

Presbyterian Church of Henderson
Worship Service 10:00 AM
December 20, 2020 - Fourth Sunday of Advent
The Good News of Emmanuel

Ringing of the Bell

Welcome and Announcements Sarah Hardy

Organ Prelude Kristin Jones, Director of Music

Advent Candle Lighting - LOVE

Krystal Samuels and Kemoni Samuels

***Call to Worship**

My soul magnifies the Lord.

My spirit rejoices in God my savior.

For the Mighty One has done great things,
and holy is God's name.

***Hymn** PH 40 "Joy to the World"

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come:

Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

2 Joy to the world, the Savior reigns:

Let us our songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

3 No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

***Call to Confession**

Let us confess our sins to the One whose mercy endures from generation to generation.

***Prayer of Confession**

Faithful God, we know that you are always there to guide us, yet we often make plans without listening to you and discover that our human agendas can drown out our ability to hear your will for us. We repent of these faults and turn to you in love. Forgive our offenses and pardon our sins, that our lives may magnify your holy name forever. Amen.

***Assurance of Pardon**

Sisters and brothers, by the faith of Christ, your sins are forgiven. Blessed be the God of our salvation, whose mercy is everlasting.

***Passing the Peace**

Please turn and bow to someone out of respect and love— "The peace of Christ be with you"

***Gloria Patri (PH 579)**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Astonishing God, send your Holy Spirit upon us as we await the coming of your Son. Fill us with good things that we may conceive your reign on earth and glorify you according to your Word; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

First Reading Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: 'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.'"

Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'

Special Music Handbell Choir

Second Reading 1 John 4:7-12

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Children's Christmas Nativity

SERMON "Finding LOVE in the Emmanuel"

1 John 4:7-12

INTRO:

- Today, the fourth Sunday in Advent, we continue our series on "The Good News of Emmanuel"
- The fact that Jesus came to earth as the "God with Us" is indeed good news

- Christianity was never meant to be a religious system with a set of esoteric rules, but God made the effort to connect with humanity through His Son Jesus the Emmanuel.
- Throughout the season of advent, we have been focusing upon the traditional symbols of the advent wreath: hope, peace, joy, and this week the fourth candle is love.
- EX: As I grew up in Southern CA, we had a small backyard pool that became my responsibility to maintain. After it would rain, the pool would be overflowing by several inches, and I had to create a siphon to take some of the water out. I would fill up a hose in the pool and plug it at both ends, throw one end over the fence to the street below, and tie the upper end to the diving board so that hose would be no deeper than the amount of fat that I wanted to drain. I would unplug the upper end, and run down to the street and unplug the lower end of the hose. A siphon would be created and the water would flow from the upper pool into the street below.
- As I think about how a siphon works with one end of a hose in a swimming pool, and by gravity, water flows down the hose into the lower end, it is a perfect word picture of the flowing nature of God's love.
- God's love is like a siphon.
- God's love comes from above, and comes to us freely flowing in abundance....and you know what? It never runs dry.
- The text today affirms that God is love...and because God is love...He desires to bring his love from His being to humanity in a practical and ingenious way.....through the lives of you and me.
- In God's divine plan to demonstrate His nature of LOVE, we are to be the conduits of God's LOVE so that His love flows through our lives and into a world filled with hate, suspicion, and despair.
- We are the siphon hoses for humanity!
- This is God's redemptive plan to help people find the love of the Emmanuel
- How does that happen?
- Today's text reveals three suggestions on how to be the messengers of God's Love so that people can find the love of Emmanuel through you.

1. KNOW and EXPERIENCE--God is the Source of Love (vv. 7-8)

*7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for **God is love.***

- The last three words in verse 8 describes the nature of God that is far different than any other religious system, "God is Love"
- John is not identifying a quality which God possesses, but he is making a statement about the essence of God's being.
- We love because God is the source of love.
- What is interesting, John as he writes this letter the word "love" or some form of it occurs 27 times in these 15 verses.
- This is the ultimate expression of what John is communicating in his letter.
- Everything before leads up to his discussion of love and everything after to the end of the letter is about love.
- Love is what is on John's mind.
- Love is not a human achievement.

- It is of divine origin, and it is a gift from God.
- All throughout the OT God is portrayed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and throughout the Psalms, that God zealously loves his people.
- This is in direct contrast to the known Stoic philosopher Seneca who was very popular among many first century intellectuals.
- Seneca's God admits life is tough.
- Seneca offers a cold depiction of a God who is totally indifferent to whether people live or die.
- He suggests suffering humans (to respond to the hardship of life) with scornful unimportance and to die at their own hand.
- You can easily see the direct contrast to God who loves us, knows us personally, and gives us life.
- NT Wright: "The Christian faith grows directly out of, and must directly express, the belief that in Jesus the Messiah the one true God has revealed himself to be — love incarnate."
- What John seems to be saying here is that genuine love cannot be exhibited unless it reflects God's love.
- Two criteria (2nd part of verse 7)

everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

- Before we can love others, we need to know and experience God's love ourselves.
- Do you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God loves you?
 - **God is good to you**
Psa. 145:9 The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.
 - **God never lets you out of his sight**
Psa. 139:3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
 - **God cares about the details in your life**
Matt. 10:30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
 - **God provides for you**
1Tim. 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.
 - **God allows you to enjoy good things**
Jer. 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
 - **God forgives you**
Psa. 86:5 You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.
 - **God is lovingly patient with you**
Psa. 145:8 The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.
- Before we can effectively love others, we need to experience God's love
- *Eph. 3:17 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*
- "God is love"

- John is carefully defining the character of God and what it means to live in relation to Him
- One author writes, "To genuinely contemplate the true identity of God is to be like Him. A true apprehension of the personhood of God should lead us to change how we live and behave."

2. EMBRACE and BELIEVE--Jesus is the Example of Love (vv. 9-10)

*9 God's love was **revealed** among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.*

- The ultimate act of God's self-revelation of His character of love is embodied in the person and activity of Jesus Christ.
- "Revealed" – the word refers to the disclosure of things formally hidden.
- What this means is that never before in the history of humanity has God ever demonstrated such revelation of His character until he sent His son, Emmanuel.
- This is why Christmas is so important!!!
- When Jesus was born in the manger, Christ is the unveiling of God's heart in Jesus Christ!
- Where Jesus the Emmanuel is displayed vulnerably before the whole world every Christmas and every day of our lives
- Why does God do this? "That we might live through him"
- Q: What is this "living" that God offers through his son, Jesus Christ?
- *1John 5:10 Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*
- Because of the sin in our lives, without Jesus we are condemned. We do not deserve to live.
- Life only comes from the forgiveness of sins that Jesus provides.
- When we place our faith in Jesus Christ and ask Jesus to come and be Lord of your life, you will live through him (read v. 10)

10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

- Q: Have you ever truly embraced and believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
- May today be the day you can experience the fullness of God's love through the Emmanuel.

3. RECEIVE and GIVE--God is Requiring us to Love (vv. 11-12)

*11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also **ought** to love one another.*

- "ought" is not a casual suggestion, but an obligation.
- It carries the idea that Christians MUST love one another.
- We do this because of all that God has done for us because of His love.
- Our obligation to love one another is the outcome of God's love, forgiveness, and generosity toward us.
- What does this love for others look like?
- *1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

- Loving others is the complete laying down of our own will and agendas and complete yield to God's agenda for our lives so that we can love others in the same way.
- When that happens, it manifests itself in personal sacrifice, servanthood, all the characteristics of the life of Christ.
- Q: When people see you, do they see the life of Christ?
 - Do they see the sacrificial love of God?
 - Do you embody sacrificial love so that those who see you will see the love of Jesus Christ?

12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

- John statement "no one has ever seen God" brings us back to the beginning of John's gospel where he writes the exact same words in John 1:18, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known."
- When Jesus came as the Emmanuel, the Christ child was the visible manifestation of the invisible God.
- The text continues to say, that if we are to love one another, the body of Christ will reflect God's expression of love.
- We become the hands and feet of Christ.
- *John 13:35* *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*
- Love is the hallmark, the family characteristic of who we are as a church.
- People should be able to see Christ's love in our interaction with one another.
- Christ's physical presence is no longer with us in this world, but if people want to see Jesus, they should be able to meet him in the churches.

CLOSE: "Love Unashamed" Alan Ambrose

Last summer I took my family to the beach. My 5 year old son and I walked the shore line looking for shells and stones. When we reached the jetty, we turned and began our walk back to our blanket. This time we walked through the deeper sand and in between blankets and people.

As we walked my son lagged about five feet behind talking all the way. We were walking through a heavily populated area, when my boy began yelling over and over "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy. Getting louder each time. I stopped and turned to respond. Every one in that area seemed to stop to listen. I replied, Yes Son! My son replied, "I love you."

That day on a hot beach, God gave me a great picture of what I should be doing with my life. In the midst of a crowded world God wants me to proclaim my love for him openly and without hesitation. If I really love God, I won't be ashamed to openly tell the world, just as my son was not ashamed to tell those around him that he loved me.

- 1. KNOW and EXPERIENCE--God is the Source of Love**
- 2. EMBRACE and BELIEVE--Jesus is the Example of Love**
- 3. RECEIVE and GIVE--God is Requiring us to Love**

Offering

Joining Mary's joyful song, our souls proclaim the greatness of the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior. With humble and grateful hearts, let us bring our offerings to God.

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessing flow. Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise him above the heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

***Prayer of Dedication**

Holy God, your love is magnified in the gift of your Son, whom you so freely share with us. Bless these gifts that we offer to lift up the lowly and fill the hungry in your coming reign of justice and peace; in Christ's name. Amen.

***Affirmation of Faith** (Apostle's Creed)

Minister:

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what do you believe?

All:

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Let us join our voices with Mary, who celebrates God's greatness and sings of God's blessing for all who are poor and oppressed.

Eternal God, we pray for the world, that our warring ways may be overturned, even now, through the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ; for nothing is impossible with you.

We pray for the mission of your church, that we may proclaim the good news of the age as we rejoice in the gift of our Savior.

We pray for all who suffer, that we may feed the hungry and lift up the lowly through the power of your holy and life-giving Spirit.

We pray for your creation, that we may safeguard its well-being from generation to generation to your honor and glory.

We remember before you those who have died and pray for those who will die today, that they may rest with you eternally in your kingdom where there is no end.

Through Christ, with Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we magnify you, almighty God, forever and ever, and now, with confidence as children of God, let us pray:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

*Hymn PH 56 "The First Nowell" (vs. 1,2,3,5,6)

1 The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they
lay;
In fields where they lay akeeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

2 They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.
[Refrain]

3 And by the light of that same star,

Three wise men came from country far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.
[Refrain]

5 Then entered in those wise men three,
Full reverently upon the knee,
And offered there, in His presence,
Their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.
[Refrain]

6 Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord;
That hath made Heaven and earth of naught,
And with His blood our life hath bought.
[Refrain]

*Benediction

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace both now and evermore.

*Organ Postlude (please be seated for the postlude)