

TUESDAY, December 24 2024 Love Was Born in a Stable

Psalms 130:1-8 Isaiah 9:2-7 Luke 2:1-20

This past summer we went to Niagara on the Lake and visited the Christmas store. While there I looked around and came across an ornament which just stood out for me. It shows a man, woman and infant-- no faces on any of them- holding each other. The words state: True Love was born in a stable. These words caught my attention then and have led us through the Season of Advent until this Holy night when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the gift of true love given to us by God.

But what is this loving Gift we celebrate with time off work and school, buying and wrapping gifts, travelling distances, wearing special clothes, and baking, cooking and eating foods that are rich in flavour and taste? What is the reason for all the effort, time and energy that we put into the preparation of special music, worship services and even lighting candles? Why do we do all this?

Because true love was born in a stable. God's Son, born of Mary and raised with Joseph as his earthly father, changed the course of human history and when he came into the world it was a significant occurrence. So important that even after 2000 years we are still taking time and effort and energy to recognize the gift of true love from our Creator God. So significant was the birth of Jesus that the prophets and Psalmists wrote about His coming hundreds of years before Mary gave birth in that stable.

God's people true followers and believers had been living in difficult times for many different reasons. Psalmists wrote about the need for waiting patiently as God would act in some way to help His people. Our reading from Psalm 130 describes the need to wait for the Lord. That it is in His word that we are to have hope and wait even longer. We are to be patient and wait as those who long for darkness of night to end and who watch for the morning. This is because our hope is in God. Our hope is in God because God offers love, and the power to redeem us. It is God who will redeem Israel and all who are faithful to him. IT is God who gives to us true love. The question is whether we love God and whether we are faithful to God?

The prophet Isaiah wrote about the righteous one who would be king of all. The reason for this was because people were walking in darkness and searching for hope and a better way of life. They needed God to guide them and to help them to see what a better life would entail. They needed the wonderful counselor, mighty god, everlasting father, Prince of Peace to come. They needed this Promised One of God to come and bring peace because He would uphold justice and

righteousness and be the One who would save his people from oppression. With Isaiah's words hope was given. And even though these words were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, hope was renewed because God had not abandoned His people but truly loved them. God heard the cries and knew that people were patiently waiting. But what were they waiting for? The one who would save them; the one God would send to redeem them and show them a better way. The One who would be the saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Time came for God's plan to be put into place. An angel went to see a young woman engaged to a man from the house and line of David. The angel told her she would have a baby boy who would be named Jesus. He would be great, called the son of the most high and he will receive the throne of David. He would also reign forever. Mary only asked, 'How can this be?' and with an act of love for God, Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." Joseph was not sure about Mary's pregnancy and was going to break the engagement but an angel intervened and told him that the baby she carried was the Son of God. Prophecies were now starting to be fulfilled and even the call for everyone to be registered took place. Why was it at that time when Joseph and Mary were waiting for the baby to be born that they had to travel to Bethlehem? Because God's love was strong and the need to fulfill prophecy was playing out. God's love was strong because he knew that the baby who was to be born would save his people.

Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem and it soon became apparent that the baby was going to be born. The inns were full but Mary needed a place that was warm and somewhat clean and safe. For this is where she would give birth to the baby. A stable was sufficient for this purpose because Mary delivered the baby and held him in her arms. As she held him and nursed him, she also cried tears of joy and held a truth that no one else could fully comprehend. This child—this perfect, breathing miracle—had been formed within her by the Holy Spirit alone. No human explanation could account for His presence, and no earthly logic could justify His existence. As she traced Jesus' tiny features with trembling fingers, Mary must have felt the weight of this divine secret. While others saw a young mother with her firstborn, she alone knew the full magnitude of God's supernatural work. Every kick she had felt during her pregnancy, every movement within her womb, had been a reminder of God's impossible promise made real. Not only did Mary love this child while waiting to deliver the baby, but God loved this baby and wanted this baby to be loved by all. For this was Jesus' purpose- so that everyone would believe in Him as God's Son, the Saviour and receive the gift of eternal life.

For Mary holding that baby was truly a miracle of faith and love. She knew the truth even when she was faced with questioning looks and whispered doubts about his father. Yet Joseph

believed and supported Mary and loved them both. Mary now held the hope of humanity in her arms. The true gift of God; true love was born in a stable and this baby, the son of God was crying, nursing and sleeping in a manger.

This baby signified God's true love for all people as he would come to bridge the infinite gap between heaven and earth. This baby born in a stable was God's Son sent to earth to save his people from death and to offer the gift hope and promise of new life. This God's true love for all people then and throughout all the generations of people who have lived. This gift of love is why we gather tonight and give thanks for His love shown to us in the birth of a baby. The baby Jesus who would live to die and rise again for all our sakes.

God's gift to the world took a long time to plan and put into place but it was worth it, for it is now over 2000 years and Jesus' birth is still celebrated because of his teachings, preaching, healing and ultimate death on the cross. But we cannot leave Jesus on the cross, yes he died, was buried but he is alive and in the hearts of all who believe in him. This is God's True love who was born in a stable, lifted high on a cross and who has risen to new life for us all. This is the reason we gather this Holy Night and rejoice and sing that this baby is Christ the King. The angels sang about his birth and we continue to sing their song of praise.

Let us pray

God we praise you for your true love was born in a stable which we remember this holy evening. Open our hearts to receive this love offered by you in the name of the Christ Child sent to save us and redeem us from sin. Hear our prayers O God as we share together in silence. SILENCE.
Amen.

