

 Good Morning, my Family. Only a couple more sleeps separate us from Christmas morning. My prayer for us this morning is that the Holy Spirit will move us from the event of /Christmas into the experience of Christmas—to the continuous declaration of the angels in verse 11: “For You a Savior is born.” C. S. Lewis writes, “Once in our world, a stable held something that was bigger than our world.” The Shepherds rushed to find the baby lying in a manger. Take a fresh look at the manger and exactly what it held. It held sight for the blind. It cradled the peace of Jesus that calmed storms. It enfolded the bread and fish to feed the five thousand. It cushioned the tears that Jesus wept over Jerusalem. It held Peter’s restoration and the living water for the Samaritan woman. It embraced the lame man’s healing; it held Lazarus’ new life, the beatitudes, freedom and new life for the woman caught in adultery. It held the resurrection and the life, the forgiveness of sin. It held the bread of life and the cup of salvation. It held *my* salvation. It held perfect love.

 In 2 Corinthians 9:15, Paul describes Christ as God’s indescribable gift. And on this fourth Sunday of Advent, we celebrate this gift of love. Look at the commitment of love. Zecharia writes that God says to him, “I will dwell in your midst”(2:10). Affirmed in times long past, the love of God secures our salvation. Of this wonderful gift, scripture says, “Even the angels long to look into.” His identity as Emmanuel cannot be declared too often. He is God With Us! He come not for applause but on a mission, to seek and save the lost. The manger proves God’s love and commitment to us. In his first letter, Peter writes that Jesus was so committed to each of us that He created the tree that He would die on (2:24\*). He

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\*1 Peter 2:24

He himself bore our sins[b] in his body on the tree, that we may cease from sinning and live for righteousness. By his wounds you were healed.

raised it up from a seed to become the agent of His death and of our redemption. That’s the fulness of God’s commitment to you: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him will have everlasting life”--John 3:16.

Family, Christ loved the shepherds. He loved the innkeeper, He loved the men who scourged Him, and He loved those who drove the nails into His hands and feet. Completely, undeservedly, and yet generously, Church, He is committed to you. He dwelt among us. In Hebrew, the word for love is *Hesed*. Found 250 times in scripture, it means “unfailing love, deliberate choice of affection, kindness, and generosity—merciful and consistent.” These attributes are our Savior’s. And just a note: God did not stop loving Adam & Eve, Noah, Moses, Abraham, Jonah, or Peter. Although He disciplined each of them, He provided a way to renew their relationship with Him. The same is true for us. We are never too far gone for Jesus. (\*1 John 4:10-11). He calls us to repentance. Dear friends, if God so loved us, then we also ought to love one another. While the manger proves God’s love and commitment to us, it should cause us to deeply reflect on our commitment to Him.

Family, listen. The Shepherds’ story is our story. We hear the revelation of the Gospel, embrace it, and believe it. We pursue and embrace Christ, and as we do, we become witnesses of our glorious conversion. We begin to tell others. The manger showed how God as revealed Himself to the world, full of mercy and majesty. Our response should be like that of both Mary and the Shepherds:

and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said. But Mary treasured up all these words, pondering in her heart what they might mean. So, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; everything was just as they had been told -- Luke 2:18-20

Our response should be a moving from the event of Christmas to the experience of Christmas throughout the year. Christ loves you, and He is committed to you.

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\*1 John 4:10-11

In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Stand in awe of the good news of great joy. Our prophet, priest, and King is born that we may have life. His birth empowers us to become obedient, to surrender, and to serve, loving others because we are loved. His birth generates commitment to Him because we know He is committed to us. His coming and His love, His gospel and our salvation are “things into which angels long to look.” Merry Christmas!

Passage in support of this sermon:

Luke 2:7-20

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: 11 Today your Savior is born in the city[o] of David. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly, a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased!”

15 When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, that the Lord has made known to us.” 16 So they hurried off and located Mary and Joseph and found the baby lying in a manger. 17 When they saw him, they related what they had been told about this child, 18 and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said. 19 But Mary treasured up all these words, pondering in her heart what they might mean. 20 So, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; everything was just as they had been told.