

# Two Things Christmas Gives Us (John 17:18)

**Big Idea:** The birth of Jesus gives us a radical encounter with God's love and a profound repurposing of your life.

I've been preaching for 33 Christmases now. I've preached the gospel stories. I've preached the prophecies. I've preached Christmas from Hebrews and Revelation before. But I never noticed this Christmas passage until this week. There's enough in one sentence to change your life.

The verse is very simple: "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

This is part of what is called Jesus' high priestly prayer. It's a prayer that Jesus prayed for us right before he died. In this prayer, we get a window into the very heart of Jesus. Not only that, but we get a window into what happened in eternity that caused Jesus to be born at Christmas.

"Jesus' "high priestly prayer" (John 17) is only about 650 words. It takes only 3 minutes and 30 seconds to read it aloud. But it will take all eternity for us to fully understand it!" ([Justin Taylor](#))

Today I want to highlight this one sentence of this prayer: "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

Such a simple verse, and yet there's so much there. We get two things in this passage that change our lives. Here's the first:

# Christmas gives us a radical encounter with God's love.

"As you sent me into the world..." Jesus prays.

Jesus is the only human being in history who could say this. All of us can say that we were conceived. Many of us can say that we were hoped for. Some of us can say that we were unplanned. But only one person in history can say that he was sent, and his name is Jesus.

This is not the first time that Jesus has talked about his sent-ness. I did a search of the word "sent" in the Gospel of John and it's all over the place:

*Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.." (4:34)*

*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me... (6:38)*

*You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me. (7:28-29)*

*I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. (8:42)*

This is not a minor thing. Somebody's [written](#), "The entire Gospel is about sending and being sent. The term 'sent' and its derivatives appear almost sixty times in the Gospel of John."

One thing is clear: the consistent message of Jesus in John is that he was sent. You get a window into the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this passage. Galatians 4:4 says:

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)*

Jesus was sent with a mission. So many things set apart the birth of Jesus. We could focus on the number of prophecies that were fulfilled in his birth. We could talk about the miraculous nature of his virgin birth. We could talk about the fact that Jesus left the praises of heaven to be born in obscurity, noticed only by people who didn't matter. He could talk about how his genealogies included people that most of us would hide if we recorded our family trees.

So many things set apart the birth of Jesus, but one of them that we must not overlook is that Jesus was born because Jesus was sent. Jesus came because Jesus was sent by God on a mission.

And why was he sent? Jesus came on a mission, sent by his Father, out of love for you. The Father was so full of love that, knowing the worst about us, he sent his Son on a rescue mission to save us. Jesus was so obedient to his Father, and so willing to serve us that he gladly went on that mission, giving up the best of heaven to rescue us. That's how much God loved us!

I have a pretty bad habit. Sometimes I get so focused on something that I have to do that it's easy for me to ignore people. I can be so task-focused that I miss out on relationships.

But Jesus' mission was love. He didn't get distracted from his mission. He pursued it with single-mindedness. You see him announcing good news to people, giving hope to sinners, inviting people to follow him, and then finally setting his face toward the cross where he gave his life in exchange for ours, only to defeat death and take his place back at God's right hand, reigning over us.

Jesus came on a mission, and that mission was us. I love how one person [puts it](#):

*Jesus left his Father (in the incarnation) and his mother (in the crucifixion) to be united with, and hold fast to, his bride (the church).*

<https://twitter.com/AJWTheology/status/1603000727651352577>

The birth of Jesus is a love story. It's a rescue mission. It speaks to the gracious heart of God and his immense love for his people.

God sent Jesus, and Jesus was willing to go. At the center of the world is self-giving love.

I love how Tim Keller describes what happened in his book [The Reason for God](#). The world began with a divine dance of love: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a community of persons pouring glorifying, joyful love into one another. Out of an overflow of love, they created the universe in an explosion of God's glory so that we get to enjoy their joy and relationship as well. But we rebelled against God and lost the dance. But God didn't leave us there.

*The Son of God was born into the world to begin a new humanity, a new community of people who could lose their self-centeredness, begin a God-centered life, and, as a result, slowly but surely have all other relationships put right as well.*

He didn't get anything out of it. "He began to do with us what he had been doing with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity. He centers upon us, loving us without benefit to himself."

"When we discern Jesus moving toward us and encircling us with an infinite, self-giving love, we are invited to put our lives on a whole new foundation," Keller says.

If you hear nothing else today, I want you to hear this: at the very heart of Christmas is the self-giving love of God. God sent Jesus, not to teach a system of philosophy or to conquer. God sent him to serve, to offer his life for us, to do what we couldn't do for ourselves. He came to rescue you and me from sin and death.

What we get at Christmas is a radical encounter with God's love, a love that will change your life when you receive it. Turn to Jesus. Bring him your life. Bring him your mess. Christmas gives us a window into the heart of God, and what we see in God's heart is love, a love that is so great that the Father sent Jesus on a rescue mission for you and for me.

Christmas gives us a radical encounter with God's love. But it gives us something else too.

## **Christmas gives us a profound repurposing of our lives.**

Ask the average person why they exist, and they'll tell you they exist to be happy. If you look hard, you'll find someone who says the purpose of life is to love. Most people would say that this is why they're alive: to enjoy life, and to love others.

If you ask Jesus why you're on the earth, he would begin where this prayer does: with God's glory.

*I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (John 17:4-5)*

Why do you exist? You exist to bring God glory.

But Jesus expands on our purpose in this part of the prayer. "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, Jesus has sent us into the world.

It's like ripples. The story of the world begins before the world began with the self-giving love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But God created humanity to share that love. We rebelled, but God sent Jesus. He was born into this world on a mission to bring us back into that love. And now he gives us the role of spreading that love further into the world. That's your purpose. As God sent Jesus, know Jesus sends you so that love continues to spread throughout the world.

It means that we get to carry on the same job that Jesus started. We get to invite people to experience the love of God that was revealed to us by Jesus at the cross.

You can do this. You don't have to be a gifted evangelist to do this. You can just be you. I love how [one person](#) describes how she does this:

*Every day I asked God to fill me afresh with his love and compassion for others. I invited unbelievers to do things with me socially. I asked them questions to better understand who they were and what their obstacles to faith were. I began to casually drop mention of God into ordinary conversation to see if it might spark their curiosity in faith, the way I had seen Jesus do. I prayed that God would use me. Most of all, I asked God to open their eyes and draw them to the beauty and wonder of the gospel.*

Ask God to give you love and compassion for others. Invite unbelievers into your life. Ask them questions. Casually bring God into the conversation. Pray that God uses you and opens their eyes. Repeat.

32 years preaching Christmas, and I'd never taken notice of this amazing verse before in relation to Christmas.

The birth of Jesus gives us a radical encounter with God's love and a profound re-purposing of your life.

I need both. Bask in his love today. Receive it. And then ask him to use your life so as many people as possible get to experience that love too.