

## This Is Christmas: Love – Christmas Eve 2020

This is Christmas: love. Not the sappy kind, but the serious kind. The sacrificial kind. Other-oriented. Not the kind you muster, but the kind that's given. The kind we're *made* for; and want. And the kind we can *have*, at Christmas and always, because of Jesus.

It's the very thing the Apostle John talks about in **1 John 4:9-11**. In the middle of a paragraph that's all *about* love, he says . . .

[9] *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* (ESV)

This is Christmas; this passage. It's the *essence* of Christmas and the *reason* for Christmas. And about as contrary to some of the *cultural* expressions of Christmas these days, as you can get. **(Photos)** Like blow-up *unicorns*; 10 feet tall. Or *giant dinosaurs*; 12 feet. Or *large snails*. Snails. What in the world do snails have to do with Christmas?

Meanwhile, we have God's expression right here. *That* [he] *sent his only Son into the world* (9). Period. More than blow-ups, candy canes, presents, and trees . . .

### Christmas is love from above

*(God sent his only Son into the world.)*

And who doesn't want to be loved from above? Whether it's your boss and the company you work for, or someone in authority over you, or your parents? Everybody wants to be loved by those they look up to.

➤ When I was a senior in college and seriously dating Becky, my brother Rick called one day and said, "For your graduation, I'll give you \$1000, or flying lessons. Whichever you want."

And I immediately said, "I'll take the thousand dollars!" Because I wanted to get engaged and didn't have a dime to my name. So he gave me the money, **(engagement photo)** and the rest is history.

The point being, I felt so incredibly loved. From above. Because my brother was 8 years older than me, and I looked up to him.\*\*\*\*\*

➤ How much more with God? Who rules the universe and spoke us into existence.

Realize it or not, admit it or not, everybody wants to be loved from above. Loved by God. And this verse tells us he does. So much that he *sent his only Son* to us. The *ultimate* in love from above. Because *God* sent Jesus, from heaven; and God sent *Jesus*, his only Son, to earth.

He sent his *Son*. The one *he* loves. The one who shares his glory, and divinity, and attributes, and power. He sent *him* from above.

And not to a welcoming party, but a sinful one. Knowing full well that he would be despised, rejected, and crucified. Full well that he would be *separated* from him. Full well that he would suffer. **(Manger)** Full well that he would be born in a lowly manger, to a

lowly family, in a lowly town, to a lowly life.

That's love. Love from above. Because *God* sent Jesus; and God sent *Jesus*. *This* is Christmas.

But it's also love on display.

### Christmas is love on display

V9 says – *In this the love of God was made manifest among us*. Manifest, as in obvious, apparent, clear. God *displayed* his love at Christmas. And not from afar, but up close; *among us*. By sending his Son to *live* with us. For everyone to see.

Do you realize how important that is? We don't put our faith in secrets – secret books, secret knowledge, or secret rituals. We don't put our faith in something imagined, something made up, something conjured.

We put our faith in a *person*. A *real* person. A *visible* person. We put our faith in the open statement of truth; *about* the Truth. We put our faith in the open display of love. Love that was made manifest at *Christmas*, and still is.

Christmas is love on display. It doesn't *get* any more important.

Just like *our* displays of love to one another. In the course of life.

Like this one tomorrow morning: **(Kids opening presents)**

Or how about this classic display of love? **(Man giving woman a ring)**

Or this one? **(Dad holding umbrella over kids)**

And then there are the more *common* displays of love. Like a **man washing dishes**.

Or a **woman folding clothes**.

Or a **mom consoling her child**.

It's love on display. All of it.

And let's not leave this one out. **(Me watching a Hallmark movie)**

We display love all the time. Or *should*.

But *our* displays *pale* in comparison to *God's*. **(Baby Jesus in a manger)** That's love. Love *made manifest among us*.

➤ And it didn't stop there. He displayed it at Calvary too. And Pentecost after that; when he sent his Spirit. And he continues to display his love in *us*, his followers.\*\*\*\*\*

Every time we wake up in the morning, we're part of new display; a new nativity if you will, with Christ *in* us. Every time he saves someone, he displays his love. Every time we *serve* someone in the strength that he supplies, he displays his love. Every time he provides, every time he protects, it's a display of God's love.

For the people of God, the church, Christmas is love on display *every* day. It started one silent, holy night; and continues to this day. And will forever.

That's Christmas. Love on display.

And last, love with a purpose.

### **Christmas is love with a purpose**

Purpos-*es*, in fact. Three of them. Found right here in these verses.

The first, is **to appease God's wrath for our sin**. V10 says – *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us* [in other words, *we're* not the cause of Christmas, *God* is; we didn't start all this, he did] *and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. Propitiation means the appeasement of God's wrath. God sent Jesus, to appease his wrath, for our sin.

You say, "I thought God was loving." He is. Perfectly. But he's also perfectly just. And perfectly holy. Which means he *hates* sin, in his justice; and won't tolerate it in his holiness. Our sin makes God righteously angry. Wrathful. Giving him every right to forsake us and condemn us.

But in his perfect love, he sent his Son to *die* for our sins. Appeasing his wrath once and for all, if we only repent and believe. Christmas isn't just a feel-good *love* story; it's love with a purpose.

Second, Christmas is love for the purpose of giving us life. **To give us life**. V9b says – *God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him*. So that we might live, and live through Jesus.

You say, "I'm *already* living." And that would be true. Physically you're alive. But apart from Christ you're *spiritually dead*. Dead in your trespasses and sins the Bible says (Eph 2:1). Following the course of this world and facing eternal condemnation. (Eph 2:2; John 3:18)

But God sent Jesus into the world at Christmas, so that you might live; have life to the full and life forever. Not apart from Jesus, but *through* Jesus. Through his death, his resurrection, his salvation, and his presence. It's love with a purpose.

And it's *yours*, if you repent and believe. Believe that Jesus was born to die, and did so for your sin; and rose again to give you life. You have to believe and you have to repent. Asking forgiveness for your sin, and turning from it. To live for him instead of yourself.

One of the purposes of Christmas is to give us life.

And last, **to love one another**. God showed his love for us at Christmas, that we might love one another year 'round. V11 says – *Beloved, if God so loved us* [by giving up his only Son], *we also ought to love one another*. By giving of ourselves.

More than a feel-good story on a feel-good night, Christmas is love with a purpose, love on display, and love from above. (**Summary**)

If you know that love, I hope your heart is full. But if you don't, I hope you'll pray with me right now.

Prayer of Salvation – In the quietness of your heart just start with this:

"God, I believe and I'm sorry. I believe in Jesus, and I'm sorry for my sin. Please

forgive me and come into my life. I want to follow you from now on."

If you just prayed that, in all sincerity, the love and life of Jesus is yours. This Christmas and always.

Closing Prayer – Lord, you're so good to us. Thank you for saving our soul and making us whole. Thank you for giving us life, and joy, and peace. And thank you for loving us so much, that you sent Jesus at Christmas. We worship you. And pray in Jesus' name, amen.

700 years *before* Christ, the prophet Isaiah said . . .

[1] *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*

[2] *For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.* (Is 60:1-2)

What Isaiah prophesied, we know – the Light of the World. We behold his glory and we display his glory. So that we wouldn't have to remain in **darkness**, but have the light of *life*.