

The Rev. Dr. Bill Paul '59
Honorably Retired Pastor

Saturday, December 25, 2010

Morning Psalms 2; 149
First Reading Zechariah 2:10-13
Second Reading 1 John 4:7-16
Gospel John 3:31-36
Evening Psalms 98; 96

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. 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. 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. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. 15 God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16 So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

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The meaning of Christmas is made abundantly clear in this passage.

Christmas is the announcement that in the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem God was giving the world a Savior. To celebrate it is to receive the love and life that the Holy One intends for all. John writes: "*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.*" Christmas is the divine signal that the Eternal One has come to us in human flesh. It is the call to celebrate that the Word became flesh and lived among us. It is the life changing message that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son. It is that, but more.

It is also an invitation to action, to share God's love in words and deeds. "*Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.*" It is to become a bearer of God's love to others. That's the test of genuine faith and the incontrovertible sign that God abides in us.

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Prayer: Dear God, having received your saving gift through the Babe of Bethlehem, now empower us to be instruments of your love. May your grace pass through us and bring healing and peace to a troubled and hurting world. Amen.