

## Love Came Down at Christmas: Christmas Eve sermon 2022

By Ken Woodley

Our orbit through space and time has brought us to this moment.

We see something, you and I, in the depths of the darkness.  
Over there, beneath Orion's Belt but above the Big Dipper.

There is a light coming over the horizon of the wilderness, like planet Earth slowly appearing from behind the dark side of the moon.

A star that twinkles out a Morse Code message, pushing back against the darkness that tries to convince us that there is no God and that we are not—and could never, ever be—loved.

Now something seems to have fallen from that star.

Come from the sky.

Tumbled down from a heaven which the darkness denies.

The darkness trying with all of its might to persuade us that the light we are following is a figment of our imagination.

But the light won't be stilled or silenced.

You take my hand and we follow.

I hold your hand and we keep on going.

And now, look. The flickering grows brighter, as if our persistent steps have somehow fueled the light's desperate reach of transcendence.

A desperate reach toward ...  
Can it be true?  
A desperate reach toward *us*?  
Toward us *all*?  
You bet your life it's true!

And there is more.  
There is something inside the light.  
As if the light has wrapped the greatest gift of all inside its  
bright shining:  
A love brighter than the sun.  
A love that has found us.  
And will find us soon to be holding candles in a darkness that  
is becoming, for us, nothing more than a place for the light of  
this love to shine with deepest effect.

And now—just like that—the wilderness has given way to the  
straw of a manger.  
To a mother and her newborn.  
To a father carefully tending the small fire that keeps us all  
warm as we gather with those who were there in the darkness  
with us, called by the light to unwrap this love.

A love that breathes.  
A love that cries out into our own wilderness until our  
wilderness begins to heal.  
A love that goes by many names, including, quite  
miraculously, our own.  
Our own.....if.

Our own if we let the light of this love reach out through us toward each other and to those whom the darkness still ensnares with its thorns of logic and doubt and despair.

If we go out into the wilderness of others and scatter their darkness with this truth:

There is a God.

We are loved.

And this love is forever and for everyone.

A love that is absolutely the only Christmas present that matters. A love that fits us perfectly. A love we will never have to take back to customer service for an exchange. A love we never outgrow.

A love, however, that is waiting for us to unwrap it all the way.

Until there are no more ribbons. Until there are no more bows.

Until there is no more paper. Until there is no more Scotch tape.

Until.....there is only love.

The love Jesus was born to tell us about. The love that he was willing to die for.

Opening this love, however, is not always so easy. Life has a way of wrapping corners of this Christmas present back up. Stress wraps up a corner here. Anxiety wraps up a corner there.

Things happen in our lives, and in the world around us, that can make us feel that the gift isn't even there anymore. That some all-powerful Grinch has come and stolen it away.

But this love can never be taken from us. It's always here. It always will be.

Sometimes, though, we need to unwrap it all over again. And again and again and again. I've lost track of how many times I've had to unwrap the gift of God's love. But every time that I have it's been there waiting for me. Any day of every month.

The truth is that Christmas doesn't have to come once a year. And it really should not be confined to the 25th day of December. Every day can be Christmas Day if we remember to unwrap the gift of God's love first thing every morning.

And then give it away to everyone we meet.

Because, as we sang together earlier, Love really did come down at Christmas.

But then Love did something way more important.

It stayed.

AMEN