

CHRISTMAS – A MESSAGE OF LOVE (Luke 2:33-35)

We saw last week Jesus the Christ-child being brought to the temple by Mary and Joseph, to dedicate Him to the Lord, according to the Law of Moses in Leviticus 12. There they encountered Simeon, *a just and devout man*; he rejoiced to see the Christ-child, for it had been revealed to him by the Spirit of God, that this child (now just over a month old) was born to be the consolation (comfort) and the everlasting hope of Israel.

In **(v.33)** scripture tells us Joseph and Mary “marveled” when they heard the words Simeon spoke **(v.29-32)** – words that declared this child to be the fulfillment of God’s Messianic promise! *I find it a little strange here that they marveled.* Had Joseph forgotten the *visitation* by the angel, when he contemplated putting Mary away secretly, after finding out she was miraculously with child? Had he forgotten the angel’s confirmation of prophetic scripture? **(Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14) "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."**

And why did Mary marvel? Had she *forgotten* her angelic visitation as well? **(Luke 1:30-33) Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”**

Despite God’s word to them, they “marveled” – *were filled with wonder*. For Mary and Joseph, it was a *“too good to be true”* moment! But isn’t that our

response, when we encounter the amazing “love of God!” ***It’s too good to be true!*** Even as believers, as with Joseph and Mary, *although they had received the word*, they *still* “marveled” at the manifestation of God’s goodness! Moses reveals the motive behind God’s “goodness” towards us. Revealed in God’s word to Israel.

(Deuteronomy 7:7-8) The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Christmas reminds us that God has **chosen** to love us! His love *alone* provides rest for the troubled soul of mankind! **(Zephaniah 3:17) The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.** We “marvel” at the thought that His love “sings” over the likes of us! *Who are we that He would “sing,” “choose” to love us; those who have “reject” Him!* **(1 John 4:9-10) In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

God’s love is always a marvel, beyond human comprehension. Unfortunately, many have heard the Christmas story, *marveled* and *moved on*. But God sent His Son that He might *move into* our hearts, and grant to us what we could **never earn or deserve!** **C.S. Lewis: “The Christian does not think God will**

love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.” C.S. Lewis In our text Simeon, speaking directly to Mary, reveals two ways in which God has manifested His love for us (v.34, 35). **First** through the gift of **His Son** – “This Child” - is God’s love, manifested! He is “Immanuel,” **God with us, Jesus; Hebrew -Jehoshua/Joshua; meaning: “Jehovah is Salvation” – our deliverer.**

The word of God became flesh and dwelt “among mankind!” God dwelt amongst us in human flesh, that His flesh might be torn that we might come to God and be delivered from the same *destructive* “fate” as the devil! Satan understood this, *therefore*, he sought to destroy the child, through the *narcissism* of “Herod the Great,” the governor of Galilee; who ordered the “murder” of every *male* child in Bethlehem 2 years-old and younger, **(Matthew 2). Notice: All self-seeking and narcissistic living seeks to “murder” Christ. But those who “marvel” and embrace Him, as Simeon did here, will “magnify” Him!**

The birth of this Child, reveals the depths of God’s love for us! In fact, God’s love, for us violates every natural law of parenting. *By nature, parents coddle and protect their children from every form of potential harm.* But **not so** with God and His only begotten Son! He exposes “this Child” to the “brutal” rejection of mankind; that we might “receive” and “know” His love! **From a purely human stand-point no “parent,” in their “right-mind,” would allow this; and especially, not for the “benefit” of one’s enemies!**

But God did! (Romans 5:6-8) For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Yet, this was God's good pleasure, because of His "insane love" for you and me! (Isaiah 53:10-11) Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

He was destined (appointed) for this purpose, resulting in the *"fall and rising of many."* That is the condemnation and resurrection of many! (John 3:18) "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And for the *"rising,"* literally *"rising again"* of many: (John 11:25-26) "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" The answer to that question is the difference between "heaven" and "hell!" "This Child" was born to *deliver* us from the devil's fate!

Secondly, Simeon mentions His Sign – in mentioning the "sign" here, Simeon may have had in mind Isaiah 11:10; (Isaiah 11:10) "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious." "Banner" – signal (sign), flagship. Indeed, mankind has spoken against the "sign," the "banner" of God's love! (1 Corinthians 1:18) For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

People are “offended” by Christmas. All that is “good” is now being called “evil.” *Rudolph, Christmas songs, nativity scenes, even Veggie Tales are now considered by some to be “racist!”* Thus, the greeting “Merry Christmas” for many is viewed as an “assault” of humanity. Many attribute their offense to the belief that “religion” is a form of “oppression.” But Christ, not to give us “religion,” but to bring us in a “right” relationship of love with the God!

Others claim to be “agnostic” (belief that nothing can really be known about God), denying the clear scientific and spiritual evidence of God’s presence and love; others claim to be “atheist”; which is a “religion” in and of itself! It takes “faith” to believe mankind “oozed” out of the earth!

I believe people find Christmas offensive because instinctively they know, to embrace the cradle is to embrace the cross! And to embrace the cross is to be accountable to God; to have the thoughts of our hearts, our *sins* revealed! (v.35b). People refuse to embrace the “sign” (cross), the “banner of God’s love,” because it is much easier to *hate* than to *humble* ourselves! Yet, God’s love continues to call out. Jesus declared: John 3:16.

APPLICATION: As believers, Christmas should *also* remind us of God’s constant, relentless love for us! **(Romans 5:10) For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.** “Much more,” **not** “much less!” How “much more” does He love you now that you belong to Him? In response to His love we should love others. **(1 John 4:7-8) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

This is not easy, but neither was the birth of Christ! *Only “proven love” is “sincere love”; untested love is merely, “infatuation!”* Infatuated faith produces “deflated Christians!” **Drained of true love, zeal and a holy expectation in the Lord!** By the “help” of the Spirit, the “sacrificial love story” of Christmas inspires us, *as believers*, to leave a “legacy of loving others!”

(John 13:34-35) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The world will know we belong to Him; not by our apologetics, doctrine, or liturgy, but by our “love” for one another.

CONCLUSION: In His Son and His Sign, we find the central message of Christmas: “God loves you!” Have you received the free gift of His love, in Christ? **(Romans 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**