

Christmas, Interpreted

Luke 2:1-19; 1 John 4:7-19

Hearing the Christmas story like it's the first time (Luke 2:1-19)

- What's this story about? First of all, it's not a *mere* story, see 2:1-3.
- Where's this story going? "But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart." (2:19)

Fast forward about 30 years, just before Jesus dies. Now do we understand what this story is about?

- Yes, sorta. But: "You do not understand now what I am doing, but you will understand later." (the foot-washing episode in John 13:7; see also Matt 16:22, Mark 9:10, John 13:1)

Fast forward more than another 30+ years, and John tells us what this story is about: 1 John 4:7-19.

- "God is love." (1 John 4:8,16)
- Historians need distance from events to better understand them. *What does Christmas have to do with love, John?*

- The key verse: "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10). Consider every phrase and what it teaches us about the love of God:
 - ...this is love...
 - ...not that we have loved God...
 - ...sent his *Son*...
 - ...propitiation for our sins.

Christmas carol lyric: "...and wonders of His love!"

Questions for Reflection and Application:

1. Read Luke 2:1-19 like you're reading it for the first time. What strikes you?
2. Read 1 John 4:7-21. Since the sending of the Son of God is about love, what applications does John make in this passage?
 - a. Vertically? (towards God)
 - b. Horizontally? (towards others)
 - c. *How can you apply this specifically during this Christmas season?*