

The Greatest Love Story Ever

Text : **I John 4: 7-21**

INTRODUCTION :

A. What is the greatest love story of all times ?

1. Romeo and Juliet is the classic we all had to read in school.
2. I knew a man who moved away from his carrier and left everything to save his children.
3. A woman who once worked for me gave a kidney to save her son's life. Having only one kidney caused her problems the rest of her life. The son died anyway. When asked if she regretted having given him the kidney, without blinking she replied, "Not for a minute; I'd do it again in a heartbeat."
4. When Alvin was 7 yrs old Andrea, his three year old sister, had leukemia. Without a bone-marrow transplant she was going to die, but Alvin was the only match. So his parents explained the procedure and told him he was so lucky because he could give his sister "the gift of life." His one word answer was, "Okay." When he woke up from the anesthesia he asked the nurse, "Am I in Heaven yet ?" She laughed and, "No, you're right here in the hospital. You're fine." With that Alvin began to cry, the nurse tried to console him with assurances that his parents were coming in soon and he would be going home soon, but her consolations just made matters worse. "What's wrong ?" the nurse asked, "Are you in pain." Still sobbing, Alvin replied, "I don't want my sister to die, you were supposed to give my life as a gift to her so she wouldn't die." With that the nurse began to cry.

B. Such stories of love touch our hearts, but there's one even greater than any of these.

1. It's a story of the love of a father for his children though they hurt Him in ever way.
2. Of all His many children, He had only one who pleased Him in every way.
3. All of His children left in rebellion, but that one Good Son stayed with Him.
4. His love for His children was so strong that He sent the Good Son to rescue those who had rebelled against Him even though He knew it would cost the Good Son His life.

C. The Good Son was Himself a fantastic love story.

1. He was heir to all His Father possessed. ("rich and powerful")
 - a. He was honored for His virtue.
 - b. He lived in glory and splendor.
 - c. He ruled over many servants who did His bidding.
2. But, He left all that He had to seek out and to rescue His lost brothers and sisters.
 - a. He knew He would die trying to save them.
 - b. He knew He was leaving wealth and going into poverty.

- c. He knew He would suffer shame and endure great pain.
- d. He knew that even after He died for them, many of the Father's children would refuse to allow Him to save them.

TRANSITION :

Of course we all realize we are referring to the love of God for the children of His creation, for mankind.

I. God's love is an outpouring of Himself.

A. God -IS- love.

I John 4:16- We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

B. God demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus to save us.

I John 4:10-11 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

C. Man has the capacity for great love because we have been created in God's image.

1. Man inherits His Heavenly Father's natural tendency to love.
 - a. The scriptures refer to our normal family ties as, "natural affection."
 - 1) **Rom. 1:31**
 - 2) **II Tim. 3:3**
 - b. Men don't just lay their eggs and swim away like a turtle.
2. This natural love carries over into the family of God, i.e., **into His church.**
 - a. In the church we have familial feels toward each other. (**Call each other brother**)
 - b. Leaders feel parental toward their flock.
 - 1) Paul called Timothy his **"true child in the faith."** (**I Tim. 1:2**)
 - 2) Paul referred to himself as the **"father"** of the Corinthian church. (**I Cor. 4:15**)
 - 3) John referred to the brethren as **"my little children."** (**I John 2: 1**)
3. Like any family, in the church family the strong carry the weak.
 - a. **Gal. 6: 1-2**
 - b. **Rom. 15: 1-2**

II. God's display of love for His children was not an emotional reaction to a situation.**A. People often spontaneously do great acts of love in response to emergencies.**

1. A woman in the late 50s lifted a 1953 Buick off of her son.
 - a. It was an impossible feat, but she did it to save his life.
 - b. Every vertebra in her back was destroyed, but she saved her son.
2. A man attacked a bear with only a rock trying to get it off his son.
 - a. The child was saved.
 - b. The man was very nearly killed and disfigured for life.
3. We've all heard stories of such heroic acts done in response to horrible circumstances.
 - a. People who could not swim jumping in to save drowning children.
 - b. People running into burning buildings trying to save their children.

B. God carefully planned what He would do to save His children.

1. His plan to rescue us from sin was in place before He created the world.
 - a. **I Pet. 1:20-21** For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.
 - b. God is omniscient. He did not want man to sin, but He knew we would.
2. Many details of God's rescue plan were revealed by the prophets hundreds of years before.
 - a. **Isa. 53**, etc.
 - b. **Acts 10: 43** (cf. – **3: 24**)
3. Thus, people can use the prophets to confirm that He is the promised one.

C. When Jesus came, all things were ready for God's plan to be implemented.

1. John the Baptizer had been miraculously born to prepare the way.
2. When the time was exactly right, Jesus was born.

Gal. 4: 4-5 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

III. God's rescue plan was flawlessly executed.

A. John the Baptizer prepared the way for Jesus.

1. John's birth was miraculous enough to draw attention.
2. The preaching of John was powerful and got people looking for the promised Savior.

B. Jesus was miraculously born.

1. Mary trusted God so she gave birth to the child.
2. Righteous Joseph swallowed His pride and raised the child. (**Imagine the shock ?**)
3. The events surrounding his birth drew attention to it. (**Shepherds, Magi, Killings**)

C. Imagine the shock to the Son of Heaven.

1. The trauma of birth.
 - a. The pain of being born
 - b. Leaving the security of the womb to face a frightening world
 - c. Leaving the water environment into air and the smells of a barn
 - d. Leaving the warmth of the womb into the cold of an early Spring night
 - e. No longer having all nutrition supplied, but having to cry for food
 - f. Experiencing the sights and sounds for the first time
2. The cultural adjustments. (**talk about culture shock**)
 - a. He went from wealth and splendor to poverty.
 - b. He went from ruler to servant of all. (**Children were under everyone's authority.**)
 - 1) Parents
 - 2) Customers
 - 3) Relatives and neighbors

D. His arrival was announced.

1. His birth was announced to shepherds in the field.
 - a. The announcement was made to common people.
 - b. **Luke 2: 8** ... Since they were there at night, we know it was not in the winter.
2. The foreign wise men (*Gentiles*) from the East came following a star.
 - a. Must have left much earlier. (**Jesus would not have stayed in the stable long.**)
 - b. They brought three gifts, but we don't know how many came. (**Caravan – protect**)
3. God did not announce His Son to the religious or civic leaders.
 - a. Jesus did not come to be a part of the establishment.
 - b. He was not welcomed by the establishment. (**Herod viewed Him as competition.**)

IV. When Jesus completed His rescue assignment, He returned home.

A. Jesus had a specific assignment on the earth.

1. **John 9: 4-** We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.
2. **John 17: 4-5** I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

B. When Jesus died on the cross, His work on earth was done.

1. On the cross, Jesus said, “It is finished.” (**John 19: 30**)
2. Jesus came to the earth specifically to die.
Mark 10: 45- For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

C. His leaving was just as miraculous as His birth.

1. Relate the events of the ascension. **Acts 1: 9-11**
2. Jesus left the earth forever changed.
 - a. He was born as a man. **Phil 2**
 - b. He died as a man. **John 19**
 - c. He ascended as a man. **Acts 1: 6ff**
 - d. He now intercedes in Heaven as a man. **I Tim. 2: 5-6**

CONCLUSION :

However, the most spectacular day of all will be the day that He returns again.

A. Few people heard the announcement of the birth of Jesus, but ALL will know when He arrives on the last day.

1. Every person who ever lived will see Him in the air.
Rev. 1:7 - Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; ...
2. There will be a shout heard around the world and even the dead will rise before Him.
 - a. **I Thes. 4: 16** - For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
 - b. Compare : **John 5: 25-29** ... Good or evil, ALL will rise

B. As with His coming, there will be different reactions to His return.

1. People responded to His birth in different ways.
 - a. The shepherds rejoiced.
 - b. The Magi worshipped.
 - c. King Herod tried to kill Him.
2. Likewise, responses will vary when He returns.
 - a. Will you rejoice ?
 - b. Will you be fearful ?

C. Jesus came to earth to rescue you, not to condemn you.

1. **John 3: 16-17**
2. He wants to enable you to rejoice at His coming.
3. **LET HIM RESCUE YOU FOR THE HORRIBLE FATE THAT AWAITS YOU !!**
 - a. Accept His love.
 - b. Respond to His call for you to come to Him. (gospel)

Invitation :