

Some years ago a soldier and his girl friend were married. Within a week he left for Germany. During their separation he sent letters and gifts reminding her of his love. Then one night there came a knock on the her door. She opened it and was shocked to her husband standing there. They embraced with the joy of reunion.

God and man have been separated by sin. But God has kept in touch thru our consciences, the prophets, he gives us many gifts, and he has kept in touch thru the love letters of the Bible. But now, God comes to you himself. . there is a star, a rented stable, a new born child, and look who's here. The separation is over. God is with us. This is the meaning of Christmas.

Now many of you have been in the maternity ward of a hospital. There before the viewing window stands the proud father and admiring relatives of the new-born. And the inspection of the new arrival is made. At Christmas we can, for the first time, view our new baby. From the text in John we get of first view, and our first opportunity to study his features.

1. One the first things you note about the baby Jesus is his face..it is the face of life. John says: "In him was life and the life was the light of men." When Jesus matures into manhood we hear him say: "I am the way the truth and the life"

And he says further: "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10) 2

How about you. Are you experiencing life with a capital L. Have you met Christ, believed him, obeyed him and let him lead you to the abundant life? A teacher one time asked her students to write a brief autobiography. When the papers were returned one young man waited after class and asked: "Teacher, what I want to know is, how can you rate my entire life as a C-minus?" That is true of many people. They live without much love, much joy, much hope. And it all comes out rather colorlessly, and flat....a C-minus life.

In 1928 a man was working on his Model A. He had done everything he knew of to do but it still wouldn't start. So he threw down his wrench in disgust. About that time a sharp looking model A drove up..and a well dressed man stepped out. He said: "I see you are having a little difficulty with your car. If you will adjust the magneto and tighten the starter your car will start". So he did and it started right off. With surprise he said: "Just who are you anyway, Mister?" And the stranger reached out his hand and said: "The name is Ford, Henry Ford".

Now one of the messages that we have today is: the God of all creation has stepped into the world to tap you on the shoulder and say: "If it is not working, listen to me. I made you. I engineered the job. . mentally and physically. I ought

to know what makes you tick"

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Well, how about you? Do you feel God tapping you on the shoulder today? Will you turn to him and do as he says. He is the God of life. You could see it in his face even when he was aa baby. Listen to him and you can really begin to live. "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly

2. So here we are, a church in the maternity ward examining our baby for the first time. He is life most other babies...but his face is the face of life...and there is a warm glow about him. Even the artists have regularly painted him that way. He has a face of light. John says: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . the true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world"

When I read that last line I sign a deep sign of relief and think: Wow, just in time. . it can't get much darker".

The world today is living in a long period of nightmarish darkness. Evil stalks our world. There are 19 violent crimes per minute. 2.6 billion worth of goods are shoplifted each year. Add to that much more including the international stesses and you end up with a picture of despair...unless, of course, you are an ostrich.

It is said that when Goethe was dying he cried out: "Light more light". That is the cry of the world today. And God has heard our cry. Jesus came and his sign was a guiding

light, a bright star in the heavens. Still, tho, we wait for the prophets words to come true: "And nations shall ^④ come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isaiah 60:3). And even before the child left the manger, people made their way to the light.

Why did God send us a light? We know the value of light in a strange darkness. Even if you have ever groped your way at midnight thru your own house you know the value of light. Farms and businesses know the value of light. We have street-lights so that people can find their way. Light enables us to see where we are going. And that is why God has sent us the light. He wanted us to really see. He wanted us to find our way home to him.

3. So we look at the child and see life and light. But there is something else. John says: "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace".

The Bible teaches us that God is the creator, it explains that God made man in his own image. And he wanted man to freely love him and fellowship with him. But he also gave us the freedom to love him or ignore him. And there has been a lot of ignoring, hiding. But God didn't become indifferent and say: "I could care less", nor did he become vengeful, saying: "I'll get even with you". No, God didn't act like that at all. He said; "I still love you, it is not my will that you should perish. I will come to you myself. I will send my son

to you".

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Hall mark cards advertizes: "When you care enough to send the very best". This Christmas remember that that is what God has done. He sent you the best. "For God so loved the world that he sent his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life". Think about that for a moment. God gave his son that you might have life. He did not say: "I have no need of you". He did not say: "I don't want to get involved with you". He did say, and is saying: "I care. . I will go out to seek and to save the lost".

Now let's suppose for a moment that some terrorist group has a doomsday weapon aimed and ready to go off and destroy the world. And they come to you to negotiate. They say: "If you give us one of your children to sacrifice, we will defuse the weapon." Would you deal with them? Which one of your children would you give? But God has already given his only son.

Don't you see what manner of love God has for us. And here, at Christmas time, is his son in a manger. See his tiny hands and feet. Those are the same hands and feet that will be nailed to a cross. Those are the same hands and feet that will bleed. And what do you see in the child's face. We see a face of love....John summed it up "God is love". He is not vindictive, he is not malevolent, he is not indifferent. He is love. He comes to give life, and light, and love.

Gwendolyn Brooks has a little poem that one of her school girls wrote: ⑥

On the day I was born
All the people came for miles around
To see what Mom had done;
And when they saw me,
They just couldn't believe she'd done
A thing like that.

There in the manger is Jesus. He is a real human being. He has hair and ears, a tiny nose and hands and feet. But, there we see the Almighty himself. As John says: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known". (John 1:18)

Would you like to see God? You've never seen him before? Maybe conscience, nature, prophets and Scripture are not enough.

Then look in the manger.

For our Lord said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9) What does God in a human face look like?

Well, he is life for those of us who are dying,
He is light for those of us who are lost,
He is love for those of us who are unlovable.