

Christmas Eve
"Love Came Down at Christmas"
Luke 2: 1-20

Have you ever heard the expression, "Love Came Down at Christmas?"
Let's think about that, "what does it mean that love came down at Christmas?"

Love is word that stirs up all kinds of thoughts and feelings.

A group of psychologists once asked a group of four to eight year olds, "What does love mean?"

Eight year old Rebecca said:

'When my grandma got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore.. So my grandpa does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love.'

Four year old Billy said:

'When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.'

Seven year old Noelle answered:

'Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day.'

Terri said:

'Love is what makes you smile when you're tired.'

Elaine, age five, said:

'Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken.'

Seven year old Bobby said:

'Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.'

Cindy, age eight said:

'During my piano recital, I was on a stage and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my mom and dad waving and smiling. When I saw them doing that. I wasn't scared anymore.' That's love.'

Here is one filled with wisdom beyond her years:

Eight year old Jessica said:

'You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.'

And the final one. This one was love in action:

It came from a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there.

When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, 'Nothing, I just helped him cry.'

The Bible tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave us His only begotten Son."

The story of Christmas is not a nostalgic or sentimental tale from long ago. It's a story that is true for you and for me.

God spoke, and God's love came down.

God named his Son, Immanuel, which means "God with us"

And the God who spoke in those days, still speaks today.

In Bethlehem, God took on human flesh and blood.

God did not stay distant from us.

God's love came down.

God so loved the world, that he gave us His only begotten Son ...to experience everything we experience.

The book of Hebrews tells us that

"Jesus was not unable to sympathize with our weaknesses."

Jesus was True God, and True man.

He experienced hunger and thirst. Joy and sorrow.

When his dear friend Lazarus died and he saw the grief in the eyes of Mary and Martha, Jesus wept.

Love in action.

We too, are called to such love.

We too are called to enter into the brokenness of this world, and grieve with those who are suffering.

Have you ever been with a friend right after they experienced the death of a loved one?

Did you know that for that friend of yours, God's love came down,

to comfort them in their grieving and to proclaim to them a hope that is eternal

... a love that never dies.

In First Corinthians, chapter 13 we hear these poignant words about love.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never ends.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote:

“Why must everything else come to an end, and why does only love never end?

Because only in love does a person let go of himself or herself,
and give up his or her own will for the sake of the other person’s benefit.

Because love alone comes not from my own self, but from another self from God’s self.
Because it is through love alone, that God acts through us...

What is ours comes to an end, all of it --
but what is of God remains.

Because love is God’s very self and God’s will... that is why it never ends.

It never doubts, it stays on course.

It goes out to enemies as well as friends, and it never abandons anyone,
even when it is abandoned by everyone.

Everywhere it goes, it finds imperfection and bears witness to perfection.”¹

In Bethlehem, in a humble, lowly manger
God’s love came down.

God’s love entered the imperfection of our sinful and broken world.
God’s love entered into your brokenness and mine.

And in the incarnation of God’s love, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World
God redeemed us from our sin.

Though the world abandoned him, though we have abandoned Him,
God in His Love, never abandons us.

¹ From the *Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, edited by Isabel Best. © 2012 Fortress Press admin. Augsburg Fortress.

God's love came down.

May God's love, by the power of the Holy Spirit,
be reborn in you tonight. AMEN