

## LOVE

### Luke 1:26-35

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

<sup>34</sup> "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called<sup>[b]</sup> the Son of God.

Most likely everyone here knows this story. A young woman receives a visit from an angel sent by God to announce that she will become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

What a unique miracle, nothing like this has ever been heard of again. Stop for a moment and think about what this meant for God himself.

When we read Luke chapters 1 and 2, and Matthew 1 and 2 can we see details like when, how, who, what happened? But I think that for that story to make sense we must understand very well the "why?" The why is what holds together everything else.

And when trying to answer, why Christmas? The simplest and most profound answer is because GOD IS LOVE! GOD IS LOVE!

### 1 John 4:16

<sup>16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

GOD IS LOVE! It doesn't say that God has love, or that He has the capacity to love.

Look at the candles for a few seconds. Candles have fire, but candles are not fire. Look at the lamps, the lamps are not light, but they have light. Look at the instruments and microphones, they have sound and music, but they are not music. GOD doesn't have love, HE IS LOVE!

That is, everything he does includes love and it's done with love. You and I are not love, we have love and we can come to love. And that's why many of our actions don't include love. With God it is different. HE IS LOVE, and all his actions are done in love.

Fire is hot and everything it touches either burns or gets hot. The light shines always. There is no way that fire one day is hot and the next day is cold, and the same with light.

All God does is LOVE. And the birth of Jesus is not an act that God did because one day he felt a lot of love or tenderness for us. Christmas is not something that comes out of a sentimental emotion of God, it is something calculated, intentional, and given in response to the promises that God had made.

So Christmas is about a God who, in his love, decides to send his only son to come and bring salvation to the world. Christmas and Easter are two inseparable sisters, they are like the two sides of a coin that show how great God's love is for us. Christmas speaks to us of that tender, soft, sweet love of God, what is more tender than a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes? Easter speaks to us of that painful, righteous, sacrificial love.

So what motivated God to love us with Christmas? Why Christmas?

### **Romans 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This is where the Christmas story becomes challenging for some.

As I said before, Christmas has an inseparable sister which is Easter. But it also has other very close relatives. One of those relatives that you sometimes don't want at the Christmas dinner table, but for the photo to be complete, you must recognize them and acknowledge them as part of the equation.

Chiaroscuro paintings (The Holy Family by Raphael)



This picture shows a painting style from the renaissance. The idea was to contrast dark and light tones to highlight the main elements of the picture. Darkness is like the canvas for the bright tones!

In the same way, this is how we should understand the story of Christmas. There is a great element of light, joy, celebration, but the reason light exists is because there is an element of darkness.

The Bible called this element darkness: sin, corruption, rebellion against God, brokenness, wounds of the heart. And it is in that darkness that the Christmas story comes to light.

And that's why the text says that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And he says that his Death is the demonstration of God's love for us.

The purpose of Jesus' birth is to be able to reach the cross. The background on which Christmas is painted is dark, and the cross is dark.

God is love and that is why he sent Christmas. That's why Jesus is called Immanuel too. Jesus literally means the One Who Saves, and Immanuel means God with Us.

God's wrath was manifested upon Jesus because our darkness was already irreversible.

So how does love work if God has to show His wrath? Precisely because God is love, there is no room in him to tolerate sin. And because he knows that sin hurts, which is like when there is a spill of oil into the ocean, and it looks like that wave that goes polluting and killing everything. So, God must deal with that. His anger comes out of that love for what is just and pure. God cannot allow that wave to continue to grow or kill all that is good.

Long before Jesus was born, God's people were doing very bad, covered in darkness and God gives them the promise of Christmas:

### **Zephaniah 3:17**

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you but will rejoice over you with singing.”

This is how we see God moving quickly from wrath to love. And he says that he will sing over us with joy.

What this means is that he will no longer see darkness and that because of that he will rejoice.

Do you feel like you need that love to be sang over you? Is there darkness covering the beauty of God in your heart? This is what Christmas is about. Jesus came to pour his love and light over our hearts. God will sing over us because He will finally see that his love has saved us and that we won't be in darkness anymore. That will give him so much joy, that his response is to sing in Joy! Who wouldn't want the Creator of the universe to sing over them?

Let's share that light as we love each other this Christmas! Receive it with faith and let's hope for his advent!