

Text: I John 4:14

Title: “Mission: Christmas” Pt.1

INTRODUCTION

We’ve just come off a fantastic weekend of ministry. God moved through the Christmas Store in an amazing way. We touched about 300 families Thursday and Friday night. We shared the gospel face-to-face with more than 200 adults and 50 of them prayed to receive Christ. Many more have expressed interest in knowing more about Christ. Praise the Lord for the hundreds of volunteers who make Christmas Store a great experience.

Well, our beautiful surroundings today signal to us that something special is in the air. Throughout this month we’re celebrating the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. It continues to tonight with the precious voices of our children presenting a program called “A Child is Born.” And next Sunday, the celebration continues with a special concert featuring world-renowned Welsh vocalists Huy Priddy and Elizabeth Woolett. They’ll be with us in both services next Sunday morning and in a special concert with our choir and orchestra next Sunday evening. Invite friends to come with you. On December 19, the Sunday morning before Christmas, we’ll share together in the Lord’s Supper. Then of course, the climax of our Christmas celebration here at Travis is the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 6pm. There’s no more beautiful place in the world than Travis on Christmas Eve.

ILLUSTRATION – In our travels to the Holy Land we have had the opportunity to visit Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity located there. The church is actually a complex of several congregations who have built churches on the site of what tradition says is the location of the manger where Jesus was born. The city of Bethlehem has been fought over for thousands of years. And the Church of the Nativity at one point was fortified against some invaders. Now the main entrance into the church is through a low doorway. An average size person has to bow in order to get past the low threshold. And once you stand in line for hours, you can make your way down a narrow, winding staircase with a low ceiling to the basement of the church where the grotto is located, traditionally believed to be the cave where Jesus was born. The whole experience forces you to physically bow.

And as we come to the Christmas season the same thing should happen for us spiritually as we reflect upon the magnificent thing God did 2000 years ago in sending His Son Jesus. It should cause us to bow in awe.

Now we need to know what happened, but we also need to know why it happened. So we’re going to spend this Christmas season thinking about God’s grand mission in sending His Son Jesus into the world ... “Mission: Christmas.” And we start this morning with one verse in I John. Turn with me in your copy of the Scriptures to I John 4:14. Hopefully you brought your Bible to church with you. If you didn’t, or you don’t own a Bible, you’ll find one in the pew wrack near you. If you don’t own a Bible feel free to take that one and make it your own. I John 4:14 is found on pg. 1209.

1 John 4:14 (NIV) - And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (Pew Bible Pg.1209)

The Christmas story is told to us in this single sentence. So I want to bombard this verse with three questions:

1. **WHAT HAPPENED?**

1 John 4:14a (NIV) – “The Father has sent his Son...” (Pew Bible Pg.1209)

We come to focus on the towering event of the birth of our Savior Jesus. The actual historical events are told to us by the Gospel writers. Let’s just be reminded of that:

READ MATTHEW 1:18-21 (Pew Bible, Pg.955)

READ LUKE 2:4-7. (Pew Bible, Pg.1014)

Now let’s go back to the statement in I John 4:14.

1 John 4:14a (NIV) – “The Father has sent his Son...” (Pew Bible Pg.1209)

Notice the Father/Son relationship. John didn’t say, “God sent Jesus.” That is true, but John had something else in mind. He’s communicating that this was an act of love. This was a Father sending His Son. *The Father sending the Son.*

And it says that the Father SENT his Son. It was no accident. Jesus didn’t just happen to be born into this world. He was sent on a mission. The word “sent” means to have something delegated ... to give a mission to someone. The Father “missioned” the Son ... commissioned His Son to assume the task of saving the world.

We can’t even begin to imagine the love contained in those six simple words ... the Father has sent his Son.

ILLUSTRATION - Imagine that. We have many families here in our church who have loved ones who are off at war in Afghanistan or Iraq. And their families sent off these brave men and women to war hoping that their loved one would come back safe and sound. But do you see that our heavenly Father sent his Son, knowing in advance that all the forces of Satan and sin would be mobilized against him: that he would be despised above all men; that he would be tortured and crucified; that he would die! And yet in love beyond our imagination, “The Father has sent his Son!”

God’s motivation in doing this was love. We know that by reading a few verses earlier.

1 John 4:9-10 (NIV) - This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (Pew Bible, Pg.1209)

This whole business of God coming to our rescue started with God. The love is seen not in that we searched for God, but that God came looking for us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

And love sacrifices. God sent His Son, His one and only Son, as an atoning sacrifice. Sending meant suffering and sacrifice. Now that leads me to the next question we need to ask about this verse:

2. WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

1 John 4:14 (NIV) – “The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.” (Pew Bible, Pg.1209)

Jesus came not just as a good example, a reliable guide, a wise teacher or a compassionate hero. No, Jesus came “to be the Savior...”

Note: It was common in biblical times for this title “savior” to be given to Roman emperors or generals. For example, when an emperor or his general went into a region and conquered an enemy the prefix Savior would be attached to his name, for example, Savior Titus.

It may have been a scandalous thing for John to say that Jesus Christ, was God’s Son, and the Savior, the deliverer of the whole world.

Now you must let that soak in for a minute, because we often hurry past this, but it’s crucial. Jesus Christ is the Savior *of the world*.

The word for “world” here is *kosmos*. Perhaps you heard that English word ... cosmos, cosmopolitan. It means the people in the world and the way these people in the world organize themselves in life.

And basically people have organized their lives without God in the picture. That’s what sin is. And that’s why the people of the world and the nations of the world need a Savior.

John 3:16-17 (NIV) - “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

The Father didn’t just send His Son to be the Savior of the US. He sent His Son to be the Savior of the entire world. Global missions was in the heart of God from the beginning.

The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world!

QUOTE: "We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God." - John Stott

That brings us to the next question:

3. WHAT IS MY PART?

Well, our part is the same as John's part in all this. He says...

1 John 4:14 (NIV) - And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (Pew Bible, Pg.1209)

What a great thing to happen for us this, and every, Christmas ... to see and to testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

- **THINK ABOUT IT.** See it ... get it ... really give yourself to consider the awesome reality of God becoming a man for the purpose of saving people. Let this grand story overwhelm you and cause you to fall to your knees in worship.
- **TALK ABOUT IT.** Testify ... the word for "testify" is the word that is often translated "witness." It's the word from which we get our word "martyr." It is someone who has become so convinced of something, so consumed with something, that they are ready and willing to make a sacrifice in order to tell about it.

Testify is a present tense verb indicating continuous, ongoing actions.

God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. Don't you think the world needs to know that?

ILLUSTRATION – There's a parable that imagines a conversation going on the council of heaven where the Father is determining the plan by which the Good News would be communicated every human being in the world. There was talk of writing the message across the sky, of writing the message on the trees or the mountains. There was talk of a great announcement by the voice of God from heaven, like over a public address system. None of those would be the Father's plan. He decided on a risky plan. He would send the Good News through the people who were touched by it. It started with Jesus' first disciples who responded to His gracious invitation to be saved. And then they would be responsible for telling the story to others who would be saved, and they would tell the story to others who would be saved. And the multiplication would go on and on until the whole world hears.

One in that great heavenly council said to the Father: "This is a risky plan. What are your plans if they fail to do their part?" The Father replied, "I have no other plan."

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NIV) - All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

QUOTE: "A tiny group of believers who have the gospel keep mumbling it over and over to themselves. Meanwhile, millions who have never heard it once fall into the flames of eternal hell without ever hearing the salvation story."

- K.P. Yohannan (President of Gospel for Asia)

CONCLUSION

There's a powerful moment in John 20 when Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. It was the evening of that Sunday when the disciples discovered Jesus' tomb was empty. Their lives were filled with confusion and fear. "What are we to do now?" And in that fear-filled room Jesus shows up. He identifies Himself for those who couldn't believe that He was alive, showing them the scars in His hands and side. Then Jesus said something to them, then He did something for them.

Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." It's as if Jesus is saying, "The Father has no other plan. This is it."

Then Jesus did something for them. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This was a provisional filling of the Holy Spirit for those disciples who needed special power for witness in those days filled with fear and confusion.

Later at Pentecost the Holy Spirit would come upon the whole church, but the purpose was the same. Jesus said then, "You'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be My witnesses."

That's what I'm praying will happen today. Just like Jesus spoke something and did something to his early disciples, that He would speak something and do something for us:

That we would hear Jesus say, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

That we would experience the breathing of God over our lives as we are filled in a fresh and new way with His Holy Spirit, giving us power for living and witnessing for Christ.

The Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

I want you to think about the world in two ways:

THE WORLD. God has all the people of the world and all the nations of the world on His heart. He has put His plan in place. The only way those people and those nations of the world will hear the Gospel is if we go and tell them. Let this drive you to your knees in prayer for the nations, that God would thrust forth laborers into His harvest field. Dig deep into your financial resources and give generously so that others may be able to go. Be available to God to go where He wants to send you.

YOUR WORLD. You each have a world in which you live out your life ... your home, your neighborhood, your school, your job. That's *your* world. The Father sent His Son on mission, and Jesus is sending you on mission into your world.