

Sermon for Christmas Morning 2019

When I do a talk for a wedding I often use some quotes from children who were asked what love is. Some of you will have heard them, some of you may have heard them more than once - sorry about that! There are a couple of these quotes that always make me well up. One is a little boy who said, "love is what is in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen". Quite profound for a 7 year old. Even more profound is the 4 year old who said, " when someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth." Our identity is so bound up in our name isn't it. Our names are so personal, they are a part of us, who we are. Whether we like our names or not they have been given to us - literally our given names. There is a wonderful verse in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 43 verse 1; But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

God was not just talking to Jacob, this is a prophetic word for all those who put their trust in God.

In John chapter 10 verses 27 and 28 Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me. I will give them eternal life, and they will never perish."

God is love, pure love and He loves us, everyone of us. And He calls each one of us by name. He says our names, yours and mine with love and your name, your self, very being, is safe in His mouth. If we choose to belong to Him, the good shepherd who loves His sheep and always watches over them, if we belong to Him then we will learn to listen for His voice, to hear His voice and we will hear Him call our name.

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God His love, and because He loves us so much, He has given us this incredible gift, of Himself. He actually became one of us, love quite literally came down at Christmas.

When we are given a gift, we either accept it joyfully or we reject it. I am sure we all have a friend or relative who always gives the weirdest or most awful gift. You know, the one where you look at it and can't for the life of you imagine what they were thinking. And actually it feels strange because it feels impersonal somehow - it feels like the person who gave you this thing, doesn't even know you, because if they knew you at all, cared about you in any way, then how could they possibly have thought that you would like this thing. And so you stick the unwanted gift in the back of the cupboard, or give it to the next raffle or just throw it away.

God's gift of love, His gift of Himself in the person of Jesus, His offer for us to have our sins forgiven, to be washed clean and to become one with God, mysteriously bonded with Him by the power of the Holy Spirit, is personal. He knows each one of us, cares for each one of us, His gift of love is for every person here. What you do with that gift is up to you, you can accept it joyfully or ignore it. But can I suggest that you find some time during this day, whether it is in the middle of opening presents, or at some other time, to stop and listen and be aware of the love that is in the room and know that Jesus is calling your name and that your name is safe in His mouth.