

Christmas Eve Sermon

Isaiah 9:2,6-7: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

It’s August of 2012. It’s a sweltering summer afternoon and a couple drives up in an enclosed moving truck to Villalobos Rescue center. The truck door rolls open, and a 12 week old puppy named Vanessa is dumped out. And the moving truck then fades away.

A listing is made. And people come by. One after the other, Vanessa’s kennel is peered upon, and passed by. She grows, and the seasons shift and her neighbors change, but for Vanessa, no one ever comes for her. She’s old now. She’s gotten used to her room and the constant influx of people who change her scenery but never her existence. When one day, this year, 11 years later, a woman comes in: Ellie. But this time, they stop by her. Vanessa peers up and they unlock her door. Ellie has come for her.

What moved Ellie to adopt the dog? I suppose it was compassion. After all, the elderly dog didn’t really have anything to offer.

The story of Vanessa is a version of the Christmas story in a way. The story of Christmas revolves around a need and the One who had the ability to meet that need. The Christmas story is about seeing compassion in action.

While there are all kinds of things that may grab your attention during this service; the hymns, familiar and beloved, the tree with its lights, the candles shimmering on cute faces, never forget that, at its core, Christmas is really about an adoption. It is all about a God that was moved to give up what was dearest to His heart, His immortal Son.

And yet.

And yet, do not think, do not think for a second that, the story for all its familiarity, is a simple story. It

wasn't matter of signing some papers and driving to the rescue. As Isaiah foretells, it involved the Second Person of the Trinity, wholly uncreated, purely spirit, bound neither by space or time. The mighty God becoming a son. The everlasting Father becoming a child.

And why? It's because the world was in darkness and needed some light. It's because humanity was stuck in the cage of the darkness of death and needed a dawn to break it. It's because God had to enter the world of shadow, to bring his impossible brightness to you.

As God peered into the darkness of the world with its wars and holocausts. Its brutalities and "survival of the fittest" mentality. As God scanned the future with its oppression of the poor and the weak. As God surveyed our existence surrounded with pain, God wanted it all. Yes, He wanted all the darkness seen and the darkness we spread. He wanted to gather all of so-called civilization's sin-sickness to be gathered in one place. And placed on one man. At one location, Jerusalem. On one day, Good Friday. For one purpose, to redeem all humanity.

But in order for that to occur something had else had to happen first, God had to be born as a child. This is why we celebrate in humble awe. God came a son of human mother in order to adopt the world. God came as a helpless child to bring dawn to darkness.

And yet, in the immensity of it all, how easy is for the individual to get lost. I mean what can one person possibly mean? And maybe that's where it's worth returning to the cold kennel. In each person's life there is a cold dark moment. A moment (or seemingly a lifetime) spent in the darkness of the world, without affection or attention, yet carrying the simple, but essential, need to be loved, to be cared for, to be seen as worth something.

This then is your Christmas present, you have a light in the darkness.

Not because of your behavior, but in spite of it.

Not because you're here in church, but for all the times you weren't.

Not because of our dedication to Him, but on account of its lack.

Not because of who you were, but who the Christ Child has made you.

You see, in many ways we are the spiritual equivalent to the dog. Nothing to offer, but need. But the one thing you and I have in abundance, a neediness for wholeness, for forgiveness, for love. That neediness is what God desires more than anything. His greatest wish, His deepest desire is to reach out to you with the good news that He sent His Son, for you.

God had only one Son to give, He gave Him, and He gave Him willingly. He gave Him for you. Jesus was born as a child for us, for you. Jesus was given as a son for us, for you. And if you struggle with seeing your worth. Just pause, after the last present has been unwrapped. After the last guest has left. After the Holiday feasting is over and the leave the dishes waiting for a moment.

And begin to think of your value. How precious you must be if the God of the universe valued you, dear child, so much that His sent His own child to redeem you? That's what you are worth in His eyes, you're worth a Jesus. That's the value that God has placed on you. Just for you.

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