

Christmas, God so Loved the World

Luke 2:19-35

A Significant Love (Luke 2:19-20) I read verses 19 and 20 passage last week, but I wanted you to see the significant love that the underserving shepherds have for the Savior. In fact, we're all underserving of God's love, but Christmas says otherwise! Look at Mary and Joseph, it's the significant love that parents have for the one who will free the world from their sin. It is the same significant love that we must have for Christ. It's not an acknowledgement that I get out of Hell free because of Jesus, no it's an adoration for the Savior for saving our soul, giving us new life, giving us the Holy Spirit! It's not lip service, it's a significant love for Jesus Christ! I can usually tell someone's affection for Christ within a few minutes. If they refer to Jesus as Lord and Savior, that's significant! If they refer to God as the big man upstairs, that's an acknowledgement that He exists at best. One time I tried to invite an Atheist to church. He said, "I'm not going because I don't believe in Him, I swear to God I don't!" I love what John shares about love in 1 John 4:19 ***"We love because he first loved us."***

Paul shares this significant love of Christ, for Christ, and for His Church in Ephesians 3:14-21 ***"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."*** If you have a significant love for Jesus, it's a gift that the original Christmas has given to us!

A Specific Love (Luke 2:25-32) I use the word specific in this context because of Simeon. Simeon was specifically loved enough to receive this honor of seeing Jesus before Simeon's death. Just as Mary and Elizabeth were specifically loved enough to be given favor of God's miracle in their lives. Likewise, Simeon was specifically loved. There is debate about this Simeon, which was possibly the father of Gamaliel, the master of the Apostle Paul. Regardless, this guy was chosen! You are specifically loved enough to hear the gospel, be drawn by the Holy Spirit, and in return love Christ! It's a significant and specific type of love! Listen to John 17:24 ***"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."*** Remember that Christmas brought to us a specific type of love for God!

A Sacrificial Love (Luke 2:33-35) Long before he made the world, God the Father prepared to send his one and only Son to earth, and yet even then he knew how much the baby born in Bethlehem would suffer. Can you imagine the all-wise, all-powerful author of life preparing his Son to live as one of us, be born in a shed — and to die a uniquely horrible death? Jesus came because you are loved with significance, you are specifically loved, and you are loved enough that He would be our sacrifice! Listen to John 10:15-18 ***“just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”***

Feel the awe-inspired heaviness of the full meaning of Christmas in his words: ***“I lay down my life for the sheep...”***

You want to know what unconditional love looks like, it looks like the cross!

Christmas brings us a significant love, a specific love, and a sacrificial love, because of Jesus Christ! John 3:16 ***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”***