

“More Than

a

Petal”

Christmas, Χριστούγεννα¹, is here to end 2019, another year. Thousands of sermons will be preached and millions of people will hear the story. And this story is about the Christ child called Jesus given by God.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 [NIV]

And the rest of the story is people like us trying to convince each other that it's all true.

For to us a **child is born**, to us a **son is given**, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ***Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.*** He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7 [NIV]

The child is born, the physical, the temporal, the fragile, flawed and limited.
The son is given, the spiritual, the divine, the mystery, the eternal becoming one.

Christmas is the union of the natural with the divine, the supernatural, the personification of Love, Emmanuel, God with us — Heaven coming to Earth — divine Love.

Break up a flower petal by petal...

Love is patient
Love is kind
Love does not envy
Love does not boast
Love is not proud
Love is not rude
Love is not self seeking
Love is not easily angered
Love keeps no record of wrongs
Love does not delight in evil
Love rejoices with the truth
Love always protects
Love always trusts
Love always hopes
Love always perseveres
Love never fails

Is this a flower... Answer: Yes — No — Maybe.

Love in parts is love as a petal, but as a whole it is love in full.

Giving petals is nice, even romantic, giving flowers is something else.

Love is more than a petal — love is the full flower.

¹ Greek for 'Christmas' meaning Christ — Birth

Love is a noun giving birth to the verb.

The action of Love is a physical manifestation of that which is entirely spiritual.

And this spiritual love is no longer a *'what'* but *'who'*, it is God — for God is love.

And now this *'who'* came to Earth in the form of a man, a temporal being, to show us a new and living way, an excellent way to live. To know that God can be experienced through Love.

And such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. We love each other because he loved us first. 1 John 4:18 [NLT]

In the Greek: Fear is not in the love, but the complete love punishes fear because the fear has punishment, and he who is fearing has not been made complete in the love. (“God is love...” was added to attempt to convey that love is a noun, not a verb — and it is from the noun that the verb, the actions, follow.)

So, Christmas is a time for family, friends, gifting, generosity, reconciliation, reunion, rekindling — it's all of these things. I hope that you also remember that all that we do is birthed in Love. Not Love the verb, rather Love the noun, for God is Love and His love is in us.

The verb, what we do, is a natural outworking of the noun, being who we are.

And our capacity to love others builds capacity in *them* to love others.

God sent us Love in an Earthly package, called him Jesus, then planted him in us.

Then Jesus taught: My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. John 15:12-13

So how does one come to know this love?

This divine love that makes no sense yet everything it does makes perfect sense.

The answer is simple.

Decide in your heart to Love — its practice and actions follow naturally.

This is why I often say; “The hardest lesson in life is learning how easy it is.”

So I strung these passages of scripture together to help us understand better.

Let God's love continually pour from you to one another, because God is love. Everyone who loves is fathered by God and experiences an intimate knowledge of him.²

The one who doesn't love has yet to know God, for God is love. The light of God's love shined within us when He sent his matchless Son into the world so that we might live through him. This is love: He loved us long before we loved Him. It was His love, not ours.

He proved it by sending His Son to be the pleasing sacrificial offering to take away our sins. Delightfully loved ones, if He loved us with such tremendous love, then "loving one another" should be our way of life! No one has ever gazed upon the fullness of God's splendour. But if we love one another, God makes His permanent home in us, and we make our permanent home in Him, and His love is brought to its full expression in us.

But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So we kneel humbly in awe before the Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the perfect Father of every father and child in heaven and on the earth. And I pray that He would unveil within us the unlimited riches of his glory and favor until supernatural strength floods our innermost beings with His divine might and explosive power. Then, by constantly using our faith, the life of Christ will be released deep inside us, and the resting place of His love will become the very source and root of our lives.

Then we will be empowered to discover what every holy one experiences—the great magnitude of the astonishing love of Christ in all its dimensions. How deeply intimate and far-reaching is his love! How enduring and inclusive it is! Endless love beyond measurement that transcends our understanding — this extravagant love pours into us until we are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God.

Encourage — Close in prayer..

Let this Christmas for all of us be in the flow of Love infecting others with it and we shall experience God in every way.

A prayer... O God, if we Love you in fear of hell, burn us in hell.

If we Love you in hope of paradise, shut us out from paradise.

But if we Love you for your own sake, do not withhold from us your everlasting beauty.

May this Christmas extend beyond ourselves.

May it be centered on the one, the Christ, whom you sent to live among us.

May we learn to forgive others.

May we learn to accept our own frailties.

And may we learn to love without measure.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.³

² 1 John 4:7-12 The Passion Translation

³ Romans 8:35-39 - New International Version