

Christmas Is How God Shows Us His Love

1. In Sending Us Jesus
2. In Sacrificing Jesus

- Don't you just love XE?! There's so much to love re XE! We're gathrd here tonight, in beautiful ch, on peaceful eve, w/lots ppl & famlr hymns; soon cndlght & Slnt Nght. Maybe on XE you spend time w/fam; have fam trads that you do ev yr. Maybe spcl fd eat, or open gifs. Or prhps on XE you reminsc on chldhd: thnk re what Xmas like when kid. It could be decrtns; could be ambnc. But just smthng re XE gives you sense of peace. Don't you love XE?
- But wait min: it's easy get wrppd up in nstlgia/sntmntl, cndls/carols/ambnc, and fall in love w/smthng for wrong reason. Don't get me wrong: I love XE; cndlght servc is one my fav servcs of yr. But why? What actly makes tonight so spcl? What's real reason we've gthrd tog in Gd's house tonight on XE? Is it our love for Xmas? Or: Gd's love for us at Xmas? You see, the real reason for celebrtng tonight: not our sntmntl attcmnt to spcl eve. No, real meaning Xmas: Gd's love for us, shown in brth Son Sav JC. That's what Xmas all about! **TITLE**. And nowhr that more clearly exprssd than in les: **vs. 9-10**. For as much as we love XE (cndls/carols/ambnc), our real focus tonight, our real reason for being here, is Gd's love for us: in sendng us J, and in sacrfcng J. **TITLE**.
- It was apstl Jn who wrote these wrds. Our ch named after Jn (SJ). He's one wrote Gos/Jn, letters 1-3, even Rev. And thruout these bks/Bbl, Gd's love for wrld is a majr theme that Jn repeats agn/agn. You might remem these famous Bbl pgs re Gd's love that Jn wrote. **"See what great love the Fr has lavshd on us, that we should be calld chldrn/Gd" (1 Jn 3:1)**. **"Gd is love... We love bec he first lovd us" (1 Jn 4:16,19)**. **"Havng lovd his own who in wrld, [J] now showd them full extnt his love" (Jn 13:1, NIV 84)**. J: **"Greatr love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's frnds" (Jn 15:13)**. And of course Jn 3:16 – **"For Gd so lovd wrld...shall nor perish...etrn life."** Gd's love for wrld: one mst imp themes in Jn's wrtngs. And notice: in all these psgs, Gd's love: not just nostlge/sentmntl/emtnl. Gd's love for wrld is always love in action. It's a decisive, commttd action on Gd's part. We see that here: **vs. 9a**. **"Showed;"** action verb. Gd took initiative, went out of way, made extra effort, to act on his love, and show us his love. **Vs. 9a**.
- Here's how: **"he sent."** **TITLE**; and emphss here is on Gd sendng us J. **Vs. 9b-10ab**. Gd's love is in the sending. Fr sent his Son J, from hvn, into this wrld. From our perspctv, we thnk of J coming down fr hvn to us. But try change perspctv on that tonight, and picture Fr sending J down, out of hvn, into this dark wrld of sin/hatred/pain/dth. Thnk dozens times J calls Gd Fr the **"one who sent me,"** like in Jn 6: **"I have come down fr hvn not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (38)**. And few vss after our les: **"The Fr has sent his Son to be the Sav/wrld" (10)**. **TITLE, 1**.
- We send kids off to college. If in miltry, get sent overseas. Your employr might send you on busns trip. In evry case, prsn sent has leave comftr/home, leave lovd ones, travl smwhr to accmplsh task: whether gettng degree, servng cntry, helpng busns. And that's hard! Hard to say bye to dgthr when leaves for college, or son when deplyd across world; hard for kids say bye to prnt when have leave on busns. And I'm sure: hard for Gd Fr to send away Son. Just think what J had leave behind: his glrious home in hvn, srrndd by angs – I'm sure hard! And what find here? Jn: **"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (Jn 1:11)**. Not but a yr old, Herod tried kill; 33 yrs later anthr Rom gvrnr'd succeed in that. J wasn't welcmd here, mockd; wasn't respctd, mistreatd; wasn't honrd, crucfd. And Gd knew it'd happen; knew exctly what sendng Son do. How many you prnts'd purpsfly put chld dngr, intntnly send son/dgthr on mission you knew'd cost life!? But that's what Gd Fr did, for you/me. **Vs. 9**. From glry/hvn to monstrous cruelty/pain this wrld, Gd sent Son, to die for us. Maybe some you have lost chld/spouse/prnt, & this XE for you: more painfl than joyfl, bec miss loved one, wish here. I want you know: Gd knows your pain; knows what like lose chld, a loved one; and he hurts w/you, bec loves you. And tonight we see love/Gd, for us, in action, as sends Son, from hvn, to earth, to die for us, to pay for our sins, that we might live. **Vs. 9**. **TITLE**, 1st in sending us J.

- And 2nd, in sacrfcng J. **Vs. 10.** You've heard phrase atnng scrfc before. Very many our servcs here at SJ, incl tonight's, begin w/the confssng/forgvng of our sins, during which Pr says that Gd has "*given only Son be atng scrfc for our sins.*" And Rom 3: "**Gd presntd Xp as scrfc/atnmnt.**" Atnmnt or to atone means – well, spell wrd out in mind: ATONE. Now put space btwn T/O. What 2 wrds? At one. Atnmnt means: make 2 parties at 1 w/eo. By nature, we were not at 1 w/Gd; we at war w/Gd! We: actvly hostile vs him. Jn even says "**not that we lovd Gd;**" we had no love for Gd, in our sinful nature. And even now, if you take honest look at your life, compare your behvr/thgts/wrds to Gd's holy will (which does not change, even if seclr scety tries redefine what's rght/wrng) – if you compare self to Gd's will, it should be easy see the many times/ways you have not lovd Gd.
- But, **vs. 10.** When we were at war w/Gd, J came to make us at 1 w/Gd: to reconcile, restore peace. And how? By a sacrfc – his sacrfc on cross. Evry Xmas, when we see Baby J laid in wdn mngr, we have remem that smday he'll hang on wdn cross. The sinless Son/Gd came to take your sins upon self, and pay for them all on cross, so that you could be forgvn and at 1 w/Gd. W/o mngr & cross, you have no salvtn, no hvn. But when J gave life for you, he was 1) bearng punshmnt for your sins ("*nails, spear shall pierce him thru; the cross he'll bear for me, for you*"); and 2) making atnmnt, restrng peace btwn us/Gd ("*peace on earth & mercy mild, Gd & sinners reconcl'd*"). **Vs. 10.**
- **TITLE.** And we need Xmas. We need return yr after yr to lowly mngr in Bthlhm and gaze upon our infant Sav, bec smtms we wonder whthr Gd actly does love us. Trgdy surrnds us: mltple fatalts in Wksha Xmas parade; senslss casualts in Oxfrd MI shootng; catstrphc tornds rippng thru KY & other states, rippng apart lives. Gd, what you doing? Don't you love us; care? **TITLE** – love in action: love that sends us J, and love that sacrfc J for us. If you ever have your doubts, if ever wonder whthr Gd really loves you, look in mngr; look at Xp chld. Baby J: ultmt exprssn Gd's love for wrld. So tonight, as you meditate on birth/Xp for your salvtn, hold the Xp child in the arms of your hrt, and let his mangr be your persnl assuranc of Gd's love.
- There's a lot to love re XE: trads/cndls/carols/ambnc. But what makes tonight so special is not the sntmntl/nstlgc. It's not our love for Xmas that we celebrt tonight – it's Gd's love for us at Xmas! **TITLE**, in the birth of his Son, sent and sacrfd as our Sav. **Vs. 9-10.**

1 John 4:9-10

⁹This is how Gd showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved Gd, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

