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Lake Cities Community Church
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Advent

“Love Travels”

Many years ago, while I was studying marketing at the University of Arizona, I had the opportunity to do a summer internship in the marketing department at America West airlines – which is now US Air. Internships are great way to get practical experience. And I learned that in the airline industry, one of the top marketing questions is, “What are we selling? Do the airlines just sell a seat on a plan? Do they sell convenience? On-time arrivals? A good safety record? Low prices? At various times, as you know, all of these have been themes for airlines in selling their services. But perhaps one of most interesting things that airlines attempt to sell to you – is love. Flying the friendly skies gives you the opportunity to connect with those you love. To come home to those you love.

This morning we conclude our Advent services by focusing on the love that Jesus brings into the world. And together I would like for us to consider this morning that love travels. Love moves. Loves goes. Love laces up her shoes and heads out the door. Do you remember this Christmas song?

I'm dreamin' tonight of a place I love
Even more than I usually do
And although I know it's a long road back
I promise you

I'll be home for Christmas
You can count on me
Please have snow and mistletoe
And presents under the tree

Christmas Eve will find me
Where the love light beams
I'll be home for Christmas
If only in my dreams

I heard on the radio that 5.1 million Texans will be traveling this year for Christmas. How many of you will be traveling to visit someone for Christmas? Ok, let me ask it a different way - How many of you will be traveling to visit someone for Christmas - *because you love them?* We know that travel is not always motivated by love. Of the millions traveling this year some are going out of obligation; some kicking and screaming for what they know will be a painfully awkward time with people they generally dislike. Some really do wish that they could be home for Christmas – *only in their dreams*. But when it comes to God, we will see that when God travels, it is always based on His love. Let's consider the travel plans of God – three trips that He has taken or will take and look at why God travels.

Jesus Traveling to Earth

First consider the incarnation. We sang *O Come Emmanuel*, God with us; the travel of God from heaven to earth. [John 8:42](#), *If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent me.* Why? [John 3:16](#) *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.* Paul said of Jesus, [Titus 3:4](#) *The kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared.* The Apostle John said, [1 John 4:9](#), *“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world.”* The coming of Jesus into the world is the manifestation of God's love, the appearance of God's love. When you and I look at the

baby in the manger – *we see that God's love travels*. There was one reason for the arrival of Christ – love.

Jesus traveling to the Cross

And of course the intent of God's love was to reconcile sinful humanity himself. We, the object of God's love rebelled and left him. There was once an engaged couple, Jimmy and Marie. Everything went wrong and Marie broke the engagement and left Jimmy broken hearted. But after a time Marie sought to reconcile. She wrote this letter: Dearest Jimmy, No words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you'll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you! Yours forever, Marie. P.S. And congratulations on winning the state lottery. Our love can be corrupted, but God's love is pure – He does not love us for what we have, but for who we are. And to reconcile his Bride to Himself – he had to take another journey – our second trip to examine – When God traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Jesus said to His disciples: **“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles” Mark 10:33.** Now why in the world go there? Why leave family and friends, 30+ years of relationships to go to death's door? Why?

Paul said, **Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ – it is not longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by**

faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be an atonement sacrifice. God traveled from heaven to earth – because of His great love, and he then set His face to Jerusalem and death because of love. God’s love travels.

Jesus Traveling to the Wedding Feast

These first two journeys that Jesus took for love were difficult. To lay aside his glory and take on human flesh was God’s humiliation. To give himself up for a shameful painful death was the greatest sacrifice. We turn now to the third journey of love – a journey that God has not yet made – but will someday – when God will travel back to earth in his second coming – to be forever with his Bride.

As we think about the second coming, but must think about the church using the metaphor of the Bride. The reason the Bible presents the Church as the Bride of Christ is to remind us that Christ loves His church. Paul said Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Because He loves His bride, we know He will come back for her, in the custom of 1st century marriage – the groom would leave to prepare a place for His bride and then return: “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” John 14:3. And when the groom returns – there is a great wedding feast. Where the bride and groom are reunited. Revelation 19:6-9:

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the

fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he *said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

There was a movie about 10 years ago called the Runaway Bride. Where Julia Roberts played a woman who had left a number of grooms at the altar. When it came time to marry – she got cold feet and ran away. That is like us – we want to run from God and flee even from His love. But in the movie Richard Gere is determined to love her anyway and to win her over with His love. So he find out the root cause of her fear and heals it, and they marry. And that is what God does – He pursues us with His love, and solves the things that makes us run from Him – so that we can be united with Him forever.

Heaven to earth; Galilee to Jerusalem, and back to earth. God's love travels. Billy Graham said, "When we preach the atonement, it is atonement planned by love, provided by love, given by love, finished by love, necessitated because of love. When we preach the resurrection of Christ, we are preaching the miracle of love. When we preach the return of Christ, we are preaching the fulfillment of love. In the end – of faith, hope and love – never forget that the greatest of these is love.

Application

Let's talk now about application. What difference should this make in our lives this Christmas Season? To apply lessons of God's love you first have to understand that God loves you. If you have not personalized this message – it is time to do so. Some might say – "God loves the world and the church" – but that doesn't include me. I like the prayer of a little child who prayed, "Our Father, who art in heaven, how'd you know my name?" Jesus knows your name – he loves you individually. God does not love an abstraction he loves

you. The most important question this morning is, “Has God’s love traveled into your life? Have you every accepted the love of God, or are you resisting it?”

You and I are created to be loved. Ultimately, what the world promises - fame, or money or power, does not satisfy. Madonna was once asked what she would title her life, if it was made into a novel. She thought for a moment and gave this title: “Madonna, a lonely life.” But Madonna with all your fame, how can you be lonely? She said, “I want everyone in the world to not only know me, but to love me – to love me.” Madonna, (An Intimate Biography, J Randy Taraborrelli, Pan Books, 2002 p.103, 109). What we really want – what we really need is not money, or fame or power, but love. We thirst for someone to love us, and God is saying to you today, right now - I love you. Will you receive my love? Will you be my bride?

Once we understand that God loves us and we accept that love, then our second application is to let the love of God travel through you to other people. If you are part of the 5.1 million people traveling - be sure that God’s love travels with you and flows freely to others. What does that look like? It may look like stacking cans at the food pantry, or serving a meal at a homeless shelter It may look like a thoughtful present for a friend. It may be a smile, or a kind word. It may be employed by overlooking an offense, or offering forgiveness. It may be time spent washing dishes. It may be back rub for your spouse, or a hug for your children. It may be the courage to share the gospel message with an unsaved relative you may never see again. For children, it may mean sharing your new toy, playing the game your cousin wants to play even though you don’t. It means spending time with that boy or girl that no one is talking to. I don’t know what it looks like for you – but God’s love does take form – it acts and moves – it travels, and that is attractive love. William

Barclay said, *“More people have been brought into the church by the kindness of real Christian love than by all the theological arguments in the world.”*

When God sent Jesus into this world on Christmas, I picture him sitting on a stool and slipping on tennis shoes – he had 33 years to spend with us and show us how to live. When Jesus went to the cross, I picture him taking off his tennis shoes and putting on work boots – this was His work – the reason why He came. And when I imagine Jesus coming again to meet us at the Marriage Supper of the lamb, I envision him getting all dressed up and putting on his best wing-tip dress shoes – polished to a shine and meeting us His church. God’s love travels – and I pray that it travels into your life and through your life during this Christmas week.