

## THE BIG IDEA: A move of God will always be marked by the love of God.

### The Take-Off

I can't think of a more perfect day than Christmas Day to wrap up our Birthmarked series!

From the beginning, we've asked one very simple question: if the birth of Jesus changed everything (and it did), then shouldn't Jesus change us, too?

If His birth marked the world, then as believers born into His kingdom, we should be marked, too, and so we've spent December talking about 4 evidences in the lives of those who have been born again - 4 birth marks, if you will.

There are many more than 4, but we've said that followers of Jesus should live lives that are marked by hope, by faith, and by joy.

This morning, we wrap it all up by talking about how our lives are marked by love.

Not the sappy, romance novel and chick flick love, or even the fleeting, glowing Christmas morning love (because we all know how quickly Christmas morning love turns to Christmas afternoon "I'm tired and angry" rage!!)...

The love we're to be marked with is a heavenly love - and that's where we'll begin...

### 1. Love moved God

- a. Contrary to popular opinion, love didn't originate in Hollywood - it started in heaven with God.
- b. 1 John 4:7 is clear: "love comes from God"
- c. Everybody loves love, but it all goes haywire when we try to love without the God of love.
- d. The part of the Christmas story that is the most (pardon the pun) moving is the fact that God didn't love us from a distance.
- e. His love moved Him to DO something, and John 3:16 - the one verse that almost everyone knows by heart in the KJV - shows us what His love motivated Him to do.
- f. He gave.
- g. Love moved God, and He gave Jesus - the best gift.
- h. Love doesn't give bad gifts. Stressful, hurried, last-minute shopping does, but love gives the best.
- i. 2 Corinthians 9:15 / Thanks be to God for His INDESCRIBABLE gift!!

### 2. Love moved Jesus

- a. Not only did love move God to give Jesus, but love moved Jesus!
- b. His entire mission was to seek and save the lost in order to restore us back to the relationship we had before we messed it all up.
- c. Our sin is part of the Christmas story (it never makes it into the songs, of course!), but the motivating factor was the unrelenting love of God shown to us in Christ.
- d. Jeremiah 31:3 / an everlasting love
- e. Matthew 9:36; 15:32; 20:34; Luke 7:13; Luke 19:41-42; Hebrews 4:15 / Jesus was moved by compassion
- f. As if we needed any more proof, John 15:13 states clearly that **what Jesus did on the cross for us was the greatest evidence of His love toward us**
- g. Love moved Jesus

### 3. Love moves us

- a. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14 that he was compelled by the love of Christ to take the love of Christ to men who needed to be reconciled to God and one another
- b. Perhaps the greatest birthmark of all on the church historically has been her willingness to be moved by love to people who need love
- c. One of the thoughts that I shouldn't shake as I prepared for this message is so simple, but so profound: love moves.
- d. It moved God, it moved Jesus, and it moves us.
- e. In fact, every move of God will always be marked by the love of God.
- f. He gives love to us, and then He gives love through us.
- g. The result? An amazing cycle of love.
- h. Here's just one example of how moving in love can impact the world around us.
- i. [VIDEO] The Love Cycle

### The Landing

As we wrap up this series, let me assure you of something: you and I, as followers of this Jesus who came as a baby, was killed as a rebel and resurrected a King - we are a part of a move of God fueled by the love of God that has left it's mark - and continues to leave it's mark - on the history of mankind.

You are not alone, nor do you live out your faith alone.

We are part of a move of God that is marked by the love of God, and the world has marked forever as a result.

Consider these words from Dinesh D'Souza:

"Christianity is responsible for the way our society is organized and for the way we currently live. So extensive is the Christian contribution to our laws, our economics, our politics, our arts, our calendar, our holidays, and our moral and cultural priorities that historian J. M. Roberts writes in *The Triumph of the West*, 'We could none of us today be what we are if a handful of Jews nearly two thousand years ago had not believed that they had known a great teacher, seen him crucified, dead, and buried, and then rise again.' " (From the book *What's So Great about Christianity* by Dinesh D'Souza.)

Still not convinced?

- The concept of universal human rights comes exclusively from the biblical idea that all people are created in the image of God.
- In ancient cultures, women were property, which such little value that it was common among the Greeks and Romans to throw out newborn baby girls to die from exposure. The church forbade its members to do so.
- It was the early church that brought an end to celebrated practice of killing one's own children. From as early as the late first century, the church has instructed against abortion.
- Historian Glenn Sunshine about slavery: "Christians were the first people in history to oppose slavery systematically. Early Christians purchased slaves in the markets simply to set them free."
- The 5th century monk, Telemachus, brought an end to the gladiator games.
- Missionaries are credited with stopping most of the cannibalism in the world.

There is no doubt that the birth of Jesus has left its mark on history, and our prayer is that His birth in our lives will change us - mark us - too.

When it does, we, too, will walk differently than the culture around us, and the move of God that comes through the church will be fueled by the love of God.

That will be the greatest birthmark of all.

Let's pray.