

This Christmas you can find love

Message for Christmas Eve 2019
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: John 3:16-17; Ephesians 3:17-19

Once there was a girl named Christine who loved ants. She loved to watch them scurry around, building their neat little ant hills. She thought they were very strong, as she watched them carry bits of food that were as big as they were. Ants were Christine's very favourite animals to watch, and she spent lots of time lying on her stomach in the dirt watching her little friends.

One day Christine was watching some ants build a new home on the side of the street. They were digging in a little crack in the pavement, and making a lovely little hill of fine dirt. All the ants were working very hard, and they didn't notice Christine watching them, because she didn't move and was very quiet.

Then Christine heard a frightening sound. It was the sound of the street cleaner coming along the road. Christine liked watching the street cleaner, too. It had a big brush that whirled round and round, sweeping up dirt on the road. Then came the hose that sprayed the water to wash all the dirt away. Usually Christine was not afraid of the street cleaner. But today, she knew that the big machine would wash away the new home that her friends, the ants were making. The ants would all be drowned!

Quickly, Christine bent down and tried to pick up the ants, moving them to the safety of the lawn. But the ants were afraid of Christine; they thought she was a giant monster. They ran down their hole and hid from Christine. She shouted at them and told them she wanted to save them from the street cleaner. But ants do not understand people language. They just hid in their hole as the street cleaner came closer.

Christine began to cry. She couldn't make her friends understand. She couldn't save them.

Mother came out to see why Christine was crying. Christine told Mom the whole story.

Mom said, "It's OK; they're safe. They have tunnels underground to drain the water; to them it's just like when it rains.

I know you're sad because you want to be their friend, but they are afraid of you. The only way to make them understand would be for you to become an ant. You could go right into their home and talk to them in their own language.

You know, you can't become like an ant. That's impossible. But God did something like that once. He wanted us to understand what he is like. He wanted to show us how to love each other. So he became a person and came to live with us. He was born as a baby, Jesus. He grew up just like other boys and girls. But he was also God. So he could show us just the right way to live. That's how much God loved us. God became a person like us so he could live right here in our home, the earth."

Christine was still sad that she couldn't make friends with the ants. But she was also happy to think that God loved her even more than she loved her ants.

There's a Bible passage which describes how indescribable God's love is.

Ephesians 3:17-19, New Living Translation:

May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ.

God wants us to *experience* his love, to *understand* his love. It's nice to read about God's love, to talk about it. But to *know* in your heart that God loves you—yes, you, with all your faults—just the way you are, that is wonderful.

Why is it so important to feel loved by God? Because people who are not loved are often people who are not loving.

1 John 4:19, New International Version:

We love because he first loved us.

Once you've experienced God's love, then it becomes easier to love others, especially the difficult people in your life.

The greatest example of God’s love began at Christmas.

John 3:16-17, New Living Translation:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

Jesus is God who has come in person to show us God’s love. Crowds came to listen to him, because his words were life-giving, rather than life-draining. After being with him, their circumstances were not changed, but they were changed. They felt uplifted, able to face things.

The many miracles of healing: Jesus was showing God’s love in very practical ways.

Finally, Jesus showed how wide, how long, how high and how deep God’s love for us is when we gave his life for us on the cross. During his last meal with his followers, Jesus said, “This is my body, given for you” [Luke 22:19].

Can you imagine being given a gift at Christmas and never unwrapping it? It would be silly. I mean, if you gave me a gift at Christmas and a year later you came over and I still hadn’t unwrapped it, you’d think I was a little nutty.

“Why haven’t you opened it?”

“Oh, I love looking at the wrapping paper. It’s so beautiful. I’m sure I’m going to love the gift. I’ll get to it one of these days.”

Many of you have celebrated every Christmas for as many years as you’ve been alive. You know the songs and the stories, and you know what it’s all about, but you’ve never unwrapped the gift.

This Christmas you can find love. The gift we’ve all been looking for all our lives—it’s right in front of us.

Next Steps:

- Pray: Say “Yes” to God and receive his love. Know that you are forgiven for all the wrong you’ve done. Feel the freedom as the weight of shame is lifted from you.
- Accept God’s help in your life to be a more loving person—to be more like Jesus!
- Commit to following Jesus. So much that we face is life-draining. Let him be life-giving as you walk with him.