

**Christmas Eve**  
**1:30 p.m.**  
**Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20**  
**Love**

Last Wednesday, Amy Mae Reisinger was born to our congregation. Amy Mae is the daughter of Kay Ellen and Andy and sister to Jenna Grace, Katie and Jill. It was a happy day with much to celebrate. Now, of course, Amy Mae's parents and sisters tell us that she's perfect in every way. She is, by far, the very best Christmas gift they could receive. 11,000 babies were born last Wednesday in the United States. 216,000 babies were born in the world last Wednesday. All are just perfect in the eyes of those who love and care for them. That's how it is with babies. Thank God for babies who teach us about the miracles of hope and promise; and shower us with love.

But, we all know that newborn babies, in all their glory and delight, don't make life trouble free. Amy Mae has her nights and days mixed up. So, there isn't a lot of sleep happening in her household. And, Amy Mae's sister isn't so certain that she wants Amy Mae to stay around now that the novelty has worn off. The other day she asked her mom if Amy Mae could go back into her mommy's tummy. When love is born, there's much to rejoice. But, the truth is, the true delights, the joys and wonders that fill our hearts with such love, are born into a world of confusion and turmoil. This is exactly how it was on that Christmas night so many 2000 years ago, when the divine joined with the human to bring us holy love. This is how it is with God's love.

God's love so works that a young, innocent girl, humbled, sings out with joy at the miracle God bestows upon her as the mother of our Lord.

God's love so works that it unites a righteous, kind, trusting Joseph with an unassuming, obedient, faithful young Mary equipping them to parent with determination and devotion.

God's love so works that it shakes and rattles a Roman Empire who believes it has the power to organize the world, holding its citizens accountable through a census and taxation, with little voice and no power; only to stumble and fall at God's redeeming power.

God's love is so abundant that the miracle of new life brought forth in Jesus Christ, can't be silenced, and spreads across all dominions. In the darkness of the night sky, alone at their work, God chooses first to herald the good news to the lonely shepherds; those not usually heard, those who go about doing their job, trying the best they can to make it all work, wanting to believe in the miracle. God's love is so great the meager are made mighty and the mediocre made magnificent.

God's love conquers fear and brings joy. "Look for it," says the angel in the night sky to the awestruck shepherds..."Look for a sign of God's love." Jesus is born, not in a phenomenon of a burning bush or a blinding light; but, simply, without sensation.

This gloriously great being who births promise and hope, blesses us in our burdens and afflictions; is wrapped not in royal robes, but safely bound and wrapped in plain bands of cloth, placed not on a royal throne, but in a manger; tossed in the mix of God's creation. God breaks through, comes in these small places; the simple places, revealing glorious wonders in his most precious son, Jesus Christ.

And God's love is so great, it can't be contained. A royal birth announcement sent in Jesus' time was usually through the gifted words of poets and orators. Instead, we're given a new sign with the wonder of a heavenly host singing an angelic hymn heralding in the birth of a new king, praising God; not a king who walks the halls of palaces ruling with an iron fist. This tiny king rules with love and peace to all who choose to look, and listen and believe that they are especially favored by God.

The shepherds go, hurrying to witness this miracle. Arriving, they drop on bended knee at the proof of God's redeeming love. We want proof. So, we look for the signs; people or things that distinguish God's glory for us. We seek out the young Mary and brave Joseph and the miracle baby, so that we can tell of the heavenly visit; of how the divine is born to us, a light in the darkness, and there shall be endless peace. There lying in the manger is the sign and all are amazed. We too want to be amazed; amazed at how God's love births in us compassion and tenderness.

Last week, the family of Christ Church shared a death as well as a birth. It was a tender time as family and friends gathered to celebrate the miracle of life; and especially to witness in one another the most precious gift of God's love. See, in this family, there was much that could have been said and much that could have been not done. Growing up in this household was often a troublesome time. But, instead, this family decided to honor their loved one. So, amazed at God's love they look for the best; find the good; live with the peace of God that passes all understanding. See, for this family, they've stood at the manger bed, and having their fill of the miracle of God's love, like Mary, they treasure and ponder the glory of this miracle of God's love for us in this Christ child. And, like the shepherds, and all who witness God's love, they go out, praising God. And we go as well, with the extraordinary blending of divine and human throughout and surrounding us.

So today, this Christmas Eve day, this holy day, we give thanks that we're given the sign of God's love in this most precious child, who breathes in us his perfect love. May this love be born in us and live within us every day, as a sign of the peace and joy that comes to us in Jesus Christ.

Now, just for a second, turn and look into the faces of one another, especially those closest. Look deep and see the greatness of Jesus; how he loves us, and fills us with hope. You are his most precious ones who Jesus sends out, praising God, loving and glorifying him in all that we do. For unto us a child is born, a perfect baby, born into a not so perfect world; who loves and lives and rejoices in our praise of him. This is our God, our gift. Merry Christmas!

