

Jesus Loves Me, This I Know  
Isaiah 61:1-4, John 3:16

Most of you must know Rick Warren, the famous preacher of Saddleback Church, and his book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*. In his book, Rev. Warren explains that everyone's life is driven by something. Most people live their lives driven by forces such as: envy, jealousy, guilt, resentment, anger, fear, materialism, or the need for approval.

Last year, on the day after Christmas, my wife Sun and my daughter Esther got up at four o'clock in the morning and went to the mall for the after-Christmas sales. When they returned, bringing home a few baby items for my grandson Benjamin, they reported, "Thousands and thousands of people were already there when we arrived!" Thousands and thousands of people were driven to the mall at 4:00 am looking for 75%-off bargains. I believe there are thousands of people in the mall right now. Much of our lives flows away aimlessly in the rushing wave of worldly tendencies.

But today, you are driven here not by the concern of what to buy, but by the spirit of Christmas. Apart from worldly concerns, we are here to celebrate Christmas. Christmas brings a totally new direction to our lives.

Karl Barth, a world-famous Swiss theologian, gave a last lecture across the United States shortly before his death. A student in one of his seminars could not fully understand Barth's complex ideas and theology. So he asked him, "I know you have written volumes and volumes of theology, but can you sum up your theology in a single sentence?" Then the famous theologian answered, "Yes. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!"

This simple hymn is known to nearly every child in the world. I would like to share this simple Christmas message with you, in accordance with the Gospel of John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This is the essence of the gospel of Christianity. I would like to share with you three concepts from this scripture.

**First, the essence of meaningful life is love.** God created humans as beings of love. If a life is failed in love, then that life is a total failure. On the other hand, if a life is steady in love, that life is steady in worth no matter what the other circumstances are.

Life is all about love. And also, love is life. God, the life-giver, is also love. Because God is love, the most important thing on earth is love. If I imagine that there was no love in my life, no matter what I had, what I did, and what I was, I would be bankrupt in life. Without love, life is nothing. Life without love is truly worthless. Life minus love equals zero.

God loves us, so that our lives can be revived. Love is not a temporary matter. It is the matter of our whole life. Paul said that love will last forever; "These three things continue forever: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love."

Have you ever thought about your legacy for your children? What legacy will you leave for them? Love leaves a legacy. How you treated other people, not your wealth or accomplishments, is the most enduring impact you can leave on earth. As Mother Teresa said, "It's not what you do, but how much love you put into it that matters." Love is the secret of a lasting heritage.

We will be evaluated on our love. In heaven, God won't say, "Tell me about your career, your bank account, and your hobbies." Instead, he will review how you treated other people, particularly those who were in need. Jesus said the way to love him is to love his family and care for their practical needs: "Truly I tell you, just as you did to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did to me." (Matthew 25:40)

**Second, love is giving.** Without giving, love is impossible. Love looks to giving to fulfill its purpose. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for the world.

One day, the famous Russian poet, Alexander Pushkin, was walking in a park near his house. He was walking deep in thought when he came upon a beggar. Pushkin put his hands into his coat pockets, but couldn't find anything to give him. So he took off his hat and bowed to the beggar, saying "Brother, I'm sorry that I can't offer you anything but this greeting this morning."

Then the beggar ran to his fellow beggars, shouting, "I received a great present from a gentleman!" The other beggars asked him to share what he was given by the gentleman. But the beggar said, "It's not something I can share. It was first time in my life that I was treated like a person."

What shall we give? Spirit or material? There are two opposing theories in philosophy. One theory says that the spiritual produces the material, and the other that the material produces the spiritual. What comes first in life – the spiritual or the material? This is quite a complicated question. Theoretically, we may the spirit, but practically, we expect the material first.

Christmas is a gift from God to us, and that gift was the Word of God become flesh. The greatest gift is to give oneself. Jesus came to give himself to us. This is the way of loving.

Love is a top priority in life, but it can easily get lost and overlooked in a busy schedule. But love is more important than other priorities, because God created humans as beings of love. If you can feel love, and you have someone to love, then you can endure anything for the beloved. Where love is, there also is the real meaning of life.

**Third and last, the love of Jesus ignites our life eternal.** Some people live with passion, but destroy their lives. Two thousand years ago, the Roman Empire conquered much of Europe and Asia Minor. The Roman Emperor was the ultimate symbol of power. This power was illustrated as a charioteer driving a chariot pulled by two horses. The chariot pulled by two horses symbolizes a passion to live in the world. In the passion of worldly life, the two horses are desire and anger. "I want that dress." "I am angry at that boy." Our lives are fueled by these basic impulses.

But the power of love of Jesus is greater than the power of worldly passion.

When Norris Dam was first built in the hills of East Tennessee, a worker on the night-shift noticed something very strange. He could not believe his eyes. He could hear the noise of the great generators, creating incredible amounts of electricity. But when he looked across the lake, he noticed that every cabin he saw was lit by kerosene lamps, and not by electricity.

When he asked why this was so, he was told that the transmission lines had not yet been laid. Think of that. Those people in the cabins lived in the shadow of this great dam, but they could not receive its power because they were not connected to it. The power was there, but they were not plugged in.

Likewise, God's power of love is available. God's strength is accessible. God's energy is at hand. God's presence is near, but many people are not connected to it. They live in the shadow of the power source, but they are not plugged in.

In 1977, Guideposts magazine reported a true story about a man hiking in the mountains. He was caught in a sudden snowstorm and quickly lost his way. Since he was not dressed for the cold weather, he knew that he needed to find shelter fast, or he would freeze to death. Despite all his efforts, time slipped by, and his hands and feet became numb. He knew his time was short now.

Suddenly, he literally tripped over another man who was almost frozen to death. The hiker had a hard decision to make. What should he do? Forget about the man and continue on, trying to save himself? Or should he try to help the stranger in the snow?

He started to walk on, but he couldn't do it. He came back and threw off his wet gloves. He knelt beside the man. He began to talk to him while massaging the stranger's arms and legs. Soon, the man in the snow began to respond, and together they were able to find help. The hiker was later told by the doctors that helping the man in the snow had saved his own life. For you see, the numbness in his hands had vanished while he was massaging the stranger's arms and legs.

This man's sacrificial love ignites somebody's life. That is the spirit of Christmas. Jesus came to us to ignites our life eternal.

Isaiah 61:1-4 foretells the Message of the Messiah. It is an igniting message to a powerless people:

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,  
Because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor,  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives,  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,  
to proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
and provide for those who grieve in Zion  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

The power of the love of Jesus is here at Christmas. Plug in to the power of love of Jesus then His spirit will ignite you life eternal. Plug in to the power of God eternal and celebrate your life. God is among us. Jump into the river of Grace of God today, God will lead you into the life of joy and peace tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and tomorrow.