

My favorite book this year, which I stayed up too late last night to finish, is by author Allen Levi and his debut novel, *Theo of Golden*. It tells a beautiful story, offering a profound depiction of honesty, vulnerability, and the possibility of kindness through human connection. The story takes place in the fictional town of Golden, Georgia, where the protagonist, an older man named Theo, arrives in town with a mysterious past.

Early on, he visits a coffee shop where he's enraptured with these portraits. Ninety-two pictures, pencil portraits of people within the community of Golden, beautifully done by a local artist. He looks and is enraptured with the beauty of the art. He then has this idea. He begins purchasing them one by one for the purpose of giving them back to what he says is their rightful owner, the one the picture was portraying.

He meets with these individuals, friendships are born, and lives are altered. There's Tony, the local bookshop owner who's humorous, but a bit calloused, broken from the past as a veteran of the Vietnam War. There's Ellen, a houseless woman who's misunderstood, largely forgotten, yet has a hidden depth to her. There's Pierce, the self-centered businessman with a hardened exterior, and there's Minette, a high-powered CPA riddled with grief over a life that took a different turn than expected. I'll spare you the spoilers.

Each character that Theo meets with has a unique story, a complexity to them that you wouldn't notice from the exterior. And as he meets with these people, he engages at a depth, wanting to connect deeper, taking each one and caring for them with the dignity that a human soul deserves.

What we find is these people begin to share not just the polished parts of their life, but the hidden parts, the wounded parts, and the ashamed parts. They start to come out of hiding because being seen with kindness has a way of giving you the courage to face what is deepest within you. Towards the end of the novel, Theo writes a letter during Christmas time that I felt was apropos to share.

I heard a lovely homily about faces this morning. The pastor offered the opinion that when we are born, our first instinct, far deeper than intention, is to find a face. Our weak, blurry, little eyes, wide open, but not yet trained to see, search for something, someone with which to bond. I'm inclined to agree with him. You, do you recall the first time you leaned close to look at your newborn daughter? Did you have a sense that you and she were both reaching towards each other somehow to speak a language too deep for words? I have a close friend who's an eye doctor and a man of great depth. He holds firmly to the belief that the most important, formative, and effortless thing a parent can do for a baby is to gaze into his or her face, to hold him or her

close, and engage the eyes. Could anything be simpler? Is anything more profound? Does anything more deeply change parent and child? I wonder if, like newborn children, we go through our entire lives looking for a face, longing for a gaze that calms and fills us. That loves and welcomes us. That recognizes us and runs to greet us. Is that perhaps what this day, Christmas, is all about? Allen Levi, *Theo of Golden*

We are in a four-week series titled Love Came Down. We're in some ways to use the words of *Theo of Golden*, looking at God, looking at us. We are searching for this gaze, and what we have done in these four weeks leading to today is pull apart, hold carefully, and meditate on the reality of how that scripture writer defines God by this phrase: God is love.

My assumption, my conviction is that every single one of us in here is searching for that loving look, that gaze, the eyes in which we're longing to be known fully and yet truly loved. We started with the grandest of statements in this series. God is love.

We looked at that moment in which John the Apostle was leaning against Jesus the night before he was arrested, and his reflection decades later was that this God was the God of love. As he drew close in intimacy, he learned that the truest thing about God is that God is love. And in turn, the truest thing about John was that he became, in response, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Then the week after that, we looked at the inseparability of God's love. We began to explore whether there was anything we could do that would negate that love. The answer is an emphatic no. There is nothing you can do that will separate you from the love of God. Then last week, we talked about the humble love of God. Because it's one thing to be loved without the ability to be separated, but the love matters. We walked through this beautiful picture of God humbly coming down to us, meeting us where we were at.

We are building on these things as we explore what I'm calling the redeeming character of God's love. What does it mean? Why did God have to come? Why Christmas? Why did God come as a human? Why did we need this love to enter the story? To understand that we have to understand what Jesus came to correct, what went wrong, what was broken, and what he came to restore. All of that takes us to our text this morning. So in your Bibles, flip to Colossians 1.

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). Two key words carry the weight of these two verses: rescued and redeemed. I want to look at each one in turn.

Rescue

First, the word rescue is the Greek word *rhuomai*, which means rescued and delivered. It's a good translation, but I point out the Greek word because it'll be important later. It also carries a connotation of deliver or deliverance. It more literally means to draw or pull someone out in rescuing them. Think of someone caught in mud or stuck on the side of the road. It's someone reaching out, pulling them in to rescue them. But did you notice something about the rescuing? Look at verse 13. The rescuing is both from a place and to a place. The rescuing has this idea of transferring the identity of the individual, transferring where the person finds themselves. So let's begin with where he rescued us from. Paul calls it the kingdom of darkness.

Now, the fundamental problem with humanity is what has created this kingdom of darkness. I had no idea today was the darkest day of the year, but how apropos. Paul says he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness. How do we understand this? Because this kingdom of darkness begins all the way back to the beginning, in Genesis. There was chaos, darkness, nothingness—*tohu v'bohu*—is the Hebrew phrase. This chaotic nothingness in which God creates the world not out of violence like the other narratives and other beliefs have told, but rather as an overflow of this God who is love.

It's out of the overflow of love that creation springs forth out of them into the darkness, and for two chapters, we live in this harmony in Shalom with God. Humanity lived full of all the goodness of what God created. But then Genesis 3 comes along. And here's where we find the brokenness of the story. Here's where the darkness enters back in, where sin fractures the world.

I want us to pause here because there are a couple of different metaphors that the scriptures use to define this moment, and what the broken situation was that God heals. Most of us rightfully pick up on the narratives that are in the scriptures of a punitive God. A God with whom we have fractured the laws of God and therefore need forgiveness. That is true. In fact, our sin causes a debt that Christ forgives through his death and the resurrection. But why I want to pause here is to bring us back to Genesis 3, to think about the first breaking of creation.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden and said that they could have anything they would like except for this one tree. Then this pesky serpent comes along, known as the Deceiver, the Father of Lies, and notice the way that he plants the deception within Eve and Adam. It's not that you will be guilty; it's not a punitive deception. "Hey, did God really say that? God just doesn't want you to have everything you could want." The lie of the deception is not a legal lie or deception. It's not, "Oh, it's not that bad. Just take it."

The lie of the deceiver is a relational fracture. It's saying that they could not trust God. Adam and Eve, before that, had lived in this harmony. There's a phrase in which they were walking with God in the cool of the day, which is the biblical way of saying everything was flourishing and everything was going as God had intended.

Yet, in that moment, when the serpent comes along, he plants this deception. He says, "God doesn't really love you the way you think he loves you." The deception is a relational fracture. And then it's from that relational fracture that Adam and Eve take on sin and brokenness, and they, in fact, accrue a debt. But never forget that it begins with a fractured relationship. Why do you think Adam and Eve, in response to that, run and hide? Because they're fearful of the God with whom they had fractured the relationship. But God from the beginning was simply love. "Everything you need is here. It's available to you."

This reframes our understanding of sin. If we purely see sin through the punitive lens, it becomes the absence for the love of God. But through the lens of what I'm suggesting, the biblical story, sin is not the absence of love. Rather, it's a misplaced love. It's a searching for love in the wrong places. It's Adam and Eve buying into the myth that they need something more than God, and so they go in search of that love through their own power and control. That changes everything. If it's a misplaced love, not a lack of love, that changes how we should understand sin.

The problem with sin is that it stems from something in us that doesn't believe God is love. Every human being is on the search for love. As Theo said, all of us are searching like a newborn child, waiting for eyes to connect with. And the problem is we are half-hearted creatures, not fully content with that which is God, which is the fullest form of love. So we search for love in the wrong places through productivity, accomplishments, promotions, and achievements, acquisitions, materialism, body image, the pursuit of pleasure, our talent, security, or whatever it is. We are all searching for love.

What's beneath the brokenness of sin is us trying to drum up our own loveliness, saying that if I just achieve this, "if I just eat the apple," if I just get this promotion, if I just acquire this tax bracket, if I just get that girl, that guy, if I just experience this or that, then I'll be loved. It could be said that sin is a failure of desire. Not a distorted desire, but a diminished desire.

You are settling for loves that are far less than the love you're longing for and the love you were created for. You were created, as the author of Ecclesiastes would say, with eternity in your hearts. And, so, what you are longing for is something to match that desire, which you will only find in an eternal God. But we are caught looking in the temporal for the eternal. We're caught grabbing from the tree, thinking that will satisfy.

God is love, and we've spent three weeks now talking about how that means God is fundamentally relational. The kingdom of darkness can manifest in our lives through our actions and behaviors, but the kingdom of darkness that we are rescued from is something far deeper. It's for that deeper longing and search for love that we settle in all the wrong places, for he rescued us from the dominion of darkness.

Now, here's the thing about rescue. Rescue is something that's done for you. It's not something you can do. That's the nature of rescue. It's something in which the person must go to you, pull you out of that mud, or off the side of the road. Rescue is not about what we can conjure up. It's not about making yourself lovable enough so God will rescue you. No,

it's about God rescuing you. It has little to do with you other than you are the recipient of the rescue.

Redemption

So he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness, but there's this second word, look back at verses 13 and 14, *"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves in whom we have redemption. the forgiveness of sins."* This word redemption, and as I mentioned, rescue, carries the weight of these verses.

This word redemption is *apolutrósis*, which means deliverance, redemption, or release. What's fascinating about this word is that it's fundamentally an economic concept in the ancient world, meaning someone went and purchased that, but that purchasing is always in the context of relationship.

The most common example of this in the Old Testament is Ruth and Boaz. Where Boaz redeems the widow, Naomi, because of the familial tie that he has with her, and he then sacrifices at great expense to himself, to rescue and redeem Naomi. It's that idea of delivering, purchasing back the person, but always in connection to the relational tie. You see this also in the book of Exodus, both these phrases, rescue and relationship. This is why I pointed out the two Greek words for you, because I want you to see in Exodus 6.

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free [rescue] you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you (The word we just looked at), with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. Exodus 6:6-7

This one passage, these two verses, are at the core of the Exodus narrative. The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt; they were caught. All they can do is cry out for God to help. Then it says here that he looked at the Israelites and said, "I will rescue you, and I will redeem you."

Exodus 6 is far before the moment on Mount Sinai in which Moses transcends that mountain and receives the 10 Commandments. This is a rescuing, which has nothing to do with the Israelites, other than God says, "You will be my people. You are the recipients of my love."

Here's the reason I point this out. Most of us carry with us a belief that somehow, we must obey, and then God will love us. But Exodus 6 is far before Mount Sinai; there weren't even commands to follow in that moment. It was simply God looking at his people with love and saying, "Those are my people. I will be their God."

He rescues them for nothing they had done. He brings them out; he restores them. He marches them out of slavery, takes them to the mountain, and now all of a sudden the commands are something far different. They're not requirements to receive love. That'd be ridiculous. That's Adam and Eve all over again, trying to earn the love. Could it be that the commandments, the teachings of Jesus, the teachings of

Yahweh through the Old Testament, are not ways in which we achieve God's love?

There are ways in which God is saying, "Here's how to be human." They were enslaved for generations. There are narratives that they believed about what it meant to be human that needed to be reconstructed, re-taught. There were looking for love like that newborn child, but in all the wrong places. Could it be that the commandments of Jesus that we've distorted into ways to earn the free love of God are God's loving way to remind us of what it means to be human? To heal the wounds that we carry deep within us.

I would imagine that being an Israelite, enslaved for generations, has a way of distorting how one might understand oneself. I wonder if God was just trying to welcome them home and heal the wounds that they carried. The story of Israel is the story of all of us, in which we're searching over and over. Redemption follows rescue because if God rescues you out of the enslaved narratives you hold, that's the way in which he retrains you in what it means to be human,

To be rescued, is to be pulled out of wrongful captivity. Egypt believed Israel belonged to them, but God said, "No, these are my people." He brings them out to be redeemed, to be claimed back at great cost. God does both because we are his people. He restores us from the dominion of deception into the life-giving love of his family.

If you hold a purely punitive view of God, meaning you only view him as some cosmic judge who's merely adjudicating your bad behavior or moral actions or inactions, then your view of God will always be clouded with fear. But if you come to see that God's work is redemptive, that Jesus' arrival is the natural act of a heartbroken God, then his work is the restoration and redemption of a wayward son or daughter who he's longing to find a way back home. It fundamentally changes the story.

Later in the New Testament, the author would continually say that there is no fear in love. But so many of us carry these images that have been buried deep within us. Fearful of a God who's much more like a father than a judge. Yes, of course, we do wrong, and of course, we've accrued death that forgiveness has wiped away, and that's a beautiful thing. But never forget that the thing that Jesus corrects is the fracture in relationship. That's the core of the problem.

Rescue and redemption, that's the doorway into life with God. That's why we come all the way back now to John 14. Jesus is meeting with his disciples right before he's about to depart. So he's preparing them. He's trying to shape what it will look like in his departure. He wants to communicate a final word. Let's pick up in verse 15.

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:15-18

Notice how it's all couched in familial language. It's Jesus saying that he lives in this relationship with God, this familial relationship. "I will

ask God the Father, and he will give you an advocate who is named the Spirit." Notice the way that Jesus names that it is the Spirit of Truth. What was the original fracture? It was the deception about the relationship that Adam and Eve had with God. And Jesus says, "I will send you a spirit that it'll counter the deception, the Spirit of Truth."

Then he says that the world can't accept him because they neither see him nor know him. Don't think of it in a negative view, but it's Jesus saying that they can't see him. They're wandering about in the darkness. Speaking to his disciples, he said, *"But you know him. For he lives with you and will be in you."* I love verse 18. *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* Jesus goes on.

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. vv. 19-20

Think of the intimacy of that language. It isn't just God stating that he'll have some tolerance that he will allow us into his presence. This is the idea that Jesus is in the Father, and that Jesus is therefore in us. You and I were created to participate in the inner workings of the triune God of love, in which the Father, Son, and the Spirit are constantly in this relationship of loving one another with no hierarchy. There is no "I'm better than you." But rather the inner workings of the trinity or the thing that you were created to live within. Jesus says on the day that he departs, we will realize that he is in the Father. We are in him, and he is in us. He welcomes us into this. Then it's into the context where he says,

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. vv. 21-23

Now, you can read this, and there's a way to see this as a conditional love of God. If you obey, then all love. But I'm wondering, in the grand scope of the scriptures, going all the way back to Exodus 6, in which he says, "I rescued and redeemed you. I went and saved you out and then brought you into the wilderness, and I'm teaching you what it means."

Could it be that this isn't a conditional statement of God? Rather, Jesus is saying, "You'll know if you love me, you'll see my teachings in light of that love, and you'll see that they're meant to prosper." John 10 says, *"I came to give life and life to the fullest."*

He says that is what he came to do: to offer the healing, this love that we've been talking about. We've been talking and meditating on this concept. Every single one of us is longing for that love, whether you can name it or not, whether you're running from faith or whether you're running right into it. Wherever you are on that faith journey, I can promise you what's at the deepest core of your being is a search for love.

Jesus says that the love is here. He said that he would depart, but the Spirit is here. We are invited to live within this reality. Verse 23 talks

about how Jesus will make his home with us. It's a Greek word that is the noun form of abide, which is the word, abode. He will make an abode in you. He will reside. He will dwell within you. Consider the intimacy of this. Jesus will take that noun word, abode, and he'll say, "Therefore, what we do is abide and connect. We remain in the love like a branch that remains or abides in the vine. That is how we find life. We remain in the love of Jesus. You and I were made to live as participants in the union of the love of God."

The early church had an interesting word that meant becoming more like God by living in union with him. Now, in later years, this got all sorts of funky because one of the definitions of it could be deification, but it's not about us becoming God. That's the mistake we often make. It's us becoming like God through this relationship of connection to him. Because that's the core of the problem. The relationship has fractured, and all of us are wandering around the world trying to find that connection.

What we are longing for is what Paul said in Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." For many years, I read that verse and thought it meant that I had to muster the courage to crucify myself.

What I've come to realize in reflection of this loving God is that it isn't so much that Paul mustered the courage to crucify himself, but rather he found himself abiding in the love of Jesus and said, "Take everything else." Because he abode in the love of Jesus, he crucified the life he lived in this body to live with Christ in him. I would argue that the beginning of the problem is that we are of a relational fracture, not a punitive one. That comes later and is, in fact, there, but the root core is relational.

Paul is writing these words in Colossians to the early church, which is interesting to me because aren't these just the basics of faith that you can't earn the love of God? Yet he's writing this to the church, which begs the question of why he would write something so basic to the early church. I think it's because you can read this section, you can walk through the Christmas story, you can attend church over and over, and you can return to that story, and you can affirm intellectually that God rescues and redeems us. But you can, like Israel, live with internal narratives that keep leading your life in ways that don't live out of that reality.

The problem is not that we think God doesn't love us, and sometimes it is, but the problem is that we've created these internal narratives in which we believe we have to somehow drum up our own loveliness. The invitation is not to obey, to please some far-off God. It's to step into the reality for which you and I were created. To learn, as Eugene Peterson would say, the rhythms of grace. That Jesus would lead us back into that life.

There's a book by a guy named David Benner called *Surrender to Love*. He talks about how so often our response to this love is to drum up our loveliness, to present the good parts to God and hope he never sees the bad parts, and somehow that will bring the connection. But read the way he says this.

Our natural inclination is to bring the most presentable parts of ourselves to the encounter with God. But God wants us to bring our whole selves to the divine encounter. He wants us to trust him enough to meet Perfect Love in the vulnerability of our shame, weakness, and sin...Tragically, however, most of us have large tracts of our inner world that are excluded from God's transforming love and friendship. Perpetuating such exclusions limits our conversion...Transformation occurs when we bring all parts of ourselves into the banquet of love provided by our divine host. Our fearful, angry, and wounded parts of ourselves can never be healed unless they are exposed to divine love. This is why we must meet God's love in our vulnerability and brokenness, not simply in our strength and togetherness. Only as we do so can our damaged and infirmed parts of ourselves be exposed to transforming love. Transformation demands that we meet God in the vulnerability of our sin and shame rather than retreating to try to get on with our self-improvement projects. But it also requires that we stay long enough in his loving presence to allow our shame to begin to melt away. For love to transform us, not only must we meet in vulnerability, but we must also linger long enough for it to penetrate our woundedness. David Benner, *Surrender to Love*

If we're to linger in the love of God, it will inevitably require us to think of God appropriately. If you live in fear of a punitive God, I don't blame you for not wanting to spend time in front of that God. I wouldn't either. The problem is that this is not the God that the scriptures describe. God is love at his core, meaning you cut him open and love falls out. It just is. He rescues and redeems us and invites us into this journey to say, "What would it look like for you to follow me, to come awake to the reality of who you truly are?"

Church, the hard part with that is it will require you to face the lies and deceptions that you've believed when you were young, that were instilled in you from pain and hurt that was inflicted upon you from the mistakes you've made. All of that you will need to bring, in vulnerability, to God. But could it be that the thing you're most scared to bring before God is exactly the place that God wants to heal? He wants to restore the broken image of yourself and the image of him.

The way to that is vulnerability. It's opening up the parts of your heart that you've hidden for years to allow the loving touch of God to heal it. We are all like those little children looking up, searching for a face to love. And what I hope you have heard this morning from both the heart of God and the heart of Jesus is that God is looking at you, and what he sees is love. It's all he sees. He sees a loving child who's probably wandering, who's probably searched in all the different places to find that love. Jesus is looking at you, and he is feeling love.

Abide

So how do we do this? I want to close in the practical realm. It begins with what Jesus taught so clearly. The first thing we need to do is learn to remain in God's love. To use Benner's language, we linger in the presence of God. The fundamental task of the spiritual journey is to fix and

hold the inner gaze of our heart on God. It's to remain or abide in love. It's as God makes his home in us, we make our home in him.

Then, when we wander, which we will, we redirect our attention back to God. You learn to remain in that love, and over and over you come back to it every day. Back to abiding and remaining in the love of God. We quite literally take up residence within him. I love Eugene Peterson's translation of the Christmas narrative. He said that God became flesh and moved into the neighborhood. He invited us to be in communion with him.

But here's what you'll quickly run into. When you go about this work of remaining in God, what you will find is exactly what I just described. When you slow down long enough to sit in the quiet before God, all the narratives and deceptions will rise to the surface. You'll begin to believe that you are not good enough. You don't have all the things put together. You might feel too much of a mess, and you can't bring parts of yourself to God. All of that will bubble to the surface. You'll have distraction come. You may have this apathy that bubbles up within you. My encouragement is to linger there. That's God doing his work. That's the Spirit bringing up those things to allow him to love you in them.

Repent

First, we abide, and second, we repent. Now, when I say that word, some of you cringe because there's a whole lot of baggage that comes from that word. Whether it was street preachers with sand boards, yelling to repent or perish. Or whether it was trauma that was inflicted on you as a kid. You just have to conjure up the guilt and all that pain and grief. Somehow, all of that baggage clouds quite a beautiful word.

Repentance, at its core, just means to change one's mind, to turn around and go the other way. It's the Greek word *metanoia*, which means transformation, and *noia*, meaning to know. It's saying to rethink everything you understand about whatever it is that you're repenting from.

This word, repentance, offers a beautiful way home. If we cannot understand repentance, we are left in our sins with no way to change. Rather, repentance is just walking down this road, pursuing love in an accomplishment and accumulation, or assuming love and pleasure and self-pursuit, and repentance is just the moment of clarity when you realize that path has led to nothing but more heartbreak. It's empty.

Repentance is the realization that we are walking the wrong way. We realize we need to turn back and go the other direction. Repentance is the reality, the awareness that what we are pursuing is as hollow as Jesus would say it is. Repentance is a beautiful moment where we allow conviction. In this understanding of repentance, conviction is always good news.

When you are convicted of sin, it's Jesus lovingly saying that he has more for you. That this isn't the way, this isn't the path. Repentance isn't about the ability to conjure up enough guilt and remorse within you. Rather, it's the way that we come awake to who we truly are in Jesus. Repentance is the realization that this route is hollow. What I'm looking for is the God of love.

Release

So first, we remain in that love. That's always where the story begins. Second, we repent. We recognize the paths we are going are, in fact, the wrong way. And third, we then release. Because the narratives that you've been living in don't just disappear magically. At some point after repentance, we must release the deception and say that this isn't the truest thing about me.

It's not that we are this or that, rather, that the fundamental thing that is the truest about us is that we are beloved children of God. You need to release the lie that Satan, the father of lies and deception, has sown in you from when you were a child. That is not the truest thing about you.

The truest thing about you is that this God of the universe loves you, and he came down on a day like Christmas to welcome us back home. The lies are that you are not good enough, not lovable, that you need to perform to be seen, that you need to look a certain way, or achieve a status. Those are all lies from the pit of hell that you must release to walk in the way of Jesus, to receive the love that is always flowing toward you from God. It's the kindness of God that leads to repentance. It is God welcoming you back home.

The great distinctiveness of the love of the Christian God is that there are no strings attached. God simply loves humans. He created you and me for a loving relationship with himself. And nothing we do or don't do changes the love that he bears toward us. The God we worship loves sinners, redeems failures, delights in second chances, and fresh starts and never tires from pursuing the lost sheep, waiting for the prodigal son to return home, rescuing those damaged by life and those that are left in its wake.

The Christian God of grace stands in stark contrast to the vindictive views of often a capricious God of our own making, withholding his love from us. It's the only God that unconditionally cherishes human beings. It's the love you're created for. It's the love we're longing for. The good news of Christianity is something that we would never discover if it weren't for the mystery of Christmas, because what you see in Jesus is the truest expression of who God is in his fullness.

The mystery of Christmas is that Jesus came down. God's love embodied, showed up on the scene because he wanted to rescue and redeem you into a new relationship. This is what makes grace so amazing. It is grace alone that frees us and makes us truly whole. The invitation for us is to surrender to God's redeeming love, refusing to believe the lies that we've perpetuated in our lives for so long.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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