

## See What Love the Father Has Given Us.

Text: 1 John 3:1

Suggested Hymns:

- 1) Prophecy
- 2) Fulfilment
- 3) Purpose

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 John 3:1, ***Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Christmas is the story of Adam and angels and of God's providence. Reaching far back into the pages of recorded history, we know that Christmas had to be because of what Adam was.

When God had made everything, He looked upon it and saw that it was good. Then, through the temptations of Satan, Adam and Eve fell into sin. By Adam's disobedience against God he had transgressed God's holy law not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Transgression is sin.

Even in Adam and Eve's separation from God, God gave them a message which indicated that they would once again, someday in the future, have the opportunity to be reunited with Him through the gift of His only-begotten Son.

Christmas is the fulfilment of the promise given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as it is written in Genesis 3:15, ***And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.***

One Friday afternoon this found fulfilment outside the city walls of Jerusalem when the Son of God, who was born in a manger at Bethlehem, died on the cross as the Saviour of mankind.

Christmas is also the story of angels — angels appearing at various times through the long centuries of the Old Testament to continue to support God's

prophets and God's people with the promise, "A Saviour is coming." Several angels are mentioned in our program tonight. Listen for them.

Finally, in the fullness of the time, God sent one of His angel messengers to a young woman named Mary to tell her that she was to be the mother of our Lord, the Saviour of mankind. Then, on that silent and holy night, while the shepherds were watching their sheep on the plains outside of Bethlehem, another angel messenger came down from the heavenly mansions with the message, "***For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.***"

We know what happened then. Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "***Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!***"

For twenty centuries these words have echoed down the corridors of time, "***Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!***"

Christmas is also the story of God's providence. God has provided us with a saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. God has also provided us with material blessings. He has permitted man to discover many things which can be used for the benefit of all people. God provides what we need when we need it. We read in Galatians 4:4-5, "***But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.***"

Let us therefore consider what love the Father has given us in prophecy, fulfilment and purpose. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Prophecy**

See what love God the Father has given us in prophecy! Through the long ages of darkness in the Old Testament the revelations became clearer as time went on. There was Moses. There was Isaiah. There was Micah. Each one revealed that which God had given to him.

In Isaiah we read, "***For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the***"

*throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*<sup>1</sup>

In Micah we read, *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”*<sup>2</sup> We know that Christ did come forth, not merely to be Ruler in Israel but to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Ruler of all things in heaven and earth. *“See what love the Father has given us!”*

## **2. Fulfilment**

To all those who lived in those ages before the event took place, in the prophecies which God revealed to man, and now see what great love the Father has given us in fulfilment. Twenty centuries ago God’s love reached down from heaven and placed the Christ Child in the manger at Bethlehem, and God’s angel proclaimed to the shepherds, *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*<sup>3</sup> So all the facts of the story begin to come together. *“See what love the Father has given us!”*

When we read these words again, we think with great joy of the presence of the shepherds at the manger at Bethlehem and how they must have rejoiced at being the first to whom the news had come. They were the first to have the opportunity to kneel at the manger at Bethlehem. Holy Scripture tells us they returned glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had heard and seen. *“See what love the Father has given us!”*

So we, who in spirit have once again knelt at the manger in Bethlehem, should return to our everyday tasks —whether it be farming, growing crops, looking after animals, keeping house, at the factory, at the computer, in retirement or whatever our task may be, — we should be glorifying and praising God for all of the things which we have heard and seen.

## **3. Purpose**

*“See what love the Father has given us!”* This is true not only in prophecy and in fulfilment, but it is true also in purpose. St. John, records these words,

***Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*** And so we are.

In these few short words we have the life of the Christian tied up with the life of God in Christ. We should be called the children of God, and so we are, because we have been received into His kingdom by the washing of Holy Baptism. And so we are, because we have put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ who came down from His eternal mansions in heaven to live and walk among men, to be our Saviour from sin. And so we are the children of God by adoption, through faith in Jesus whom God has given.

*“See what love the Father has given us!”* This was the purpose for which He came. Jesus appeared on earth to take away our sins, so Bethlehem and Calvary are very close together. It is only a short distance from the little town of Bethlehem to the site of Calvary, outside the city of Jerusalem — 11 km or so — but they are even closer than that in the life and the work and the purpose of God the Father in sending Jesus Christ.

John says in 1 John 3:4-5, ***“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.***

So God’s perfect Gift came to the imperfect earth, made imperfect by man’s fall into sin. Once again He began to have the earth and all that was in it continue to strive toward perfection by the gift of His Holy Spirit, that we, being received into His kingdom by Baptism, made His own by faith, children by adoption — and so we are — might continue to walk in His way towards the everlasting mansions in heaven, where Jesus will be waiting for those who are His own.

This is the great hope of our Christmas celebration. ***“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God.”*** These are the words of our text. Jesus came to earth to take away our sins, to join us once more with God, His heavenly Father, to assure us that we are His children so that we may live under Him in His kingdom.

See what love the Father has given us in Christ Jesus, our Lord, our Saviour and our Redeemer. Now we are going to listen to the Children tell us about the

coming of Jesus Christ, as it is written in the four Gospels, and presented as one complete story. May God bless your Christmas! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 9:6-7

<sup>2</sup> Micah 5:2

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:11