



Presiding Bishop Michael Curry Christmas Message 2018

In the Third Chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus says at one point, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

For years, I've often thought that that passage only referred to Jesus giving his life as a sacrifice on the cross. And to be sure, that is part of what it means. But some years ago I was reading a commentary by Raymond Brown, on the Gospel of John, and Professor Brown said that that passage not only speaks of Jesus willingly giving his life on the cross, but it actually speaks of Christmas, of God giving his very self, his very son to the world, not for anything God could get out of it, but for the good and the welfare and the well-being of the world. Of us.

Someone once said, in a Christmas poem, "Love came down at Christmas." That's what love is. To give, and not to count the cost. To give, not for what one can get, but for what the other can receive. That's what love is. God so loved the world, that he gave.

I realized recently how powerful that passage really is, when I saw an old poster from 1938. A poster produced by the Episcopal Church at that time, to encourage Episcopalians and other Christians, and other people of faith and good will, to do whatever they could to help Jewish refugees fleeing tyranny in Europe. To help people from all over Europe seeking refuge in America, this land of freedom. The poster depicts Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. They're fleeing persecution in Palestine, as Matthew's Gospel says. And the poster depicting Mary, Joseph, and Jesus says in the tag line, "In the name of these refugees, help all refugees."

God so loved the world, that he gave, even to the point of risking his own son. And in the name of those refugees, in the name of that Jesus, help all refugees, all people who suffer, anyone who's alone, everyone who is in need. That's what love does.

Love came down at Christmas, because God so loved the world, that he gave.

In those days, a decree went out from the Emperor Augustus, that all the world should be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem because he was a descendent from the House of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged, and who was expecting a child. While they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son, and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Meanwhile, in that region, there were shepherds, living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then the angel of the Lord stood above them. And the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were terrified. The angel said unto them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people. To you is born this day, in the City of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign. You will find the child wrapped in bands of cloth, lying in a manger."

And suddenly, there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to all people on earth."

Have a blessed Christmas. Have a merry Christmas. Have a joyful Christmas.

God love you, God bless you, and may God hold us all in those almighty hands of love.

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