

The most famous part of most romantic movies is the Grand Romantic Gesture. The moment where, usually the man, does something incredible to demonstrate and proclaim his love for the woman. There could be a dramatic run to try and catch her at the airport before her flight takes off. He might give a big speech in front of a crowd of onlookers and strangers. Or he might sing a song, dance, or hold up a boombox.

We might not all like gestures like that. Perhaps you prefer something much less public. Or maybe you hate romantic movies in general. But whether you are married, divorced, celibate, or a widow all of us long for love. And I don't mean romantic love. No our desire to be loved is much deeper than romance. Because we were created with the need to be known and loved. When God made Adam he said it is not good that man is alone. And he didn't mean that it wasn't good that Adam did not have a woman in his life. God meant that we as human beings are created to be in a community, ideally, that knows us and loves us.

And all of us are created with the need and the desire for someone to love us. For someone to really know who we are. Not just the public things or us at our best. But to know what we're like when we get angry. For someone to know the things about us that are embarrassing. We long for someone to see the things about us that we think make us undeserving of love. And we hope that someone would see those and yet love us anyway. They would love us for who we are, sins and all.

Now I think that God must love grand gestures too. And we put grand gestures in our movies and romantic stories not because we or Hollywood have invented them, but because they echo God's love for us. Tomorrow is Christmas morning. We have been counting down lighting our candles and looking forward to the day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. And I want to present to you this morning the idea that the birth of Jesus is a great gesture of God's love for us. But it is not just an empty gesture. It is not just a symbol or something nice. It is not just a cute story that we tell ourselves and it makes us feel good—the birth of Jesus. God the second person of the trinity putting on flesh and being willing to become a human being for our sake is the demonstration, the revelation, and the incarnation of love.

So this morning we are going to talk about the love of Jesus. And I want us to talk about three things that Jesus does because He loves us. Turns me in your bibles to Isaiah 43 and we will read the first seven verses.

Point 1: Because God loves us, He is with us (v. 1-2).

This might seem like a strange passage to read on Christmas. But I chose this section because it is all about the love that God has for us. And because God loves us He comes to be with us. He demonstrates His love for us by showing up and being present. This is one of the reasons He is called Emmanuel, God with us.

Because the beauty of the incarnation is that Jesus, God comes and takes on human flesh to be truly with us. He doesn't just condescend to us and appear like a spirit in our presence. He really becomes one of us. He is willing to be born as a baby. He willingly accepts the limitations of a human body and a human mind. Out of love.

"But now thus says the LORD,"

Any time of prophet says thus says the Lord they are speaking on behalf of God.

It is God's words through their voice

And the God who speaks is the I Am. The eternal incomprehensible glorious loving and omniscient omnipresent God.

**"he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:"**

And it is the God who created us.

This is a call back to the story of creation in Genesis 1.

The idea that God is the one who made everyone and everything.

It is also the idea that God created the particular nation of Israel.

He called Abraham even when he was a no-one and when he had no children and he and his wife were too old to have kids and from them, God made a people.

And He did it not just because Abraham was so awesome but because our God is so loving.

And as God fashioned the nation of Israel God also fashioned you and me. He fashioned us from the womb.

Even before our mothers knew that they were pregnant God knew and He was piecing you together atom by atom, cell by cell, and piece by piece. Lovingly creating you to be exactly as you are.

And is this God who speaks to us.

When we hear God speak we need to remember who He is.

It's not just an abstract God.

Is the creator God who made you with His hands and who loves you.

And so this God is something to say to us.

He says,

**"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine."**

There's the off repeated refrain to fear not.

There are a lot of reasons that we fear. All you have to do is open your phone or look at the news read a newspaper and you will be filled with places telling you stories that incite fear.

But God tells us that we do not have to fear.

And we do not have to fear because God is with us.

We do not have to fear because Christ is born.

God has redeemed us.

This is why Jesus came.

He calls us by name and we are His.

This is the call and the invitation of God to be His follower.

God does not just generically call people and invite them.

God calls us by name.

There's a worship song that I love called you know my name.

It is the reminder that we did not become Christians on accident or unintentionally.

That God cries out your name to come and be His.

Because He loves you.

We do not have to fear because the God who is with us redeemed us

He calls us by name and because we are His.

We are not His property or His puppets we are His beloved sons and daughters.

Verse 2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;"

Because God is with us we do not have to fear.

We do not have to fear even when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

And we do not have to fear when we pass through the waters.

I grew up in Nebraska that means I don't really do water.

Being out on a boat makes me nervous.

My least favorite time of flying a plane is if I'm flying over water.

But water in these days is dangerous.

Water and waves are unpredictable.

But God promises to protect them.

Because God has protected them through the waters.

Their story after Story and scripture of God being with His people and protecting them as they pass through the water.

It began with Noah who even though the whole world was covered in water that killed everyone he and his family passed safe through the water because God was with them.

As a baby in his own small Ark, Moses past safely through the water when Pharaoh tried to kill him and went to safety.

Israel passed through the waters when Pharaoh's Army chased them but God split the Red Sea so that they walked through Dry Land.

The Red Sea killed Pharaoh in his army but it didn't harm a single Israelite because God was with them.

Israel went through the Jordan River in Joshua's day.

As the Ark of the Covenant entered into the water the water stopped so that they could walk again on dry land.

God mentions the waters not just to remind them of the past.

But throughout the book of Isaiah, the flood and waters refer to Assyria.

The Assyrian empire was one of Israel's enemies.

They were an empire of terror.

And Isaiah threatens and warns that the flood of Assyria will wash over Israel.

But even if that day comes.

Even if their worst fears come true, God promises to be with them.

It will not be the end of their story.

But God does not just protect us from the water but from the flame.

**"when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you."**

This is the promise that though the fire comes we will not be burned.

Daniel chapter 3 is the best example of that.

As Shadrach Meshach and Abednego are tossed into the fiery furnace.

The furnace that is so hot it kills the men who threw them in and yet they walk around free because there was one who had a face like the gods who was with them.

And so too we who put our faith in Jesus can pass through the Flames that are coming to remake the heavens and the Earth.
And that fire will burn away the chaff and the weeds and all wickedness.
But for those who have put their faith in Jesus.
For those who God is with the fire will not burn them but it will only refine them.

These verses remind us that God is with us.
The baby in the manger is God physically and literally with Humanity.
He entered into our existence and He entered into our suffering.
He came to pass through His own suffering.
And He came to be with us so that when we pass through the waters and we pass through the fire we no longer have to do it alone.
Now Jesus will go with us too.

Point 2: Because God loves us, He gives Himself up for us (v. 3-4).

This is why Jesus was born.
He came not to give us presents, but to become a ransom for us.

**"For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."**

God is our savior.
He was not just the one who saved Israel from slavery.
He was not just the one who saved them again and again from their enemies.
Jesus was born to become our Savior.

**"I give Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in exchange for you."**

A ransom is when you pay someone in order to set another person free from bondage or a debt.
God is saying that He is willing to pay the ransom in order to save His people.
And He gives the image of exchanging other people in their place.

Now this not literally what has happened.
As if Satan controls Israel and is holding them hostage.
It is not like God and Satan are negotiating the prices of nations and exchanging people.

Instead, I think this points to the fact that God has chosen Israel above other nations.

In Genesis, God chose Abraham, a total nobody, to be the patriarch. This is reminding Israel of the special privilege that they have. That God picked them above more powerful and seemingly more deserving nations. It would be like having the number one pick in the draft and choosing an obviously terrible player. Maybe even choosing someone who had never played the sport.

Why would God do this?

Because of verse 4.

**"Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honored, and I love you,"**

This is one of my favorite verses in not just Isaiah, but the whole Bible. It is for one simple reason.

This is the only place where God explicitly says those three words.

"I love you."

Now it is clear God loves us in all sorts of other Scriptures and stories. But here in the middle of one of the longest and most complicated books of the Bible, God tells us that He loves us.

He loves us because we are precious to Him.

He looks at us with love.

The way that you would look at your first born child or your grandchild.

God looks at you that way.

You don't have to do anything to earn it.

You are precious to Him.

He loves you.

**"I give men in return for you,
peoples in exchange for your life."**

This verse foreshadows something significant.

Because there is one ultimate person who is given to us.

There is one man who is given in exchange for our lives.

That person is Jesus Christ.

He came to give Himself up for us.

Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 **"the Son of Man came not to be served
but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

Jesus was not born as a king who demanded we serve Him.

Jesus was born to die for us.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 **"For there is one God, and there is one mediator
between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a
ransom for all."**

Jesus was born as a man because we needed a mediator between us and God.

We needed someone who was truly human and truly God.

And only Jesus could do this.

1 Peter 1:18 **"You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from
your forefathers, not with perishable things like gold and silver, but
with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish
or spot."**

Jesus spilled His precious blood for us.

He went to the cross to die in our place.

He was the perfect and true sacrifice.

Revelation 5:9 they sing a song of praise to Jesus the Lamb of God

**"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were
slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every
tribe and language and people."**

We praise and remember the birth of Jesus because of what He accomplished.

If He was born and did nothing, then we would not remember Him.
But He was slain for us.

And Jesus ransomed people from every people.

He did not just save Israel and the Jews.

He did not just come to save Americans or people like us.

Jesus died for people from every tribe.

He died for people whose names we would struggle to pronounce.

Jesus died and ransomed people from every nation and people group.

Because God so loved the world.

He gave His only son.

Point 3: Because God loves us, He brings us home (v. 5-7).

Jesus came to take us home with Him.

"Fear not, for I am with you;"

This same beautiful refrain repeats.

We do not have to fear what will come because Jesus is with us.

The future is so uncertain.

I fear what my next dinner will be.

But with God we do not need fear the future. He is our future.

**"I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you."**

This is the promise of bringing Israel back.

Because they are going to be scattered throughout the world.

Their nation conquered and their lands taken.

Their people will be spread out and left alone far from home.

And they will long to go home.

They will long to be restored and brought together again.

The promise of God is to bring them home again.

He will gather all of their children and offspring.

He will bring them back from Babylon in the East.

Verse 6, **"I will say to the north, Give up,
and to the south, Do not withhold;
bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the end of the earth,"**

He mentions every direction.

The East, West, North, and South.

He will bring them home from every direction.

No matter how far away they have traveled.

God did not wait for us to come home to Him.

Instead, Jesus came to get us.

He is like a parent who goes out to find their child who has gone missing.

He came to bring us back into a right relationship with God.

He came to take us back home.

When I graduated high school I went far from home.

I wanted to leave the state and get away from everyone and so I did.

I think it was the right decision it was good for me but there were times when it was really hard.

There were times when I was really homesick.

And there were times that I really wished I could have just went home.

Jesus came to Earth to bring us home.

Not just to take us to the place that we grew up in.

Not to take us back to our hometown.

But Jesus came to take us back to Eden.

You see spiritually, home is where Jesus is.

And maybe like me you wandered away from home.

Maybe you ran away from Jesus.

Maybe you are still running and hiding from Him.

But no matter how far away you have traveled.

Whether you have crossed the oceans,
Whether you've been in so many places you can't even remember how
you got here,

Jesus came to bring you home.
The invitation of the Gospel is the invitation to join God's family.
It is the invitation to be adopted into the kingdom of God.
It is the invitation to find your true home with Jesus.

And everyone is invited into Jesus's home.
Verse 7, **"everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."**

Everyone is invited.
Jesus is calling and He's calling you by name.
And if you will answer then you can come home.

And who is this?
The people that God made.
So people who God created and formed.
And when it says you were made for God's glory.
I don't want you to get the image as if God made you like a dancing toy
who is just here to entertain Him.

God's glory is the greatest and most beautiful thing in the universe.
And you were made to participate in it.
You were made to perform on the greatest stage of all.
You are made to hear Applause and praise that you cannot even begin to
imagine.
That is God's glory.
And being made for it doesn't mean that you are some blind or unwilling
participant.

Instead, it means that we have been invited to come and to share in the glory of Jesus.

And on what basis can you come?

Who gets to participate in the glory of God?

Who was fashioned and made by Him uniquely?

And what basis can you come and gain salvation?

You can gain it on the basis of the child in the manger.

Jesus came down to earth in order to offer salvation to everyone.

He was born in Bethlehem crucified in Jerusalem but He ascended into heaven and His voice goes out into the entire world inviting you to come home.

You are invited.

And you do not have to come having prepared food for Christ's table.

You do not have to come dressed your best.

You don't have to take a shower, make sure that your makeup is done, or clean yourself up in order to come to Jesus.

The beauty of Jesus coming to Earth is that we do not have to earn his love.

We do not have to make sure that we follow the rules so that his love does not go away.

Jesus came to Earth because He loves you.

And if you want to come home.

If you want to experience the love of Jesus.

If you want to be made clean and given eternal life,

Then come to Jesus.

Put your faith in the God who was born of a virgin and came to life for you.

Put your faith in the God who died in order to save you from yourself and from sin and from death.

But your faith in The God Who invites all the wayward wondering prodigal sons and daughters to come home.

And if you come,
If you knock on the door,
If you ask Jesus,
You will find redemption and salvation.

You do not have to know the secret knock.
You do not have to ask with the exactly perfect right words.
Just come in faith and come home.
Jesus is waiting for you.

And if you're unsure how to do that. Or you have questions or things that you're still just trying to sort out but what you believe about Jesus.
Please come and talk to me.
Or talk to Pastor Rob or talk to any of our elders any of our leaders.
I would love to listen to you answer your questions.
And we would love with Jesus to welcome you home.

Because Jesus loves you, He is with us, He gives Himself up for us, and He brings us home.

Have a Merry Christmas. Because you are loved by Jesus. And He came down and was born on earth for you. I hope this Christmas you are able to bask and reflect on the love that Jesus has for you.