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LOVE - REALITY OF REDEMPTION

Sometimes, Christmas seems unreal. All this talk of peace and hope and love and joy. Our world needs all that. You need that. And that's what makes the reality of Christmas all the more real.

Christmas is the LOVE language that speaks to all people. The book *"The Five Love Languages"* explains how we generally respond emotionally to five communications that makes us feel loved: Affirming words, physical touch, undivided time, receiving gifts, acts of service. These five languages speak "love."

That's the real life world you live in. And on that first Christmas, God spoke volumes. He came to us to be with us, in His physical presence. With words of peace and hope and joy and LOVE, in order to save us, the greatest act of service the world has ever known. The greatest gift ever given, came - to be received.

The name Jesus means "**God saves.**" He is our Savior, the Mighty God who created us and re-creates us in Christ. Jesus is the Christ, the Promised One, the most precious gift of God. Jesus is Lord of all, of time and eternity, the Everlasting Father who will never leave you. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, who is Himself our peace, our hope, our joy, and love. Jesus is Emmanuel, "**God with us,**" the Wonderful Counselor who by the Holy Spirit indwells all who believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Receive Him. Speak words to Jesus that acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior. Spend time with Him, reading the Bible and praying. Worship Him with your church. Realize His presence as you trust Him.

And since He has so loved you, and given you His Holy Spirit, you too can LOVE like He does. That great Christmas passage, Philippians 2:1-11 explains it in grand poetry. Our Creator laid aside heavenly glory to come wrapped in swaddling cloths, to be God's obedient servant and pay for sin, then be raised again to reign in heaven. Many reject Him today, but one day EVERYone will acknowledge, Jesus IS Lord!

Because before Eden, God planned Emmanuel for all Eternity - God with us! The majestic language in Ephesians 1:3-14 expands our understanding the reality of our redemption. In LOVE, our Creator, "**before the foundation of the world**" determines to be our Redeemer - as He lavishes upon us the riches of His grace. God ordains that all those He adopts as His children - and who in "**the fulness of time**" believe in Jesus - will live forever with Him, for the "**praise of His glory**" in Christ. That's love!

1 John 4:9 says "**In this the LOVE of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.**" The message of Christmas is all there. Our Creator comes in a Cradle to go to the Cross and pay for sin and rise again to gain the Crown of eternal life.

1 John 4:10 says "**In this is LOVE, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the payment for our sins.**" It's not something you earn. You receive His love and life by simply by receiving God's gift of Jesus. He is your Redeemer. Jesus saves! That's love. And then, as 1 John 4:11 says, "**Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to LOVE one another.**" In Christ, you are the beloved child of God. As His resurrection life lives through yours, you - not only *ought to* but are ABLE to - love one another. Because, as Galatians 5:22 teaches, love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

So this Christmas, YOU can echo God's lavish language of love in Christ, in real life. You can speak affirming words to others, encouraging them with good news about Jesus. You can hug and touch others, to convey the love of Christ, "**God with us.**" You can spend time with them, especially those grieving or lonely, when the absence of loved ones and the weight of loss seems so heavy during holidays.

You can do acts of service. Put their needs ahead of yours. Think creatively about blessing others, in Jesus' name. And of course, gifts. Giving and receiving. Receive the gifts others give you, no matter how tasteless they may seem. Appreciate their intentions of thoughtfulness. Thank them. Be a giver, not a taker. Give gifts that convey love to others. Accompany them with the lavish love of Christ.

YOU can do all five practical LOVE languages, even when you don't feel like it - IF you have received God's gift in Christ. Our Redeemer sets you FREE from sin and self so that His real life overflows through you. That's your real life: Realizing the reality of that Christ-child in the manger - and how only JESUS can make YOUR real life really REAL. Now, and forever.