

Introduction:

- Luke 1:4 *that you may be certain of the truths you have been taught.*
 - Christmas Foretold-God's Plan
 - Christmas Told-God's Action
 - Christmas Retold-God's Heart, this is today's message.
- Did you know that the famed Christmas classic movie MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET, which premiered in 1947, was originally released in June, not December? That's right. The studio knew that it had a potential hit on their hands, so they didn't want to forgo the extra dollars that a summertime blockbuster could rake in (apparently, holiday blockbusters weren't yet a sure deal back in 1940s). Producers knew that selling a "Christmas" movie in the summertime could be a bit tricky, so they billed it as a romantic comedy--a love story!--and totally downplayed the film's holiday theme. The marketing department even tailored the movie posters to show the film's "love interest" stars, Maureen O'Hara and John Payne, coyly eying one another, with the film's other stars--Edmund Gwenn, who played Kris Kringle, and then child-star Natalie Wood--tucked neatly and discretely in the background. In essence, it was a Christmas story pretending to be a love story. The ploy worked, and the film was a huge success. It has now been viewed and cherished over and over again--not in the summer, but every Christmas, by every generation since. **APPLICATION** Did you know that the Christmas story--you know, the real one with shepherds and wisemen and the baby Jesus--isn't just a Christmas story? At its heart, it is a love story! A love story that just happens to be celebrated at Christmas. It first premiered over two thousand years ago and has been cherished over and over again--not just at Christmas, but every day, by every heart longing to be loved, in every generation since. This holiday season, don't just rehearse a Christmas story. Rehearse the great love story that is the gift of Jesus. *"For God so loved (loved so much) the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).
- What makes the Christmas story so re-tellable?
 - It really is a love story.
 - It is love story that touches the heart.
 - Most stories that we retell are stories that reflect some kind of relational aspect.
 - This story is easily retold for three reasons: It's important to His relationship with us. It's important to our relationship with Him. And it's important that others know they can have this relationship.

I. Its Important to His Relationship With Us

- A. We have to remember, that from before the Garden of Eden, God had a plan! And that plan was that we would have a home with Him!
 1. God has always wanted a people for Himself. The garden, the fall, Immanuel and at the end of the age. God now lives among His people (Rev 21:3).
 2. God has always wanted man to live in His love, respond to His love and share His love. Love is the dominating force of the Gospel/Good News. I love you!
- B. God took the first step by preparing a plan in advance. God took the next step in that He acted to demonstrate His love.
 1. So we retell the story because we are touched by the extent of which God went to show us His love (to have a relationship with us). Jesus could have been born in a palace but He came to serve and to love us.

- a) He knows what it feels like to be a man in my world.
 - b) Bad things that happen to me happened to Him.
 - c) Born in a barn-poverty.
 - d) Born of a woman.
 - e) Knows hunger.
 - f) Knows loneliness.
 - g) Knows rejection.
 - h) Knowing that is part of His story, lets us know that God understands.
 - i) The focus at Christmas is the birth of Christ but we cannot ever forget that His love went beyond the stable!
- C. God in His holiness was so far out of our league that in our eyes, "There was no way we would ever get a date." God in His holiness and purity would utterly destroy us if even got close. There was such a divide between us and God and there was no way we stood a chance of life.
1. But He wanted this relationship! He wanted it because He loved! *"For God so loved (loved so much) the world that He gave..."*
 2. We love retelling the story because we see His desire for us in it. We were important to Him. In this I realize He cares.

II. It's Important To Our Relationship With Him.

- A. ***You retell stories that are important/valuable to you.
1. Another way of saying that is, you retell a story because in doing so you share the value of a relationship that is important to you. Ie. The January 6th, 1980 story where Tim Franklin found Jesus!
 2. We retell the Christmas story because the account reveals something about our relationship with God. Something in it touches our heart.
- B. God loved me so much that He gave His one and only Son to die in my place. And in doing so:
1. I received something that I did not deserve. His love and His forgiveness. *"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* (Romans 5:8, NLT) God had a plan and He acted! It was the plan of redemption and He acted on it!
 2. I received something that I could never earn. His love and His life. *his life brought light to everyone.* Jn 1:1 and Jn 3:16 says that by trusting in Him I receive eternal life.
 3. I received sonship when I was orphaned! *"But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God."* (John 1:12, NLT)
 4. I received value and significance in this life simply by trusting Him. *"Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,"* (Psalm 17:8, NKJV)
- C. We love retelling the story because it reveals our desire for Him. He is important to us. In this He knows we care.

III. Its Important That Others Know They Can Have This Relationship.

- A. We retell the story because it is the heart of God and it is our mission.

- B. God wrote the story clearly to reveal His heart. Again, Jesus could have been born in a palace. Yet He came to serve and to love us. It wasn't about Him it was about us.
1. And every time someone is born again a new lamp is lit to send forth the message that *God did not send His Son to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.* Jn 3:17
- C. It important that the world have this relationship.
1. This Importance of retelling relationship shows others His heart. And allows us opportunity to fulfill His mission of making followers of Christ of all whom we meet.
- D. One of my most favorite parts of telling the Gospel is Is. 53:6 *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* (Isaiah 53:6, NKJV)

Conclusion:

- Good Love stories are always retold! Lets go beyond *Miracle on 34th Street* to *Miracle on Lake Andrew Dr.*
- We retell the Christmas story for three reasons: It reveals something important about God's relationship with us. It reveals something important about our relationship with Him. It lets others know that they to can have this relationship.
- God wrote the story clearly to reveal His heart.
- "The tradition of mistletoe is worth noting," says sermon illustrator Raymond McHenry. It dates back to the Druids in Northern Europe. They believed mistletoe had curative power and thought it could even cure broken relationships. When two enemies found themselves under a tree with mistletoe above, they saw it as a sign from God that they should lay down their weapons and be reconciled. **APPLICATION** McHenry continues: When missionaries moved into Northern Europe, they realized this was a perfect symbol for what occurred on that first Christmas. Christ's birth ushered in the opportunity of reconciliation between man and God, so the mistletoe offered a powerful tool for communicating this truth. Although today we associate the greenery with romance, its deeper meaning provides a rich reminder of what God has done through the birth of his Son." *"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"* (2 Corinthians 5:18).