

Title: Is Christmas Really Over?

Object: Bag of trash filled with wrapping paper and boxes

S Scripture: [“To all who did receive him \(Jesus\), who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”](#) (John 1:12-13_{ESV})

Today we are a couple of weeks into a new year. It has only been a few weeks since we were celebrating, opening gifts, and eating a huge Christmas dinner. What is left of the Christmas celebration? A trash bag full of used wrapping paper and empty boxes. The Christmas tree and all the decorations have been taken down and stored in the attic for another year. Christmas is over and our lives have returned to normal. It is back to work for the adults and back to school for the children. Yes, Christmas is over -- at least for another year.

Wait! Is it really over? Is that all there is to Christmas? Is it just a time for parties, giving gifts to friends and family, and a brief period of "Peace on earth, good will toward men?" Surely there is more to Christmas than that.

Our Bible reading today reveals the true meaning of Christmas. The Bible says that, [“To all who did receive him \(Jesus\), who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”](#) Jesus came, full of unending love, and we have seen His glory. We have seen the glory of God's only begotten Son.

What did you get for Christmas? No doubt you received some toys and clothes, but the most important gift any of us received was Jesus who came to earth as a gift from God. To those who receive Him and believe in His name, He gave the

right to become the children of God.

Jesus came to the world, but many did not recognize Him and believe in Him. For those who do not know the Savior, Christmas is over. But for those of us who received the gift of the Father, Christmas goes on all year long.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your love and for the gift of Your Son, for it is through that gift that we also become Your children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

-S- Love – The Standard

Let me begin by reading what is commonly referred to as the “Ten Commandments” found in Exodus.

1³“You shall have no other gods before Me. (Exodus 20:3)

2⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol...

3⁷“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain...

4⁸“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

5¹²“Honor your father and your mother...

6¹³“You shall not murder.

7¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

8¹⁵“You shall not steal.

9¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness ...

10¹⁷“You shall not covet... your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Why should we obey these? We have no reason to accept these “Commandments” or obey them – unless we believe that verse two, the verse preceding these “Ten Commandments” is true. “I am the LORD your God.” We live in a society where the majority of people do not believe that verse two is true. Even though America was strongly influenced by the Bible and Christians which resulted in the “Ten Commandments” giving the foundation to our laws and moral standards we have seen a steady eroding of these standards because most people and especially those in control of our government and our laws do not believe in or honor God. Is it any wonder that our society has such a lowly opinion of Christ as they observe the behavior of those who call themselves “Christian”, but are not.

The Bible warns us of those who claim to be Christian, but they are not. **“But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe...”** (John 6:64) Do most people in America who label themselves “Christian” uphold the standards of Christ from whom they derive their name? I will let you answer that question.

Why should we obey the “Ten Commandments”? We should obey them if we believe verse two, **“I am the LORD your God”** and we love God. Love of God is the standard for believers. We believe that Jesus is the Christ or God the Son. The mark of a true follower of God, the one God, the triune God is what proceeds out of one’s heart – a heart that have been transformed by the redeeming grace of God, **“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”** (2 Corinthians 5:17) This inner transformation results in a changed life, a heart of flesh with a love for God first and foremost. We can observe a truly changed life in Christ by a believer’s external behavior – behavior that includes both attitudes and actions. Galatians gives a list of some of these attitudes and behaviors, **“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”** (Galatians 5:22-23) Love tops this list because it is foundational to all the rest. The reason there is no law concerning these behaviors is because you cannot legislate love, morality or behavior or force someone to love what he hates. The Apostle Paul wrote, **“You were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”** (Ephesians 2:1-3) **“Even as the rest”** means unbelievers and by their very

nature they hate God and all that is of God. Consistent obedience to the scriptures and to the God who gave them to us is a visible demonstration of ones true love for Christ.

Love – Christ’s Expression (v.31-33)

This brings us to our study passage this morning. Please open your Bibles to John 13 verse 31, “Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. ³³Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’” John makes it clear that Jesus did not want to talk about His glorification until Judas had left, “Therefore when he had gone out.” Now that Judas had left everything was in place for Jesus’ final sacrifice and victory. Jesus tells the remaining eleven, “Now is the Son of Man glorified... and God the Father “will glorify Him immediately.” The words “Now” and “immediately” give me the feeling as if time is almost standing still as Jesus prepares the eleven for what is now going to happen. Jesus began laying the foundation for what was now to happen throughout His time with the disciples. Back in chapter ten Jesus told them, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (John 10:11) Love’s highest expression is self-sacrifice. Jesus saw His death through the lens of His self-sacrifice and His glorification and all that meant for mankind and God’s chosen throughout history. His crucifixion would be His greatest humiliation, Jesus “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8) But His crucifixion and resurrection is what causes Jesus to be glorified and loved, ⁹“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and

bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.” The name of Jesus Christ is above any great person’s name in all of history, for people are mortal and Jesus is the immortal God. Whether in this life or the life to come ¹⁰“at the name of JESUS EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” Everyone, as is found in the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16, will know that there is a God and Jesus is that God and at the time a person enters heaven or hell “EVERY KNEE WILL BOW ¹¹and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11) The enemies of Christ thought at the Cross Jesus would be defeated, but through the Cross Jesus brought salvation to sinners that God calls to worship and glorify Christ. How could Satan be foolish enough to think the death of Jesus would defeat God? After all, does not Satan know the Scriptures? I see it this way, there have been intellectually brilliant people since the time of Christ who were not limited to the Old Testament as Satan was and yet they see the Scriptures as mere stories and do not believe even though there is a mountain of evidence to demonstrate that the Scriptures are indeed true. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18) Those who are perishing, the intellectuals and even Satan lack spiritual wisdom that comes from God because they have not had their souls regenerated and experienced the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus makes clear that through His glorification God the Father will also be glorified - for all that God had inspired and spoken in the Old Testament will be proven true as well. “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.” (John 13:31b-32) Jesus’ death and resurrection demonstrated the power of God. On the other hand Satan and the wicked fallen world tried to destroy God’s

most precious possession and failed. Jesus' death showed God's justice. The penalty of sin and the violation of God's holy Law was paid for once and for all time. Jesus' death displayed God's holiness – His own Son had to become a curse for believers on the Cross. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE.'"

(Galatians 3:13) Jesus' death expressed God's faithfulness. Adam and Eve's sin thrust mankind into generational sin separating mankind from God. God from the time sin entered into the world promised a redeemer. As Matthew wrote, "She (Mary) will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) Jesus' death was the most powerful expression of love in all history. Remember we looked at the "Roman Road of Salvation" and learned that every person who has lived or will live has "sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) We know from the scriptures that the holy God says, "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) How are believers to receive eternal life through Jesus? Paul wrote the answer, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) The Apostle John added to what Paul wrote, "In this is love, **not** that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (appeasement) for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

As Jesus was explaining to the eleven that He would be crucified on the morrow and glorified after 3 days they had a hard time understanding that Jesus had to leave them and they were called to carry on His work after He left – just as we are called to carry on the work of Jesus until His return. Jesus closes His explanation by saying, "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'" (v.33) Not only was Jesus going to leave His disciples, but where He was going they could

not, at this time, follow Him. However, unlike the unbelieving Jews and all who died unbelieving, the disciples would one day see Jesus again. This is our state as believers also; we are to carry on the work of Christ and be His ambassadors to this unsaved world and then we will one day see Jesus again and never be separated.

At the Cross, the love of God through Christ was displayed in a way that showed the world God's truth and love. For believers it seems so very obvious and to the unsaved they just do not see. In one of the most famous verses in Scripture, Jesus says it so clearly, **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."** (John 3:16)

Love – Christ's Example (v.34-35)

The Lord's charge to the eleven to LOVE was **not** entirely new, for Moses wrote down God's command, **"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."** (Deuteronomy 6:5) Jesus wants the disciples to understand and to teach others that after their love of God they need to go further, **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."** (v.34-35) Here we see the standard set by God, the standard of love expanded. As believers we are to live the example given by our Lord and Savior Jesus. Believers face the challenge of living lives loving each other as deeply as Jesus loves us. Is Canyon Bible Church, which is to say our community of Christ, known for our love of each other? We are called to have such a deep love for each other that unbelievers will see the love of Christ in us. This is the challenge Jesus had laid before us. Paul understood this and wrote to the Ephesians their need to strive for this level of love. Paul exhorted, **"walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a**

sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” (Ephesians 5:2) If as believers we truly embrace this we will then see “The fruit of the Spirit in our lives as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23) If we, my beloved brothers and sisters, live a love like this we will have a powerful impact within our community and on the East Mountains and far, far beyond.

There are two practical ways we can begin this very day to show love for one another: First, by being willing to apologize and seek forgiveness from those we have knowing or unknowing wronged and hurt. We hurt each other and those around us when we handle our differences in an unloving manner. We are called to think the very best of each other unless evidence is given to prove different. Last week Pastor Rick spoke about hindrances to our worship of God. Jesus taught that reconciliation with each other is a prerequisite to being able to truly worship God. As the very words of our Lord and Savior are written in the Gospel According to Matthew, “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.” (Matthew 5:23-24) I am admonishing you and I believe the Lord is telling you do not let the sun go down this day if there is conflict, hurt or bitterness between you someone else – seek reconciliation. Failure to hear these words and obey is disobedience and sin. We need to understand that we cannot forgive if we first have not learned to repent and seek forgiveness. The second way to demonstrate love is to grant forgiveness. When we consider the eternal forgiveness we have been granted by God through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and what price God paid for our salvation – salvation of sinners – does this not put into perspective that as followers of Christ we should be eager to forgive

offenses committed against us? When we refuse to forgive it creates a “root of bitterness” within us that eats at our souls like a cancer and we become spiritually sick and I believe often physically sick as well. “Then Peter came and said to Him (Jesus), ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” (Matthew 18:21-22) Jesus also said, “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” (Luke 17:3-4) Here we see the balance of true repentance and forgiveness. A truly repentant person will accept rebuke knowing it comes from love.

We, my brothers and sisters, may be orthodox in our doctrine of Scripture and we may be vigorous in proclaiming the truth of Scripture – but how will we persuade unbelievers unless we truly love each other as Christ has loved us? We as a church are to be a loving church living in a dying culture. Does not Jesus give the right to an unbelieving and unsaved world to judge whether we are truly born-again Christians on the basis of the observable love we have towards each other, other Christians and beyond believers, the love we have for the lost? The Apostle John wrote of himself and those with him, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.” (1

John 3:14)

Love – Christ’s Expanse (v. 36-38)

Jesus’ conversation with Peter illustrates how deep Christ love for sinners is. On one hand Jesus tells Peter His love is eternal and Peter will be with Jesus again. On the other hand it shows the depth of Christ’s love and that we cannot earn His love or our salvation as Jesus’ love is far greater than Peter’s disloyalty and cowardice.

Reading verses 36 to 38, ³⁶“Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, where are You going?’ Jesus answered, ‘Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.’ ³⁷Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.’ ³⁸Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.’”

Peter asked, “Lord, where are You going?” Peter is just the “poster boy” for probably what most, if not all, the disciples were thinking – Peter just spoke his thought out loud. His question shows the disciples still did not understand that Jesus had to leave and they were to carry on the work of the gospel without Him. Jesus offers Peter and the rest hope by saying, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” It was not God’s plan for the disciples to be martyred with Jesus. They were to establish Jesus’ church and be reunited with Him later. Praise God – for we are Jesus’ church.

Peter does not give up, but wants to know why he cannot come with Jesus. Sadly Peter’s intentions were good, but his self-assessed ability to be brave and strong, “I will lay down my life for You” out stripped what he was capable of. The other gospel accounts show just how strong Peter thought he was. “But Peter said to Him, ‘Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.’” (Matthew 26:33) Peter thought he was stronger than all those around him. And in the Gospel According to Mark we read, “But Peter kept saying insistently, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’ And they all were saying the same thing also.” (Mark 14:31) Here we do see that Peter was just voicing what the other disciples were thinking for the end of this verse says, “And they all (*disciples*) were saying the same thing also.” Peter could not hope to be this strong without power given from Christ.

Jesus responds to Peter with an ironic question, “Will you (*Peter*) lay down your life for Me?” It was Jesus who would lay down His life for Peter and every saint called by God. Jesus makes clear Peter’s good intentions are not enough saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.” Good intention voiced in a secure room among friends and after a good meal are less fulfilling than what happens in a dark garden with a hostile mob. Jesus’ final words to Peter must have had a great impact upon him, for Peter does not respond and remains uncharacteristically silent. Do we come before an all-powerful God in boastfulness or in awe and silence to listen and learn?

Closing

Closing thoughts. God the Father made it possible through Jesus, God the Son, for people who were once sinners and separated from God to be made right before God through the loving sacrifice of Christ. Only those who have been regenerated and given the gift of the Holy Spirit can love like Jesus loves. Just look at the world around you and see this truth. My beloved, here is the goal that lies before us, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Peter 1:22-23) Am I, are you, are we, up to this challenge to live with love for each other? I say let us, through the power of the Holy Spirit given to all believers by Christ, strive for this - “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (v.34-35) Do I hear an Amen!