

GOD ' S GIFT- CHRISTMAS EVE 2007

1. John 3:1

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God. And we are...

Dear Christian friends,

Tonight as we celebrate Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of Christ the King, let us reflect upon God's wonderful love and grace.

The Apostle John sums it up in the words of our text. He writes: ***Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.***

At Christmas time we have a tradition that we give gifts to our family and friends. We do this because we love them. Gift giving is also a celebration of the gift that God has given us.

On the night when Jesus was born, angels appeared to the shepherds who were looking after their flocks. Understandably the angels were terrified by the bright lights and tremendous sound. The Angels proclaimed the good news :

Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all the people. For there is born to you this day in the City of David, a Saviour , who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, and goodwill to all men.

The angels first words to the shepherds were fear not. Do not be afraid. This is one of the great messages of Christmas. We do not have to be afraid for Immanuel has come. Immanuel is one of the names given to Jesus and it means God with us.

God came down from heaven in human form to be with us. To be one of us. To suffer and die in our place. To take our punishment upon himself that we may become children of God. Jesus himself said: ***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, so that whosoever believes on Him, should not perish, but have eternal life.***

God's love for us was, and is ,so great that He sent us His son Jesus . The Bible very clearly teaches us two important facts we cannot afford to ignore:

- Firstly : The wages of sin is death.
- Secondly: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

When we speak here of death, we speak not only of passing from this life- but also eternal death- to be forever separated from God. This is such an awful thing, that God out of his love and mercy decided to send His Son Jesus to be our substitute- to take upon himself our punishment.

That is why Jesus came, why he was born. He came as the Saviour of the world. Remember what the angel said: ***I bring you good news of great joy. For there is born to you this day a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.***

That is good news indeed, for without a Saviour we all stand condemned. There is nothing that we can do to right things with God, because we are all sinful. Knowing that there was nothing we could do, God did it for us. His gift to us is Jesus.

When we put our trust in Him- when we believe in Him, when we confess our sin to Him and ask for forgiveness we receive it. John writes:

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that god is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that if we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

I don't think that John could have put it much clearer. Clearly all of us are in need of forgiveness. The good news is that if we seek it we shall find it.

Think back to the Christmas story. What did the shepherds do when they heard the news about Jesus? Did they rub their eyes, say what on earth was that and leave it at that? Definitely not! Instead they said let's go and see for ourselves. They left their sheep and headed for the stable in Bethlehem. When they got there they saw that it was true. Then they fell on their knees and worshipped Jesus.

Tonight my friends, you have heard the same good news. **Fear not, a Saviour , who is Christ the Lord has come for you.** He has come that you may pass from darkness to light- from death to life. How will you react? Will you shrug your shoulders and say –that's not for me! I hope not, for that decision would be fatal.

David once wrote : “ **Taste and see that the Lord is good**”. He is good. He loves you. He accepts you just as you are. He has given you the great opportunity to become his child. To enter into a glorious fellowship with him. Tonight heed his call and know that He loves you.

In the words of one of the great Christmas hymns:

Dear Christ child our hearts we now offer to thee- O keep them from sin and from wickedness free- O let them be holy and blessed like thine- thou son of the Highest-thou infant divine.

Amen.