

# God really, *really* loves you

Message for Sunday, November 30, 2014  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-7

**Children's Message:** Jeffie and Grandpa

Jeffie was in his playpen in the living room and he was crying. Tears were rolling down his little cheeks, his face was red as it could be. He was crying, and he looked pitiful in his little baseball T-shirt and a diaper.

Then Jeffie's Grandpa entered the room; Jeffie's little face lit up when he saw his Grandpa! He immediately reached out his little arms and said "Out Pa Pa out." How can Grandpa resist that? So Grandpa went over to the playpen, he bent over. He reached down to lift his little buddy from captivity and distress...

Just then Jeffie's mother walked into the room. Momma said "Jeffie, you stay right there! I'm punishing you because you have been naughty! Dad, leave Jeffie alone!"

What is a Grandpa to do? Grandpa steps back and is thinking, "I can't just sit in a chair while Jeffie is stuck in there. He would think I don't care about him. I don't want to leave the room, because then he would feel that I really don't care.

What is a Grandpa to do?

But you know what? Love always finds a way. Since Grandpa couldn't take Jeffie out of the playpen, Grandpa climbed in with Jeffie!

Having Grandpa join him in his "prison cell" brought Jeffie great comfort and joy. In the midst of his captivity, Jeffie no longer felt so alone.

What Jeffie's Grandpa did is also a picture of what Jesus Christ did for us when He came to Earth as a baby.

The message is simple, clear and personal: God with us... He loves you so much He sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ!

**Message:** "God really, *really* loves you"

It was getting close to Christmas, and a little girl was pushing the limits of her mother's patience. Mom was trying mightily to complete all the chores of cooking, cleaning, shopping, wrapping and church stuff. The girl kept interrupting her, looking for attention, and it was very frustrating for both of them. Finally the little girl was bathed and ready for bed. As she knelt to say her prayers, Mom listened as her daughter prayed, "...And

forgive us our Christmases, as we forgive those who Christmas against us."

The story of Christmas is God's love for us, come in the flesh. It's not about decorations and shopping and parties. Please understand me: there is nothing wrong with all those things. I do them, too, and I greatly enjoy them. But that's not what Christmas is really about.

With that in mind, listen to the Scripture reading.

**John 3:16, New International Version:**

**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.**

Christmas is the coming of God's love for us, come in the flesh. God truly loves you. That's right: God loves you more than you'll ever know. Here's how Max Lucado put it:

**If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If he had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, he'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and he chose your heart. And the Christmas gift he sent you in Bethlehem? Face it, friend. He's crazy about you!**

We have this idea of God, that God is eternal and God is holy, and that's right. God has revealed himself to us in the Bible, and that's what we see. But in Jesus, all that it turned upside down.

God is eternal, but God stepped out of eternity and into our dimension of time. God is holy, but God came and lived among people who are not holy. God is surrounded by majesty, but God left behind the glories of heaven and was born in a stable, laid to sleep in a feed trough, and was wrapped in rags. This is *not* what people expected.

Ron Hutchcraft tells the story of Harold. Harold wanted to be in the annual Christmas play which was always a big production in his town. But Harold was not the top student in his class and seemed to have a lot of problems. The directors of the children's play did not want to hurt Harold's feelings, but they were worried about whether he could handle a part. They finally decided to give him the part of the innkeeper. All he had to say was, "I'm sorry, there is no room in the Inn."

Well, the night of the big play came and the church was packed. At the precise moment Mary and Joseph came and knocked on the inn door. The whole village of Bethlehem shook as Harold tried to open the cardboard

door to the inn which was stuck. At last he got the door open, and the pitiful young couple was standing there looking all too real to Harold, but with a little coaching he blurted out the words: "I'm sorry, all the rooms are full, and there's no room for you here."

The couple turned sorrowfully away and began to walk off stage when all of a sudden the door of the inn swung open again, and Harold ran up to the couple and said in a loud voice so that everyone could hear, "Wait a minute. Come back. You can have my room." It was a great addition to the play, even though it was not in the script.

What God did was not what people thought was in the script. In Jesus, just about everything we thought about God was turned upside down.

**Philippians 2:5-7, New International Version:**

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

God loves you. God loves you so much that he came to earth through the Son, Jesus. The story of Christmas is God's love for us, come in the flesh.

Per Nilsen, a Lutheran pastor in Minnesota, wrote about the time his son, Bjorn, got sick.

I took his temperature, and it was 102.5. The Children's Advil came out. He slugged down the appropriate dose for his size. Forty-five minutes later the fever was back down to 100.

Just before bed, I checked his temperature again. It was back up. More Advil. I checked again 45 minutes later; now it was 103. Concerned, I asked Bjorn to drink more water. He obliged, but he was clearly languishing.

My wife, Mary, slept with our youngest son, Kristian. I slept alone in our bedroom and monitored Bjorn through the night. At 12:30 A.M. the thermometer was shaken down and placed under the tongue of my lethargic son. His skin was hot. His affect dulled. 104.

I called the urgent care facility at the local medical center. They said, "Bring him in as soon as possible."

Mary took Bjorn in while I stayed home with Kristian. While she started the van, I got Bjorn ready. I jostled him. He awoke. I told him we were going to the doctor. He looked at me with weary, wondering eyes and said, "Am I going to die, Daddy?"

Immediately, I had three reactions. Common sense: "No, you are not going to die. We need to get this fever down." Emotional: "I'm scared." Visions of children with bizarre diseases flooded my heart. Spiritual: "Dear Jesus, Cover him. Heal him. Love him."

I conveyed the common sense reaction to Bjorn, not wanting to scare him, and I was fairly certain his fever was not life threatening. But my mind flashed to the many parents in this world who have had to look at their children, knowing that the ultimate answer to that question was "Yes." I can barely write as I contemplate that circumstance.

And I wonder if in the heavenly places there was once a conversation between the Father and the Son, when the Son asked the question, "Am I going to die, Daddy?" and in his heart the Father knew the answer was "Yes."

I'll say it one more time, just to be sure you get it: The story of Christmas is God's love for us, come in the flesh.

Have you seen one of those awkward YouTube videos, where the man makes some elaborate preparation to propose to his beloved in front of a crowd of people... and she rejects him and walks away? Ouch! How embarrassing, for both of them.

Well, with Jesus, God is proposing to you. God is saying, "I love you. I want you to spend your life with me." What will your answer be? If your answer is "Yes," then you need to take some next steps.

### **Next Steps:**

- Follow Jesus: hang out with him. Spend time together in prayer, worship, just enjoying life together.
- "If you love me, obey my commandments" [John 14:15]. Where do you need to make changes in your life?
- Spread the love around: tell others about Jesus, forgive others who have hurt you, help people in need, treat all with respect.