

INI - SDG

3rd Mid-Week Advent Service

“The Colors of Christmas”

December 17, 2008

Hecla

Text: 1 John 4:10 - ***“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”***

Theme: The Colors of Christmas: Red

- The Shed Blood

- The Great Love

Dear fellow redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s own Son,

Two weeks ago we began our Advent series by talking about the colors of Christmas. The colorful lights, the colorful decorations, the colorful clothing that seem to be used only at Christmas time are certainly one of the things that makes Christmas so special. For us living in the fringed Northern plains during these short days, the colors and lights of Christmas add excitement and life to the otherwise drab and lifeless month of December. Who hasn’t felt let down and even a little depressed after those Christmas lights and decorations are packed away for another year.

At Christmas time we see the color green used quite a bit. Our Christmas trees are green, our wreaths are green, our ornaments and lights are green. Green is the color of life. When our fields and gardens are green we know something is growing. At a time of year when everything is dead and lifeless outside, green decorations give a feeling of life. The green of Christmas, then, can be a great reminder of the life that Jesus brought when He was born into this world. He came to give us life to the full. He came to conquer death and give us eternal life. So green is a very fitting color to use when celebrating the birth of Jesus.

As you look around tonight at our Christmas decorations, what is another color that sticks out? Isn’t the color red very predominant? Maybe more than any other color, the color red is widely used at Christmas time. I know of men who have red sweaters they wear only on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day - other than those two days you’d never catch them in a red sweater. Also at this time of year we see pictures of a large bearded man wearing a red jacket, with red pants, and a red hat. At Christmas time we decorate with red bulbs, red ornaments, and red bows. I don’t know if there is any other time of year when the red poinsettia plant is used or even sold, other than at Christmas time. Red sweaters, red ties, red lights - the color red certainly rules the Christmas season.

Tonight I would have you dear Christians consider how fitting the color red is for celebrating our Savior’s birth. How the color red is a reminder of the blood and love of Christ. We base our meditation tonight on 1 John 4:10 - ***“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*** These are the very words of our God, given to us and preserved unto today by His Holy Spirit. May He work mightily in us, strengthening our faith and thoroughly equipping us for every good work - to the glory of God. Amen.

THE SHED BLOOD

How do you hold up at the sight of blood? I know of some very strong men who work with animals and even hunt animals. Because of that they are used to seeing blood. But somehow when these same strong men suddenly become weak-kneed, light headed, and nauseous when they see blood flowing from the knee of their little girl.

Tonight as we consider the red color of Christmas we want to talk about blood - not the blood of just any animal or person, but the priceless and eternally valuable blood of Jesus. But is Christmas really the time to talk about blood?! After all isn't Christmas a time for family and merriment? It's a time for pretty lights and gifts. It's the time to talk about that little Baby laying in a manger in Bethlehem and sing those familiar songs. It's time to talk of shepherds abiding in fields and angels singing. Let's not talk about blood and death at Christmas!

But if the red, shed blood of Christ is not a fit topic for Christmas time, then when is it fit to discuss? When John in our text writes of the "*propitiation for our sins*," he is talking about the cost to purchase the forgiveness of our sins. He's talking about the Son of God shedding His blood as He died on the cross. And isn't that the whole reason God sent His Son into the world to shed His blood and die? You see, the Baby in that manger was not just any child. That Baby was true God who took on flesh and blood. He was born with a purpose. He came to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins.

The Son of God had to do this because not the blood of just anyone could be the propitiation for sins. In Psalm 49 we are told that the redemption of the soul is costly. (Ps 49:8) Think of it - what do you have which you could give to God to purchase your soul from hell? What could you give Him to make up for all the sins you have committed? Your life? Well, God gave you that life, so He in effect you would be giving Him something He already owned. Money? Silver or gold? Well that too God created. He owns all the money in the universe - so again, you'd be giving Him something that was already His. Your home? Your farm? Everything that your house is made out of is something God created. Your farm consists of everything God made. The point is that we have nothing to give God for our redemption. Not even the shedding of our own blood could purchase our redemption, because our lives are tainted by sin.

The human soul is too costly for us to be able to redeem it with anything we have. Only the blood of Jesus is valuable enough to be the propitiation for our sins. Only His blood was precious enough to purchase our forgiveness. Jesus was true God. The life He lived was one without spot or blemish - He was perfect in every way. There was no accusation of sin, for He never once sinned. And so His life, His blood was precious in the sight of God the Father. So valuable was the blood of Jesus it that it could purchase the forgiveness of sins for every single man, woman, and child that was ever born into this world. Peter writes in His first epistle, "*You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*" (1Pt 1:18-19)

It was on the cross of Calvary that the precious blood of Christ was shed for the forgiveness of sins. The cross is the focal point of Jesus' whole life - including Christmas. He was born to die. This is why the Father sent His Son into the world, to shed His blood as the propitiation - the atoning sacrifice - the purchase our forgiveness. So let the RED of Christmas remind you of the blood which Jesus shed for your forgiveness.

THE GREAT LOVE

Can you think of another holiday where the color red is used? Isn't the color red used on Valentine's Day? There are the red roses, the red hearts, the red cards, and so on. Red is used for Valentine's Day because red is the color of passion, the color of love. How fitting then when we consider the use of red at Christmas time! The Son of God being born as our Savior is the greatest act of love this world has ever seen. It is greater than the love between husband and wife. It is greater than the love between parent and child.

Consider the love we are familiar with in our lives. We love our spouses, we love our children, we may even say that we love our homes, our jobs, and certain kinds of food. But the love we have for our spouse and children is pretty much mutual. We love them and they love us. For the most part we treat them well and they treat us well. There is a natural affection between each other.

But imagine if your spouse was constantly cheating on you - do you suppose you would love your spouse just the same? Or imagine if your child purposefully disobeyed everything you told them to do? Would you allow them to live in your house much longer? It would be obvious that the other person - your spouse or your child - did not love you. In fact it would be obvious by their actions that they hated you and didn't care about what you said or how you felt. Then that mutual love would be hard to find.

So what was it about us that caused God to love us so much that He would send His Son as the propitiation for our sins? Did we love God SO much that He felt obligated to do something for us? Not at all! In fact Scripture says we were by nature enemies with God! Everything God told us to do, we disobeyed. When God told us not to have any other gods, we cheated on Him by placing something else in our hearts as number one - rather than Him.

Yet John says herein we see what real love is. ***"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*** To prove His love for us He sent His Son into the world. And He sent His Son under the most humiliating of circumstances. As we confess, He was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He didn't send His Son to a cushy, privileged life, but a life of servitude. A life which would eventually lead to the humiliating death on the cross.

And He didn't just send His Son for a select group of people. He sent His Son for the whole world - for every single sinner! He sent His Son to be the sacrifice that would purchase the forgiveness of sins for all who had sinned against Him. Paul writes of this love to the Romans, ***"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** (Rom 5:8) Certainly the color red is fitting for this love!

So we see why the color red is the perfect color to celebrate Jesus birth. In the red decorations of Christmas we are reminded of the blood of Christ which was shed for the forgiveness of all our sins. In the red decorations of Christmas we are reminded of the great love with which God has loved us in sending His Son to be our Savior. May the color of red ever be a reminder of the blood and love in Christmas! Amen.