

Wesley United Methodist Church

December 25, 2016

“Christmas Is Love.”

Luke 2:1-20, John 1:1-18

Years ago the cartoon strip “Family Circus” carried a cartoon that illustrates what happens so often at Christmas. It showed a little girl holding her baby brother in her lap and telling him the story of Christmas.

Here is how her account read: “Jesus was born just in time for Christmas, up at the North Pole, surrounded by tiny reindeer and the Virgin Mary.

Then Santa Claus showed up with lots of toys and stuff and some swaddling clothes.

The three Wise Men and elves all sang carols while the Little Drummer Boy and Scrooge helped Joseph trim the tree. In the meantime, Frosty the Snowman saw this star...”

It’s easy to see how she could be confused.

So many secular stories and customs surround the celebration of Christ’s birth, that we could easily lose track of the real meaning of this wonderful season.

Every December, schools across the nation make preparations to celebrate “Winter Festivals – a pale attempt to celebrate Christmas without any mention of God or Jesus Christ.

We understand, but it is frustrating not to be able to let people know that the baby is the reason for the celebration.

A family and their young son attended a memorable Winter Festival at their school.

Their son, Nicholas, was in Kindergarten.

The little ones were going to perform the songs about snow and Santa and candy canes.

Nicholas’ group began with the song “Christmas Love.”

As they sang, each child held up a letter to spell out the title of the song.

But a little girl in the middle of the front row got confused and held her letter upside down.

She had the “M” in Christmas.

Warm sighs and smiles flowed through the audience as they read the children’s message.

Instead of “Christmas Love,” the upside down “M” changed the message to “Christ Was Love.”

And it’s true. This is the message of Christmas.

We need to state it in the present tense, though. Christ is Love.

And we know this is what Christmas is all about.

A story of a grandfather who is trying to comfort his little grandson, Jeffy.

Jeffy has done something wrong; his punishment is a time out in the play pen.

But Jeffy cries and begs his granddad to get him out.

Grandfather knows that Jeffy’s punishment is just, but his love for the boy won’t allow him to watch the child suffer.

So, grandfather chooses to be both just and loving – he climbs in the play pen with Jeffy.

In this way, he shares his grandson’s punishment and at the same time offers him comfort.

Christmas is about love. From the very beginning this has been so.

God saw his children’s plight and God crawled into the playpen of our existence. To have the spirit of Christmas is to have the spirit of love.

Every once and a while we hear about someone who has been touched by the spirit of Christmas love and it renews our hope.

Once there was an old man in a small town.

He was an ill-tempered recluse who avoids his neighbors at all costs.

Most people give up on these folks, leaving them to rot in their self-imposed loneliness.

But every once in a while, love steps in and turns the situation upside down.

One thanksgiving season, the youth from a small West Virginia town decided to do a good deed for this cranky, unfriendly old man.

The old man had been injured in a farming accident.

He was facing a harsh winter with a dwindling supply of firewood.

These teens decided to cut enough firewood to fill the man’s wood bins for the winter.

They gathered in the woods that night, their pick-up trucks brimming over with firewood.

Just as they were placing the last few logs in the wood bins, the old man suddenly jerked open his front door, his shotgun aimed into the night.

“Don’t shoot,” the youth leader said. “We just came to help you with your wood.” The old man looked at his overflowing wood bins and growled, “I don’t need any help. Get out of here.”

Later, the teens discussed their act-of-kindness-gone-wrong with the youth leader. Why would God ask them to do good works for those who don’t appreciate them?

A few weeks later at the Christmas Eve service, the whole congregation noticed when the cranky old man walked in the door.

During the prayer time, the pastor asked if anyone has some thanksgiving to share. The old man stood and began, “A little over a month ago, I ran a group of kids off my property...”

His voice faded, as his eyes overflowed with tears.

The love of Jesus had broken through the old man’s defenses.

This is what Christmas is all about—love.

We all know that’s true. From the heart of the Creator straight into our lives.

And it’s all wrapped up in a tiny babe surrounded by his mother, Mary and his father, Joseph, and cattle and sheep and shepherds, and later, wise men and above them lingers a star.

Angels sing in the heavens and for one glorious night, we see a glimpse of why this world was created.

It was created for love. We live in a God-invaded world.

Because we could not go to him, he came to us.

And because God came to us, everything is forever changed.

That’s why we are here this morning. That is the great truth we celebrate.

Christ is love.

Love of the Creator for his creation. Love of the Father for his children.

As we turn to our homes this today may the love of Christmas go with us.

