

Prelude

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night
182 – Baptist Praise and Worship Book
(By Mary Marriot on the piano)

Welcome, Introduction and Prayer

Welcome everyone and I am glad you are here! I would like to thank you all who prepared something to participate in our service this morning. My prayer is that God will bless every part of this service. May we all experience His presence and be filled with the wonders of His love. God is Love and we ought to love one another! Jesus is the reason of the season and we want to praise and worship Him with our hearts full of joy. *“Dear Father we thank you for the great love we find in Jesus, which is transformational and sacrificial. Thank you for sending your son into our world. Please accept our worship, which comes with full of gratitude and thanks giving from our hearts. Speak to us and make us more and more like your son. In Jesus’ name, we pray amen!*

Preaching and Teaching

“God’s Love at Christmas” by Pr. Claudio Moises

Introduction

Today I would like us all to light the candle of love in our hearts. In that first Christmas Heaven and Earth proclaimed that God is love! **John 1:14 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16**

Let us read together from I John 4:7-12

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. I John 4:7-11

The apostle John was transformed by God’s love. He was known as the disciple that Jesus’ loved and he proclaimed this Good News! He firmly understood in His heart God’s love for Him. He was an eye witness of this love of God. **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life”.** I John 1:1 I would like to share about God’s Love at Christmas and I’ve got three points and the first...

I – God’s Love is Like a River

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” I John 3:1a I have this image of God’s love being like a river. It transforms, changes everything, everyone and everywhere it passes. The love of God doesn’t stop, it is always in movement. God’s love is also

expressed and lived through His people. We see God's love throughout the Bible and in the Old Testament we see that God called Abraham and He lavished Abraham and Sara with His love giving them Isaac. And this love continued and grew with Jacob and His sons and it arrived and multiplied in Egypt with Joseph. With Moses this love went out of Egypt in a powerful way and took God's children to the Promised Land. God not only loved Abraham, but he blessed him, so that he could be a blessing to all families of the earth. ***"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'*** Genesis 12:1-3

The children of God have a calling to be a blessing. This is the reason why God loved and blessed the people of Israel so they could be a blessing to others. In the same way, God's love is lavished on us and He called us Children of God so we can love one another and bless others. The people of Israel disobeyed God worshiping other gods and they divided themselves and God sent them into exile. But God brought them back again to their promise land. Only a few people came back from the exile, which the Bible called the remnants and those who came back stayed there waiting for their Messiah to come. Jesus is God's love gift from the Father to us!

II – He Loved us Sacrificially

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." I John 4:10 Jesus was born to die! The creator of the world humbled himself and came down to earth. He became flesh in order to identify with His creation. The Bethlehem baby grew up and performed many miracles. All who came to him were transformed by the way he loved. He healed the sick and forgave people's sins and He went to die on the cross but on the third day He rose again. The people that followed Jesus were perplexed, confused and fearful. But Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the power of the Holy Spirit. They waited 50 days until Pentecost and the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. Peter stood up and preached with authority and people were transformed by God's love. Stephen laid his life down by sharing boldly about this love. This river of love flooded in Jerusalem again with such a manifestation of generosity, mercy and compassion. ***32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there was no needy person among them. Acts 4:32-34a*** This river of God's love kept flowing sacrificially from Jerusalem and eventually arrived to us.

III – We Ought to Love One Another

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." I John 4:11 God's love is an incarnated love, He identified with us and that is the way we ought to love one another with an incarnated love. God wants to change our hearts of stone and put a heart of flesh in us that beats like His heart. God's love goes beyond our charities and food banks. When we identify ourselves with people who are suffering we are transformed. Abraham Joshua Heschel, who was a very good Jewish writer in his book he wrote about the prophets in Israel He says: ***"God doesn't give His prophets a message but God gives His prophets a heart for the people."*** God breaks the hearts of His prophets so that they can be filled with God's compassion and God's indignation

against injustice. They started to experience the deep compassion and mercy of God. ***“The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.’ Jeremiah 31:3***

Conclusion

My prayer is that our hearts would be expanded with God’s love. May His Holy Spirit visit us with His power helping us to see how much God loves us. It should continue flowing like a river in us and through us. Starting in our own hearts and flowing out into the hearts of others. Love breaks the power of darkness and brings life. Love restores, cures and redeems. Love is transformational and it changes people from inside out, giving them dignity and sense of belonging. Love spreads like a river. It’s dynamic, contagious and influential. Jesus wants us to go beyond our obligations of being “good Christians.” Jesus looked into the eyes of the people and called them by name. Are we interested in going beyond good deeds? Are we interested in being relational and committed to a transformative relationship of love? Let’s ponder about these questions and let’s allow the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with true love; the love of God.

Response Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for showing us how much you loved us by sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. We thank you for the great salvation, redemption and freedom we find in your sacrifice for us. May we be filled with the same sacrificial love for one another, may the people in our community have the opportunity to experience the love of God through us. Lord fills our hearts with love this Christmas, in Jesus’ holy name, I pray. Amen.

Intercessory Prayer by Andrea Moises

Father God, We are thankful for all your blessings in our lives and we know that’s all fruit of your great love and your mercy. We ask you to continue covering our families, our church members, neighbours, city and the whole world with your protection. And as we approach Christmas we ask you to reveal yourself to souls who are thirsty and hungry for the truth. Use us as your body to be a clear vessel of your amazing grace. We pray for next Sunday service and the Christmas service to be real venues of the message of the gospel. Since now we pray for the guests who will join us so they will be truly blessed. May we all, your church, be involved and engaged in proclaiming the good news through we are and what we have. May we look people in their eyes and speak to their souls so they will really be filled with hope and God’s love.

In Jesus’ name, amen

Poem 1 - “The First Christmas” by Marian Swinger – by Peter Bestall

It never snows at Christmas in that dry and dusty land.
Instead of freezing blizzards, there are palms and drifting sands,
and years ago a stable and a most unusual star
and three wise men who followed it, by camel, not by car,
while, sleepy on the quiet hills, a shepherd gave a cry.
He’d seen a crowd of angels in the silent starlit sky.
In the stable, ox and ass stood very still and calm
and gazed upon the baby, safe and snug in Mary’s arms.
And Joseph, lost in shadows, face lit by an oil lamp’s glow
Stood wondering, that first Christmas Day, two thousand years ago

Reading by Mary Marriot

We hear a lot of keeping Christ in Christmas.

I was in a different church from usual recently and found myself sitting beside a beautiful nativity scene. From a side-on position, I could see, lying behind the stable, neglected and with arms reaching up, the Baby Jesus! The little manger was empty. I wondered if the minister had hidden it there or if had been some childish mischief. If I put it back, would I be spoiling some surprise the minister had set up? In the end, I picked the little figure up and, with a silent prayer of thanks, I laid him in the manger. The minister saw me and said, "Ah, I was wondering where our Lord was." When it comes to keeping Christ in Christmas, it's not a case of railing against a secular society. It is much more of an individual, personal thing. Do it for you, and for him. Keep the Lord in your heart and he will always be in Christmas.

Poem 2

"God's Love at this Time of the Year"

By Richard Tranter

I'll talk of God's love at this time of the year,
so all move in closer so you can hear.
God wants us to know now Christmas is near.
It's all thanks to Jesus and the time he was here
God watches the children open their toys
with smiles on their faces and hearts full of Joy's.
Christmas is here and the gifts have begun,
still caring for children who sadly have none.
So if we talk about Christmas and of God's love.
He cares for us all and watches above.
Maybe this Christmas when we are at home,
Try to remember we are never alone.
Computers and bikes, Christmas jumpers are worn.
To celebrate the day that Jesus was born.
Pastor Claudio I'll show you God's love and what it can do.
God knew I was lost and sent me to you.
To feel God's love at the end of the day,
is to say that you're sorry for losing my way.
My words that I say I do have to think
they come from my heart and not from the drink.
I know that I am down. Tired and sad
but God heals my heart and for that I am glad.

Song 1 – Promises by Maverick City Music (by Courteney and Pierce)

<https://youtu.be/muEqwtYjdB0> Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*God of Abraham
You're the God of covenant and of faithful promises
Time and time again You have proven
You'll do just what You said*

*Though the storms may come and the
Winds may blow I'll remain steadfast
And let my heart learn when You speak a word it will come to pass*

*Great is Your faithfulness to me
Great is Your faithfulness to me
From the rising sun to the setting same
I will praise Your name
Great is Your faithfulness to me*

*God from age to age,
Though the earth may pass away, Your word remains the same
Your history can prove there's nothing
You can't do, You're faithful and True
I put my faith in Jesus
My anchor to the ground
My hope and firm foundation
He'll never let me down
I put my faith in Jesus
My anchor to the ground
My hope and firm foundation
He'll never let me down*

Song 2 – You Are My Serenity by Saulo Moises and David Smoult

*Lord come down in this place
Fill my heart with your embrace
Holy Spirit fill us with your love
Even sinners given grace
Your compassion on us laid
The highest price on earth you paid*

*You are greater than our human breath
The empty space you'll fill instead
I'll walk on waters with you*

*You are my serenity
You keep me still
Surrendering
Open the windows of my soul
Just so I am not alone
All this passion just for you*

Song 3 – The First Noel by Phil Wickham (Rebecca Moises)

<https://youtu.be/1jxaOPhBmxQ> Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*The First Noel the Angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep*

*Noel Noel Noel Noel
Born is the King of Israel!*

*They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the East beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night*

*And by the light of that same star
Three Wise men came from country far
To seek for a King was their intent
And to follow the star wherever it went*

*This star drew nigh to the northwest
O'er Bethlehem it took it's rest
And there it did both Pause and stay
Right o'er the place where Jesus lay*

*Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
That hath made Heaven and earth of nought
And with his blood mankind hath bought*

Final Words and Apostolic Blessings

We are coming to the end of our service today and we hope you enjoyed it. Next Sunday we will have special guests joining us. The group 4 Kerigma will be proclaiming Jesus the Hope, Joy, Love and Peace of the Nations singing beautiful Christmas Carols for us. We are planning to have two identical services one starting at 9:30 and the other one starting at 11am. So, we can all invite our neighbours, friends and families and keeping the social distance and the capacity of the number of people allowed in the building. Please sign up in the sheet at the end of the service today or by calling me or sending me an email to book a place to you and to your guests.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Have a blessed week and see you all next Sunday at church!