

October 3, 2021

## **God Loves Us Because That Is Who God Is**

God loves us because that is who God is. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17)

Do we allow ourselves to forget whose we are? When we do forget we get caught up in the confusion of our times: water shortages, floods and volcanos, anti-Semitism, racism, Covid, climate change, and masks.

Sometimes it feels like I am in a movie or in a TV commercial: “mask on, mask off, mask on, mask off.

On a different note did you see the picture from the Hubble Space Telescope of the solar systems in the middle of our Milky Way galaxy? There are millions of them! Our God is a great God.

We are to be witnesses of Jesus the Christ so that others will see Jesus and therefore see God who loves them.

Do we allow ourselves to forget we claim to be Christians? Do we forget what that claim means? Am I a man after God’s own heart? Are you after God’s own heart? God loves us because that is who God is!

Do your words and actions present Christ to the unsaved and hurting people?

How do you think about other people? Particularly how do you think about folks who are not living like you think they should. Do you ask are they saved? Or do you condemn them?

Well, first we must ask ourselves are we saved. We quickly answer, yes; I am saved. We forget we were saved 2,000 years ago just as the person we judge and condemn was saved. Maybe you are the one who is supposed to share that truth with that other person.

We worry and now we are being encouraged to shop early for Christmas because of supply chain problems. Our stuff is on ships outside our ports.

We are talking about Christmas. We are supposed to bring tidings of great joy.

The Angel told Joseph to call the baby Jesus a common Hebrew name which means 'Yahweh is Salvation'. This baby is the Messiah, Hebrew for the 'Anointed One'. We call him the Christ, Greek for Messiah.

The Angel told Joseph you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us'. (Matthew 1:21-23)

This is the Good News of Great Joy. God loves us. Pass it on.

We must never forget the cross reminds us Jesus is the proof of God's love for us. It shows the vertical reconciliation between God and us and the horizontal reconciliation between you and me and between us and others.

In the midst of all that is going on God challenges us. God gives us power to rightly respond if we choose to do so.

Some years ago there was a pornography convention in Las Vegas. There were people outside across the street with signs saying those involved were sinners, going to hell, and they were yelling condemnation. They were very visible and loud; and very Christian.

One year a Christian group called the XXX Church rented a booth inside the convention hall. They were not sure how they would be treated but felt someone had to tell those involved in pornography that God loved them and Jesus was the proof. They brought with them hundreds of Bibles with no idea of what they would do with them or how their presence would be received.

Not everyone at that convention picked up a Bible. But all the Bibles were picked up by individuals involved in the pornography industry. Many people stopped at the booth and after listening to the Christians explaining why they were there those individuals said it was the first time they heard there was a way out of that life style and that they were loved by God.

Which side of the street would you have been on? Which side would you be on today?

We forget whose we are. Proudly we say we are Christians and then whine claiming to be victims.

I am a Christian loved by God since before I was born – that is not a description of a victim! You are a Christian loved by God since before you were born. You are not a victim!

Today it is what about vaccinations? Are we looking for a religious reason to not get vaccinated or a Christian reason? We must be careful because religious and Christian often describe different things.

A church in Las Vegas has prepared a religious excuse letter a person can download and submit asking for an exemption from getting vaccinated. Would you sacrifice your Christian witness for a downloaded religious letter used by many people: both religious and not religious.

You see, we must never forget Christianity is not a religion. I'll repeat that. Christianity is not a religion. Christianity is a faith. A religion requires us to do something to achieve what we call salvation or eternal life. Christianity is a faith based on the accomplished work of Christ because God loves us.

Jesus says he is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by him: not by meeting any criteria. (John 14:6)

Does the Lord tell us what to say or believe or do we listen to TV and radio talking heads?

Jesus is the way the truth and life. Jesus is who we should listen to. He is God. He and the Father are one. (John 1:1)

You will be Jesus' witnesses. When you call yourself a Christian no part of your life or your words are outside of that description. They are all part of your witness of whose you are.

The Bible is sufficient to teach us how to relate to other people. Today it seems we hunt and cherry pick through the Old Testament and the Epistles jumping over the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We need to remember Gospel means Good News. The words of Jesus are in the Gospels and they are true, they tell us the way and they are life giving.

The Old Testament gives us warnings and describes the results if we fail to heed the warnings.

The Epistles, the letters to the churches and individuals, tell us how we as Christians are to live. Christians have the Holy Spirit for power and conscience. Non-believers cannot live by the Epistles. They do not have the Holy Spirit to provide warnings or the strength to live as described in the Epistles.

The Epistles are how we should live not how expect unbelievers to live.

In the Old Testament God shows the reality and unrelenting destruction of sin and the need for a Savior.

People say 'I must see it to believe it. The Christian says 'I believe therefore I see'. It is the Holy Spirit that opens us to God's truth.

Some look around today and say we are approaching the end times which will come and end all this we are experiencing. Jesus says no, we are not seeing correctly. He says "the good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come."  
(Matthew 24:14)

In the meantime he says "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12)

When we finger point Satan divides us. And we act as if this division is news to us

We think we need to condemn but John 3:17 says we all are already condemned.

What we are to do is to lift up Jesus and He will draw people to himself.  
(John 12:32)

How great is our God! What a blessing to sing that song and know God loves us. Will others know we are Christians by our love?

While we were yet sinners God first loved us. We did not have to change before God loved us.

Do you remember Jesus prayer for us? He was with the Disciples the night he was betrayed. 'I ask not only on behalf of these, the Disciples, but also on behalf of

those who will believe in me through their word (that is us), that they may all be one. He continued, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, (why) so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.’

(John 17:20-23)

It is a fearful thing to fall in to the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31)

Do you remember how it was before you believed? Do you think about the future for those not born again? We should be profoundly moved and deeply concerned about how we are representing God who loves us and his Son our Lord.

Jesus says ‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?” Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.”

(Matthew 7:21-23)

At your funeral what do you think others will say about you. What would you like them to say?

Jesus leaves us peace and the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. (John 14:22, 18)

Do you pass it on?

“It only takes a spark to get a fire going. And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing; that’s how it is with God’s Love, once you’ve experienced it, you want to spread the love to everyone. You want to pass it on.”

“I’ll shout it from the mountain top – PRAISE GOD! I want the world to know the Lord of love has come to me. I want to pass it on.” (Pass It on Lyrics – Kurt Kaiser)

Is this your song? If so, what do you pass on?

What do others see in us? Do they see Jesus and therefore see God?

It seems Christianity is becoming a minority voice in America so we need to stay focused on what is important. Christianity in the U.S. appears to be in chaos. Are we allowing ourselves to be divided? Is there discord? Are we playing into Satan's plan? God abhors division.

You see, 'there are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family.' (Proverbs 6:15-19)

Jesus stressed unity: love for each other. Remember "they will know we are Christians by our love".

I was saved 2,000 years ago not by what I do now or how I live. You were saved 2,000 years ago not by how you are living or what you are doing but because God loves you. Do we pass on this great message of hope?

Jesus said he and the Father are one. We see God each time we see Jesus. If we can present Jesus so other people grasp who he is they will see God for the first time in their life.

The World says if I see then I will believe but Christ says believe and you will see. This is the difference between a Christian and a non-believer.

Out of our mouth come words from our heart. What we say and how we say it are important. How will they know unless they hear and how will they hear unless someone tells them and who will that someone be? (Romans 10:14)

If you call yourself by the name of Jesus, saying I am a Christian then you are the one God has called to tell them. What are you telling them? Do you tell them how to live or that God loves them and Jesus is the living proof of that. Believe, be just and be merciful.

Do Christians seem angry. Are we angry to overcome our fear, frustration and hurt? Are we an angry Christian because God is not doing what we think he should do or God is not treating us as we think we should be treated? Or is guilt coming in because we used to think we were the "justified and righteous" ones. Humbly ask God to forgive us for the sins committed by a 'Christian' nation.

I think God is warning us to come back to focus on his son Jesus and his love for all people. We look back at the Tulsa massacre, Indian boarding schools, and Jim Crow and say that was then and now is now. BUT should we look around today because what we are ignoring, justifying, or overlooking today is what our children and grandchildren will ask us about; why did we let it happen?

We need to understand that past behavior predicts future behavior unless we learn from it and therefore change the future outcome. A week or so ago the spiritual leader of the largest Christian church in the world said history teaches us that when Christianity becomes political violence results. (Pope Francis)

Do you find yourself saying there ought to be a law? Well there already is a law. It is the law of sin and death. And we have the one and only answer to that law. God loves you.

What are we learning? The Epistles are how believers are supposed to live to be effective witness of God's love. The letters to the churches and individuals are impossible for the non-believer to live up to (even if there is a law).

“When the Spirit of truth has come he will guide us into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” (John 16:13)

Then Jesus said to those who believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’ (John 8:32-31)

Jesus even defines eternal life. “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

Remember how Jesus prayed for us. ‘As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

What are we passing on? Jesus prayed we would be successful!

“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:12-14)

This morning the Lord may be speaking to you. We need to listen. If what we have talked about does not seem real to you ask God who loves you to make it real.

**PRAYER:** Lord give us your heart for others. Encourage us to pass it on. You love us because that is who you are. Let us be light in someone else's darkness hope in someone else's despair. We ask in Jesus name.