

## The Faith, Hope and Love of Christmas

*Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy, which shall be for all people, for today in the city of David there has been born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10).*

*And now abide faith, hope and love, these three, but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).*

The birth of Jesus Christ brought the good news the world had been waiting for. We needed a Savior. God had promised He would come. With His coming, the world would never be the same. Now reconciliation with God was possible. Through faith in Him, our sins could be forgiven. His coming brought hope of everlasting life with God. And most importantly, His birth, His sinless life, His sacrificial death and His resurrection from the dead spoke volumes about the love of God.

The good news (the gospel) announced to the shepherds on the first Christmas has been celebrated throughout the centuries. Mary was chosen by God to bring the Son of God to the world. An angel told Joseph *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit*. Jesus promised His disciples that although He was leaving, He would still be with them because His Father would send them the Holy Spirit to help them, teach them and help them remember the things He had said. The Holy Spirit brought gifts with Him to enable Christ's disciples to carry on His work. There would be specific, individual gifts but the abiding gifts of faith, hope and love would be given to all believers.

### **Faith**

Faith is the revelation of the good news.

Through faith we see God for who He really is. His nature is revealed to us through faith. Faith is not blind. It allows us to see the miracles that God has wrought through His Son. As C.S. Lewis says, "The central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. They say that God became Man. Every other miracle prepares the way for this, or results from this."

When you believe in the miracle of the Incarnation and invite the Christ who chose to be born in a manger to take residence in the manger of your heart, you experience the greatest miracle of all - forgiveness of your sins, reconciliation with God and a place in His forever family.

In faith, the servants of God in the Old Testament looked forward to this miracle and the revelation of God's presence. Disciples in the New Testament and followers of Christ ever since that time have all come to God through abiding faith.

All we need to know about God we see in Jesus. Through faith in Him, we see the nature of God revealed.

*For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ (Colossians 2:9).*

### **Hope**

Hope is the fulfillment of the good news. We hope because of God and God does not disappoint.

God's word in the Old Testament prophesied of God's salvation through the coming Messiah. His word in the New Testament recorded that salvation obtained through the miraculous birth, sinless life, sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the men of old believed God would deliver what He promised, men today look back upon that accomplished fact in history. The Son of God gives all believers *the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27).

Like Abraham, our faith is in a God who fulfills His promises. Our hope is not a "hope so," but "I know He will." *Now we want each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the final realization of your hope, so that you won't become lazy but will be imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance.... We have this hope as an anchor for our lives, safe and secure* (Hebrews 6:11-12, 19). Peter calls our hope a *living hope* (1 Peter 1:3).

Paul said of Abraham: *He did not waver in unbelief at God's promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, because he was fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness. Now it was credited to him was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification* (Romans 4:20-25).

## **Love**

The greatest of these is love. Love is the good news.

God does not need faith. Neither does He need hope. We do. He provides what we need so that we might see the love He has for us. We love Him only because He first loved us.

There is no other religion that speaks of a God who loves His people so much that He chose to send His only Son to die on their behalf in order to have a relationship with them.

God is love. It was love that brought Jesus to earth. It was love that enabled Him to endure temptations and shame so that He could be our perfect substitute. It was love that led Him to the cross. It was love that resurrected Him from the dead.

He loved us and wants us to love others the same way - sacrificially. *As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love. I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you* (John 15:9-14).

The King of kings chose to be born in a stable because of His love for us. There is no greater love. Love is the gospel story.

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Scripture references are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible