

1 JOHN 4:7-10, 13-16

LOVE SENDS JESUS

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

John's premise of our text is that out of love God sent Jesus to our world so that He might be the Saviour of this world by taking away our sins. That's your Christmas card message to you. God loves you and sent Jesus to be your Saviour by taking away your sins.

It's a simple message; one I hope that you take home with you. Many people don't send out Christmas cards anymore, and Christian Christmas cards can only be found in the odd store. If you still get cards do you read the message inside? Some people don't! Some people just look at the pretty picture, see who sent it, and think 'that was nice of them', and then put it up somewhere to look at that nice picture, and then throw in in the garbage a few days after Christmas.

Some people go to a lot of effort to find the right card. They make sure what's written inside is a good message fit for the person they're sending the card to. A lot of thought went into today's reading. A lot of good news is conveyed to you in this Christmas card. There's way too much for me to tell you about this evening. I do hope that you take your Christmas bulletin home with you and read it again to see how much love God puts into this card, which is attached to a very special gift.

Let's examine our Christmas card and the gift as someone might ask questions for a news story. Who, what, where, when, why and how.

The whos in our reading are God, Jesus and us. God is the sender, Jesus is the gift, and we are the receivers of that Gift. The what is that nasty thing called sin, the wrong things we do, or the good things we fail to do. Sin is the guilt you feel even if you don't think of yourself as a sinner. Sin is all that is bad in this world, the cause of all the sorrow and suffering. It's what you know you want to avoid, even if you don't call it sin, but you know you can't avoid it, because bad stuff is going to happen to you. You're going to be involved in doing bad stuff.

Now when God looked at sin, He didn't use that commonplace saying of "it is what it is". He did something about Sin. He looked at us as victims of sin, and loved us, and sent us His Son Jesus to do something about that sin.

Jesus said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:38-39). This raising up that Jesus talks about is the resurrections of your bodies and souls to eternal life in heaven.

Now when did God send Jesus to do something to bring about our resurrections? Paul told the Galatians that “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5).

What’s the fullness of time? Paul told the Romans that the fullness of time is God’s right timing. Things don’t always work out according to our plans, but they work out according to God’s timing. Paul wrote that “while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

That takes us to the how of our news article. In our reading from John, John says that Jesus became the propitiation for our sins. Most people don’t know what propitiation means anymore. It’s a type of appeasement. Jesus appeased God’s anger over sin by taking our sins upon Himself and dying for them. His death on the cross paid for all our sins, and the sins of the whole world.

That brings us back to who and where. The sins of all the people on this entire world, past, present, and future were paid for by Jesus. Why did God do this? Why did God set up this elaborate plan to put the sins of the entire world on His Son, and then have Jesus die with those sins as a sacrifice for you and me so that we may have eternal life through faith and trust in Jesus?

He did it because He loves you. It wasn’t because you’re such a great person, or have done great things in your life. You weren’t even born yet. Yet, before the foundation of the world God knew of your existence, and He loved you.

Not only is love of God, but God Himself is love. God isn’t a wrathful judge, or a nitpicking accountant of sin, or an avenger lying in wait to punish you. God is represented in the Bible as generous, self-giving and compassionate. And our reading tells us how we know that God is love. This is no abstract saying, but it talks of a living, active, personal love in sending His Son Jesus to us. God takes the initiative to save you. It’s not that you loved God, but that He loved you. He found you when you sought Him not. This is the greatest sign of God’s love for us: when we were not able to seek Him because of our many sins, He sent Jesus to us, so that He might grant forgiveness to all who believe in Him and call us back into the fellowship of His Fatherly glory. Amen.