Series: Down to Earth

Title: Be Loved. Do Love.

Text: John 1:1-14

**\*Slide- Down to Earth**

A young husband was rushing out of the door to head for his office early one morning. As he was leaving, his wife said to him, *“Do you remember what today is?”*

*“Of course, I do honey… I remember how special today is...”* he said.

But the truth was… the young husband didn’t have a clue what was special about the day.

When he got in his car, he quickly called his secretary and told her what his wife had said… he confessed to his secretary that he had no idea what she was talking about, so could she help him figure it out?

The young husband knew it wasn’t their anniversary. It wasn’t her birthday… it wasn’t his birthday. It wasn’t Valentine’s Day. He was completely stumped. He could not figure it out. All morning long, he and his secretary discussed what it could be… but they still could not come up with the answer.

So, the husband decided to be pro-active, hoping that as the day unfolded, he might be able to remember what was special about it.

To be safe, he bought his wife a new dress she had been admiring at her favorite store and had it beautifully wrapped and sent out to their home.

He also sent flowers… He made reservations at the best restaurant in town, and bought tickets to see a show together.

He left work early and rushed home. His wife met him at the door… and she looked absolutely beautiful in her new dress and jewelry… and off they went for a festive night. The restaurant was wonderful. The show was amazing… they had a great evening.

Finally, when they got home that night, the husband was so proud of himself and how well he had come through, but he still had no idea what they had been celebrating, so finally he said, *“Well, I hope you enjoyed our special day.”* And she said, “*Oh Honey, I did! I did! This has been without question been the best Groundhog Day we have ever had!”*

Wow… sounds like a great day to be loved and to do love.

On Christmas Eve, we celebrate this great day when Jesus came down to earth to show us just how much God loves us.

Like that young husband on Groundhog Day… On Christmas, God pulled out all of the stops… he sent… his own son down to earth so that we would know God’s love for us.

**\*Slide- Scripture**

As John 3:16-17 says:

*16“For this is how God loved the world: God gavehis one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”*

Our God sent Jesus down to earth to be “God with us” in person… to be our God in the flesh who moved into our messy world… to be with imperfect people, like you and me… so that we would know God’s love... So that we would accept God’s love for ourselves. So that we would “be loved”.

**\*Slide- Down to Earth**

It seems so simple. And yet, it’s not always that simple.

This past weekend during the sermon, I shared a story from my own life when I felt really lost… a time when I felt really disconnected from God.

You see, I had grown up going to church… my whole family was active in the church… I ushered on Sundays with my dad… I sang in the choir with my mom… I was a leader in the youth group… but then I moved away to go to college. And I… like so many young adults… fell away from the church.

It wasn’t something that I had planned to do… it just kind-of happened.

I was in uncharted waters… I was living on my own for the first time. All of the sudden, I had more freedom and free time than I’d ever had before. I also had a lot more questions about life and faith than I’d ever had before.

A few times… I tried to go to church to help me figure some things out. But when I went… I’d go alone… I’d leave alone, and usually I wouldn’t meet a single person in the process… so I after a couple of times… I quit trying.

But then a friend invited me to go with him to church. It had been quite a while since I had gone. I wasn’t sure that I wanted to “say yes” to his invitation. But I knew that something was missing in my life… so I went.

When we got to church, we sat in the very back row because I felt so distant from God. In my mind… I knew that God loved me. After all, I had grown up going to Vacation Bible School… going to church… I had grown up in Sunday school singing, *“Jesus loves me this I* ***KNOW****.”*

I **KNEW** that God loved me… that God would always love me… I **KNEW** it up here (point to head). But I didn’t **KNOW** it in here (point to heart) anymore.

In my heart, I couldn’t **FEEL** God’s love for me.

But as I sat in church, you know what happened? I began to **FEEL** loved again… to **FEEL** accepted again.

It’s often been said that the greatest distance in the universe can be from here (point to head) to here (point to heart).

Maybe… you can relate to that? A time when your head and your heart were not on the same page. A time that you’ve felt distant from God. A time when you didn’t feel lovable… or a time you didn’t feel God’s love for you. I think we probably all go through those times.

But Christmas is a special time of year… where we pause… to be reminded once again… of how great… how wide… how deep… is God’s love for us… for you and for me.

One of my favorite sayings of all time… is something that I have heard Bishop Ough, our United Methodist bishop, say… probably a dozen times… something that he said even when he was with us a few weeks ago that made a few of us giggle.

In nearly every final blessing that I’ve ever heard him give… Bishop Ough says this: “God loves you and there is nothing that you can do about it.”

**\*Slide- Quote…“God loves you and there is nothing that you can do about it.”**

God loves you and there is nothing that you can do about it.

Perhaps, the greatest gift that any of us can receive at Christmas is this: accepting that God accepts you… accepting that God loves you… accepting to be loved.

And the second greatest gift is sharing that same love… God’s love with someone else.

**\*Slide- Kindergarten Class**

This week… I saw a story about a teacher and her church sharing God’s love with her kindergarten class.

This is Danielle VanScoy and her kindergarten class at Ridgewood Park Elementary School in Orlando, Florida. Ridgewood Park is a public, Title I school which means that a high percentage of the students who go there… are from low-income families.

Ms. VanScoy is a member of the Christ Church of Orlando, she asked her church if they could help the students in her classroom.

Her request was simple: goodie bags for her 16 kindergarten students. As the school year hit the halfway mark, many of their supplies had dwindled, and students were in need of crayons, pencils and erasers.

But the church decided to go one step farther… they would not only provide goodie bags, but they also would raise money… so that they could donate a bicycle to each student in her class.

In the end, church members were able to provide bikes, helmets, bike locks and goodie bags filled with fun items like: necklaces and stickers… in addition pencils, crayons and erasers.

Let’s watch her kindergartener’s reactions to the church’s gifts.

**\*Watch Video**

Ms. VanScoy’s kindergartners will never forget that day… the day that the people of God cared about them so much… loved them so much… to give them not only what they needed: pencils, crayons, and erasers… but to give them something that they wouldn’t even have dreamed of… brand-new bicycles… so that her students and their families would know in here (point to heart) that God loves them.

**\*Slide- Down to Earth**

Friends, this is what Christmas is all about. It’s about being loved and doing love. So here’s my invitation for each of us this Christmas… I invite each family to take home a Christmas ornament today to remind you this Christmas and in every coming Christmas… to “do love” by sharing God’s love with the people God puts in your life… so that others would know God loves them in here (point to head)… but more importantly… they would know that God loves them in here (point to heart.)

Let us pray:

Friends, in a few moments we are going to take a special offering… we’re calling it our Christmas Miracle Offering.

Our Christmas Miracle offering will fund two critical ministries in our church: Food Giveaways and Outreach Events.

We know that about 15% of the men, women, and children living in our community go to bed hungry most nights. Our food giveaways allow us to share God’s love by giving away thousands of pounds of healthy food to people in need right here in Watertown.

But we don’t want to stop at just giving people food… we want to give people Christ.

We know that about 70% of the people living in our community do not have a church to call home. Outreach events… like the Easter Egg-Stravaganza and the Community Outdoor Movie… that create opportunities for people to **FEEL** the love of Jesus.

As we sing our song of response: “He Came Down”, I invite you to think about… pray about how God is calling you to “do love” tonight through the Christmas Miracle Offering.