

A Christmas Reflection Dec. 24, 2024

Merry Christmas to you and your family!

Tonight, I believe God wants us to remember three things.

First, **God loves you.** Jesus loves you. As a matter of fact, I can repeat that truth a hundred times until it sinks into your heart. *God loves you.* When was the last time someone told you that they truly love you?

Incline your ears and hear your heavenly Father telling you the eternal truth, *“I love you.”* In fact, He’s been telling us all these years multiple times and in many different ways. But tonight, He speaks to you one more time through my mouth that He loves you. I believe someone present tonight here can use that affirmation. God loves you. Never doubt. Never forget. He loves you.

By the way, what is the ultimate expression of true love? If you had to choose one word to sum up what true love is, how would you define it? Without hesitation, I would choose the word, **sacrifice.** My wife loves me. She truly loves me. Because she loves me, she doesn’t hold anything back from me. She would not spare anything for my sake. In the same way, in a million times more way, Jesus sacrificed everything on our behalf, even to the point of death, because He loves us.

Think about that. That’s exactly why God sent us His one and only Son Jesus Christ on Christmas day. To pay the wages of our sin, He sent Jesus to die on the cross. And, God says, *“Do you see now how much I love you? All for you, I did this.”*

The same God wants to start a new relationship with you. Truthfully, some of us tonight have been away from God for so long. Do you hear God saying, *“My child, isn’t it time that you came back to Me?”* *“Let’s start a new relationship. Why don’t you call on Me? Speak to Me, and I will listen to you. Pray to Me, and I will deliver you from your trouble, and you will glorify My name.”* God invites all of us saying, *“Let’s Walk together again.”* He loves us. That’s the first thing God wants us to remember tonight.

The second thing God wants us to remember is this: **He is alive.** *He is not dead. He is still in control.* I would like to read a poem “Christmas Bells” that was written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. This poem was written in 1863. Here’s a little background info about the poem. The year 1863 was a bad year for the Longfellow family. That year, Henry lost his beloved wife due to an accidental fire that was caught in her dress. She got serious burns all over her body and two days later she was gone. On top of that, his eldest son Charles, against his father’s wish, enlisted in the Union Army saying that he was going to lay down his life to this great cause. Charles went away. Several months later, he got severely

wounded in a battle in Virginia. So, the father sadly witnessed his son return home all wounded. That year, to Henry, everything seemed so bleak. The whole nation was still engulfed in the Civil War. Longfellow was in deep despair. That's when he penned the poem, "Christmas Bells."

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;

The Wrong shall fail,

The Right prevail,

With peace on earth, good-will to men."

The poem says it all, doesn't it? In the midst of chaos and trouble, let us declare that God is not dead. He does not sleep. He is alive. He is still in control. The wrong shall fail, the right prevail. God is alive.

The third thing God wants us to remember tonight is this: **God is with us.** Immanuel God is He. With us God. That means, He never leaves us. He never forsakes us. He is always with us to the end of the age. He will see us through. He will carry us through. Thick and thin. Low and high. Valleys and mountain tops.

How many of you remember a Christian poem "Footprints in the Sand"? There are a few versions around. Here's one I like.

[A] young woman who was going through hard times ... began to pray to God for help... [S]uddenly in her mind's eye she saw two sets of footprints side by side on a sandy pathway. Immediately her spirits lifted because she interpreted this to mean that God was with her and was walking beside her. Then the picture changed. She now saw the footprints located in a vast desert wilderness, and instead of two sets of footprints, there was only one. Why was God no longer beside her? As despair settled back over her, she began to cry. Then the inner voice of God softly spoke and said, "I have not left you. The one set of footprints is mine. You see, I am carrying you through the wilderness."
([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footprints_\(poem\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footprints_(poem)))

Like the woman in the story, although Jesus is always with us, sometimes, we feel we are alone. We wonder, *where is God when I needed Him the most?* In such a moment, ask yourself, *do I trust in Him or my own feelings?* Remember our feelings can deceive us, especially when we are in despair. Let us trust in God's promise that He never leaves us or forsakes us, and is always with us, no matter what.

Please take home with you these three truths of God's Word: God loves you, He is alive, and He is with you forever. Merry Christmas to you all. Amen.