

1 John 4:7-16

“Love at Christmas”

December 24, 2015

Our text tells us that God is love! Our text goes on to define love. Love is the sacrifice of our God that we might share eternity with Him. In the Greek that love of God has a name. It is called agape love. We translate it into English by saying that God’s love for us is self-sacrificing love. Christ sacrificed His comfort and praise due Him as God to live among us. Christ’s human body endured the physical pain and emotional rejection of crucifixion so that the disruption our sin caused between us and our God could be healed.

Jesus Christ is our role model. We love as He loved us. Like Him, our love is to be sacrificial. In all our relationships, like our marriages, we are to be sacrificial. In all our relationships like our church family, we are to be sacrificial. Especially in our relationship with our God, we are to be sacrificial. Our question should not be; “What can you do for me!” Our question should be; “What can I do for you?” God said it this way; “We are to love God above all things and love our neighbor as our self.” When we love God above all things we become God’s servant even slave. When we love our neighbor as our self, we still maintain our identity as God’s own as we give sacrificially to each other.

Consider the Lord's mother, Mary. She was told by the angel Gabriel; "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Then she was told that she, a Virgin, would bear a Son who would be Savior of the world. Mary accepted this by saying; "I am the Lord's servant." That was her first sacrifice to accept what she could not understand. The sacrifices continued until she watched her son be crucified on the Cross at Calvary. Of course her sacrifice did not end there because John not Jesus took care of her in her old age. Her sacrificial love is an example to us all.

Tonight our faith has drawn us to this moment. We are here to feel the presence of God among us and in us. Some of us see the beauty of this moment and it inspires us to greater faith. Some of us hear the words and the music and our faith is strengthened. Sadly for some this night is not an inspiration. We are all different. How blessed we are that God loves us as we are and not as He wishes us to be. How blessed we are that God teaches us to love each other as we are and not as we wish them to be. How blessed we are that God teaches those around us to love us as we are and not as they wish we would be. Yes, we are role models of His love to each other and the world.

Advent was a time to prepare to celebrate. This next couple of weeks, beginning tonight, is a time to celebrate God's gift of His Son to us. Christmas is a time to begin our journey to the Cross at Calvary, the Resurrection and the

Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven to sit at the right hand of God. Of course in our love for each other we continue to encourage each other in the faith. Worshipping together, forgiving each other, being willing to gently say no to the selfishness and self-centeredness we see in ourselves and each other is another way to encourage each other in the faith. As we see in Mary's life, being a Christian is not easy and there is much doubt, uncertainty and pain along the way. We travel that road because Jesus Christ is God and we are His servants. Amen.