

Sunday, December 22, 2019

Isaiah 35:1-10

Luke 2:8-20

Love Came Down

Just think of a person whom you would like to see in person doing what they do best. Someone who is famous for what they do- an actor, singer, business person, politician, professor, sports figure- maybe a hockey, football, soccer, basketball, baseball star. Then reflect upon the fact that you have been able to obtain tickets to see this person perform—either at a theatre or wherever they play their sport well. What would your reaction be? Most likely it would be filled with excitement because this person is famous for what they do and you get to see them live in concert, or at the arena or place where they function best. You have not only admired them for their talents and gifts but because you have tickets to see them perform you will probably have found out more about their lives- their backgrounds, family situation and even their likes and dislikes. And now you get to see them live and in person doing what they do best!. Now just add one more thing—you get to meet them and receive backstage passes to their show, or even called from the stands to do photos. How would you react? How do you respond? What do you say or do? People respond differently when we meet people whom we've seen on TV or heard on the radio. When we see them live we might see them for who they are—shorter/ taller, pleasant, quiet or outgoing. And their reality for us changes because they present themselves for who they are in the moment.

Throughout our Advent journey we have been preparing for Jesus' birth by sharing the readings of the Old Testament prophets who spoke of the One who was to come. We have also marveled at God's Gift to us by sharing and hearing the name of Christ Jesus our saviour lifted up in praise music as we seek to know this baby born for us. The prophet Isaiah makes clear that God was going to do something amazing because He wanted his people to be reconciled to him. They had floundered away and he wanted them to follow his way of living. This was true at the time of Isaiah's writing, but also through the generations which followed until Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary and it is very true today. God's love for his people has never stopped and so his promise of reconciliation needs to be believed.

We heard Isaiah's prophecy *ch.35 how all will be changed so that all will see the glory of God. Isaiah wrote that the wilderness and desert will not be dry but blossom abundantly and God will come to save all the faithful people. When this happens waters shall break forth in the wilderness and there will be streams in the desert. The path to God will be made clear so that all

believers will not go astray This is so that we will continue to focus on Him and the glory of God would be revealed by God's promised Messiah, the Lord and Saviour, Jesus.

For generations people prepared for Jesus' birth and anticipated his coming when false prophets came and went, even though they often cited Isaiah's prophecy. But Isaiah wrote that there was no other to be born but the Messiah the one who is Emmanuel. God's faithful people cried out and wanted God to act for they were searching and waiting .But unlike people today who want to see a famous person perform or play their best game, people in Jesus' time did not know for whom they were looking and did not see him for who he was or react to what he might do.

Mary and Joseph were told the news of the baby to be born which they will raise together. And they knew that this baby was not going to be raised like royalty, or with an entourage of people looking after his every whim. He was going to be raised by a family who loved him, and even though they knew his purpose he would soon learn to grow and discover for himself that he was/is the Son of God, the Son of Man.

As we prepare for Christ's birth we seem to rush into doing many things- decorations, Christmas baking- cooking special dishes, gift buying and wrapping and sometimes in the rush of all of this, we forget that the most wondrous part is the fact that in the person of Jesus, God becomes flesh.

Jesus was born in a little town of Bethlehem, a community where Joseph's family had come from and where he had to return for the census. Even though Mary was very pregnant and uncomfortable they had to go to be registered. They arrived at the village only to find there were no accommodations available. Joseph knew that Mary's time was soon and they only needed a warm place to stay and rest. Out behind an inn, was a warm barn with several animals of transportation and it was comfortable. While they were there Mary entered labour and soon gave birth to a baby boy.

But this baby was someone important—why? Because on the outskirts of town shepherds were watching their sleeping sheep and they were startled awake by angels talking and singing about God's glory. They sang of a newborn baby whose purpose was to save the world. This baby is the Son of God who disguised His glorious divinity and came to live under the cloak of humanity from heaven to earth. Jesus is the son who was born to mary and Joseph, and the Son of God given to us in love. This gift of Jesus is truly love which came down from heaven to all of earth's people. God became flesh in order to respond to the cries of the people

for reconciliation and redemption of sins. God's Son was born into human history in order to change it for the better.

Isaiah had prophesied that when God came and lived amongst the people- they would be saved. They would also be stronger, not fearful, and the hope would be experienced by all. Those who could not see would have their eyes opened, those who could not hear would be able to hear and those who were crippled would be able to jump like deer and sing for joy. Even the landscape would burst forth with streams of water and this water would support new life. There would be new life, new hope and love from God the Creator to God the Son=Jesus.

Out of love, God gave to us Jesus, born of Mary to live a human life. Love came down when Jesus came as a baby- Jesus invaded the world he had created and identified himself with sinful people. His birth in a barn was the beginning of his humility yet we rejoice at his birth because we know of what he did for those who have and believe. We believe that this baby was given to us in love so that we might be reconciled with God to be and become the people God wants us to be. The Word was God and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. This is love which came down.

As we give thanks to God for Jesus on this Fourth Sunday of Advent let us reflect on these words written by Christina Rossetti in 1855:

Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine;

Love was born at Christmas, star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead, Love incarnate, love divine;

Worship we our Jesus, but wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine;

Love to God and others, love for plea and gift and sign.

PRAYER

God of love we praise you for your love and your gift to us in Jesus the baby born in a stable, the word made flesh the One who came down to love and to show us how to live love one with another. Bless us we pray as seek your grace and renew our faith, this day and always. Amen.