

“The Day Love Was Born” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Christmas Eve, 2024

- I. **Luke 2:10-11** – ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
- II. **God’s love is so big that He chose to enter the darkness of our world.**
 - a. I sometimes think about the people who were looking forward to a Savior before Jesus was born, and just how good that news would sound... a Savior was born today in Bethlehem... the Messiah and God!
 - b. It’s especially sweet for people who understand the pain and suffering that comes from evil and sin.
 - c. It reminds me of a story about Pope John XXIII, who was pope in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s.
 - i. He decided to visit one of the worst prisons in Rome the day after Christmas.
 - ii. It was the first time in almost 100 years that a pope had gone to a prison, and in greeting the prisoners, the Pope said, “You could not come to me, so I have come to you.”
 - iii. And that is the very spirit of Christ’s love.... He came to rescue us because He loved us, and His love never ends.¹
 1. Does that mean Jesus loved you even 2000 years ago?
 - d. Listen to the Scriptures as they remind us of God’s love for us – even farther back than 2000 years ago...
 - i. God says to Jeremiah the prophet, “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as My prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)
 1. If God knew Jeremiah this way – don’t you think He knows you this way too?
 2. Before we were conceived in our mother’s womb God knew us.
 - ii. The Psalmist writes, “You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in Your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.” (Psalm 139:12)
 - iii. Galatians says, “But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by His marvelous grace.” (Galatians 1:15)
 - iv. Ephesians says, “Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.” (Ephesians 1:4)
 - v. And 2 Timothy says, “For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan from before the beginning of time-- to show us His grace through Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:9)
 - e. Do you begin to see the picture of how much God loved you, even before Jesus came into the world?

- f. The problem for all of us started when the first people on earth disobeyed and rebelled against God.
 - i. As Adam and Eve turned away from God rather than toward Him, they opened the door for darkness... for evil to invade everything... from all of creation, to the people we sit with even today.
 - ii. No, it wasn't God's doing, but it was their decision... based on pride... and then they were ashamed and guilty, and knew they broke God's command, so they hid.
 - iii. What did God do... What did He say? "But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" (Genesis 3:9)
 - 1. God did what He does best... He pursues the lost... the hiding... the angry... the ashamed... the guilty.
 - 2. And not long after, He promises a Savior to Adam and Eve because He still loves them and will save them. (Genesis 3:15)

III. **Can you relate to Adam and Eve, crouching down to hide from God?**

- a. Even as little kids when we did things that were wrong... what did we do?
 - i. We run and hide, because facing the consequences of our actions makes us afraid... or angry... or ashamed and guilty.
- b. As we get older, we try to hide in other ways.
 - i. Some just get mad at God or other people and storm away.
 - 1. They point the finger of blame on everyone but themselves... and refuse to take any accountability for their choices.
 - 2. Just like Adam pointed at Eve and said, "She gave me the fruit, and I ate it... and by the way, God, You gave her to me!"
 - ii. Others hide by believing their sins are not *that* bad... so why would they need God?
 - 1. How many people do you know who take offense when a pastor like me says that everyone is sinful?
 - 2. It's just another way of hiding from God because if our sins aren't that bad, then we don't have to go to Him and confess our sins and change our behaviors.
 - iii. Some people hide by filling their schedules with work, family, and non-stop activities.
 - 1. Even Jesus says that people walk away from God by getting choked out by "the cares and riches and pleasures of life." (Luke 8:14)
 - iv. Some will find drugs and alcohol as a place to run away.
 - 1. It's an escape that might even work for a while, but the real trouble begins when these substances start to take over... and people lose control... of their lives, their jobs, their relationships and families... and their spiritual well-being.
 - 2. People hide from God behind a bottle all the time.

- c. Some of you can relate to these things I just talked about... and some of you have other ways that you hide from God.
 - i. All of these things are nothing more than the worst prison imaginable... locked up in sins and pride.
- d. Yet, God is always seeking us... and in fact sin can never keep us locked up because Jesus came to break those chains for us.
 - i. Some of you have heard this story, where an escape artist put the word out that he could break out of any jail in the country.
 - 1. An old sheriff from a little town took him up on the challenge... so with reporters and a crowd of onlookers, the escape artist was put in a jail cell and the door slammed shut.
 - 2. The sheriff checked back several times to see if he was ready to be let out... but the prideful man said he would get it soon.
 - 3. Finally, he cried out to the sheriff to be released, and the old man walked up to the iron bars and yanked the door open... it was unlocked the entire time.
- e. Our God has given us the freedom of the Gospel so that we are no longer bound by sin... we are no longer locked up in a horrible prison without hope... the door has been flung wide open.

- IV. **In His infinite wisdom**, God ensured that Love was born on Christmas Day.
- a. Christ – “Though He was God... gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble [place] of a slave and was born as a human being... He humbled Himself... and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)
 - b. God’s love was wrapped into His rescue mission through Jesus... and the baby born on that fateful day in Bethlehem is God’s love revealed...
 - i. “God showed how much He loved us by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love-- not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)
 - c. The greatest news of all was shared that night with the shepherds... finally, God’s love was dwelling among them... not in some distant place... but right there in the flesh.
 - d. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, remember: He came to us when we could not come to Him, breaking the chains of sin and flinging open the prison doors of guilt and shame.
 - e. In the baby born that night in Bethlehem, we see God’s love revealed—a love that pursues us, frees us, and invites us to live in His grace.
 - f. Let us leave this place rejoicing with the shepherds, proclaiming the Good News: Love was born on Christmas Day, and His name is Jesus. Amen

¹ Source: W. Frank Harrington, "The Love That Brought Him," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 51.