

Sermon - Dec. 27, 2009

What Love Calls Us to Be and to Do

Luke 2:8-20 Psalm 103 I John 4:7-21

The Psalmist sang the truth of what Scott has shared - about us and about God - *Bless the Lord who forgives all our iniquity, who heals all our diseases, who redeems our lives from the Pit,,,*

And – strange as it may seem - I think I saw it all – all of human history – played out last night at Chucky Cheeses - We were there with our 4 grandchildren - I am not exactly sure why we were there - it wasn't for the food - Maybe it was to help me see the truth of God's word. And I saw two things there - I saw sin. My gosh – how many commandments got broken – greed, coveting, not telling the truth, stealing, some....

And yet – I saw some good parenting there, too - kids watched over – cared for - and – yes – loved – even loved by discipline – called from bad behavior to good.... Redeemed... And the words from John came to life...

Jesus Christ – our redeemer. *God so loved the world that God gave the only son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Indeed God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him.*

As Scott has shared with us well this morning – this is the history of our human race, it is the story of our faith. From Adam and Eve to every human being alive today.... We live with the truth of our separation from God - God's power and wisdom, God's reach from one end of all creation to the other,

God's perfection, set over against all the imperfection, the sin, that marks our lives. And - in spite of who we too often are - in Christ, in the humble nature of his birth - in the sincerity of his teaching and ministry to people, in the compassion of his touch in word and deed – in Christ we know, we know, the wonder of God's forgiving new life giving love for us.

And more ... so much more to the story. Strangely - The Christmas story was not mostly about the birth of Christ. It was, and it is, about the birth of Jesus Christ - AND - what that birth could And would and does and will mean for the world... for us, to be sure, but for the world of God's people.

For us - the truth is clear – God, in Jesus Christ, in Mary's child, God in that babe in Bethlehem, God in flesh appearing, really did mean, and does mean, that the hopes and fears of all our years have been met. Do we fear that in the end evil wins, that crooks and liars and cheats do get away with it.....? Do we enjoy the good life to the end?... Because death is the finish line.... ?
Do we fear disease, and accidents, do we fear death? Or do we remember God's promise in Christ is the gift of eternal life... that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus....

Do we remember, do we, that death is not the finish line, but that whoever lives and believes In Jesus Christ will be saved, that is - though we die, though we will die, yet those who believe in Jesus, they will live, we will live - forever.. in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit – one with God?

Our lives have been redeemed from the pit - We can live in constant hope - that finally - nothing can separate us from God's love.... And Jesus said - if God so loves us - then we ought to love one another.

If God loves us so much – that God sent God's son to live with us, and to suffer with us and to die - and then to rise to eternal life.... If God loves us that much then we do have the strength to love God - and if we love God we will try to do God's will.... And God's will is that we love one another.

The commandment we have from God is this - *those who love god must love their brothers and sisters – their fellow human beings.*

We just celebrated Christmas - we remembered how much God loves us.
And we remembered God's love for us by giving presents to each other, giving presents to people we know and love - And - if we really love God – we also gave presents for people we do not know, and may never meet....

That's the Christmas spirit - loved by God - we show God's love to every one.
Howard Thurman once talked about Christmas this way... about celebrating Christmas a little bit every day... That every time we try to show our love for others... we help fill the world with more of God's love...

Loved by God – we love one another... we try to make the Christmas spirit last for

365 days...When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, when kings and princes are home, When shepherds are back in their flock, When we put all the Christmas decorations away for another year...

Then the work of Christmas begins - showing and sharing the love of God for us at Christmas with everyone we meet... To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among brothers, to make music in their hearts...

Redeemed - saved from our sin - by God's love for us in Christ... We can keep the Christmas spirit...If we forget what we've done for others, and remember what others have done for us; If we remember, too, that probably the only good reason we are alive is not for what we may get out of life, but for what we are able to give to life - We can keep Christmas - if we stoop down and consider the needs of little children...; if we remember the weakness and loneliness of old people; if we bear in mind the things other people have to bear on their hearts... We can keep Christmas...

And we can keep Christmas if we are willing to believe ... that love is the strongest thing in the world - stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death, and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem 2000 years ago is the image and brightness of Eternal Love...

And that's our call in Christ... not just to celebrate Christmas, the great good news of God's redeeming love for us in Christ... but to do all that we can to make sure that the Spirit of Christmas, the love of God in Christ, becomes more and more and more - the Spirit of every day we live.

So - may the light of Christmas, all its hope and joy and peace and love - Shine brightly into our lives... and Shine through us ... into God's world. Amen....

David W. Robertson, Co-Pastor