

## Christmas Eve, Year A

- God loves you
- That is the takeaway, the headline for tonight, and I wanted to lead with it so that if you hear nothing else that I say tonight, you hear this: God loves you
- There are plenty of other messages we often hear about what tonight means – Christmas is about family, or about kindness, or solidarity with all humanity, or about the joy of giving to others
- And if those are helpful ideas for something of what Christmas is about, by all means, hold onto them
- But more than anything, what Christmas really is, is a love story
- And I don't think that we hear that or realize it enough
- Tonight is a love story written by the author of the cosmos – a love story that God has been writing to humanity for all of time – a love story that God is still writing to us, to you, tonight
- God loves you
- Tonight is not the beginning or end of this love story
- It began at the creation of the world, when God saw everything that God had created and day after day, creation upon creation, God lovingly declared that it was good
- Tonight is a love story written to the people of God, whom God always, always loves, even when they turn their backs and walk away – even when they harm one another and break God's heart
- Tonight is a love story about how the infinite love of an infinite God somehow still keeps growing, including more and more and more people in its scope – from the first two humans to entire families and nations and eventually all the world, which someday, God says, will one day be united under the same loving King of Kings
- Tonight is a love story about just how far God was willing, is willing to go for love of humanity – not just from Nazareth to Bethlehem, but from heaven to earth, from the throne of the universe to a trough for livestock and from majesty to diapers
- Tonight is a love story that doesn't begin or end in a manger, but sometimes finds its most profound expression there
- Wonder of wonders, tonight we see the one called Mighty God unable to hold up his own head
- Tonight we see the one called Everlasting Father made a vulnerable child

- Here, in the manger, a child has been born for us, a son given to us – and that child is love made flesh – that son is the son of the living God
- Our God-with-us, Emmanuel, made flesh even knowing what flesh means – even knowing what awaits the Messiah who comes not to conquer but to serve, not to overpower, but to love, to show us that God’s love has no limit
- Because God’s love is so great that it fills the distance between heaven and earth and surprises us by bringing the God who is above the heavens close enough for us to touch
- God’s love is so great that it fills the distance between manger and cross, and beyond both, so that we know that even before our birth we are beloved of God and even when we die God’s love will not allow our stories to end there
- Because that is how much God loves us
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- Tonight, or any other night, when we find ourselves to be people who walk in darkness, we can always know that there is a great light, and that light is the love of God – a love so bright that even the dark days and long nights of winter cannot overcome it
- That is the Good News of great joy for all people: our God will leave no stone unturned when it comes to loving us
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- Tonight, a love letter is written in flesh and blood and dirt, **our** flesh and blood and dirt
- Tonight, a love song is being sung in the insistent wails of a newborn infant, wails that refuse to be ignored, as if to say...
- Tonight, there can be no doubt: God loves you