

*Sermon for the Sunday after Christmas,
2024*

LET CHRISTMAS SOAK IN
Based on John 1:1-18

This is an odd Sunday, just a few days after our Christmas Eve worship services and Christmas Day itself. According to the world, the Christmas season? Been there, done that. The world tells us Christmas is over. The Hallmark Channel is already advertising Valentine's movies.

But, according to our liturgical calendar, we are still in the season of Christmas. Today's worship service is an opportunity to let Christmas soak in.

With the feverish activity of the holiday season completed and the new year just ahead, today is a day in which we can ponder again the glory of Christmas. Today is a day in which we can let Christmas soak into our souls.

Which isn't always easy. For a month, we anxiously prepared for Christmas Day. Then, finally, the day came and our expectations were met with varying success.

Society tells us that now is the time to get back to the routine. For some, this cycle of preparation with all the emotions of the holidays can be depressing, exhausting and overwhelming. That is why we need to let Christmas soak into our souls.

And how do you feel about the New Year, just three days away? We want to step into the new year, putting our best foot forward, but for some of us, our feet get tangled and we stumble into the new year instead of strolling into it with grace and purpose.

I've already broken three New Year's resolutions and it isn't even January first yet. And that is why today, I need, we need, to let Christmas soak into our souls.

Remember the main message of Christmas? Basically, it is a love story; the ultimate love story. And not like the passionate flings of soap operas or romance books. This is something different and deep.

I've had the honor of meeting with a lot of engaged couples over the past year, getting them ready for their weddings and marriages. One of the things I constantly tell them is that love is not spontaneous and easy. Love is not a feeling. Love is a sustained pattern of action. Love is always either work or courage.

Jesus, who moves from the manger to the cross, is indeed the ultimate love story. The ultimate love story because it is a sustained pattern of action from God to God's people, both work and courage.

God sending the Christ child to earth for us and our salvation was not a frivolous last-minute idea of God. Today's Gospel lesson clearly reminds us of this: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

For those of us who are overwhelmed, tired, depressed or frustrated just a few days past Christmas, today is the time to hear this message. Today is the time to hear that God's sustained pattern of action towards humanity is not just the ultimate love story, but also your ultimate love story.

God wants you to be. God created you. God loved you into existence. And in Jesus, God redeemed you, saved you, rescued you. God's love will keep you going. God wants you to be.

As we hear this message, Christmas soaks into our souls.

God loves us in Christ so that we may **be**. But God also loves us in Christ so that we may **see**. Through Jesus Christ, born in a lowly stable, we are enlightened to see what is true and beautiful and good. As it says in our Gospel lesson today, "In him was life and the life was the light of all."

As we let Christmas soak in, I'd like to close this sermon by talking with you about three knots. Maybe you think I'm going to preach on "thou shall not steal, thou shall not kill, and all those other shall nots..."

No, my intention is not those nots, not the N-O-T-S nots, but the K-N-O-T-S kind of knots.

There is a story about a famous surgeon performing an operation. At the end of the surgery, he tied three knots in the suture to close the incision instead of the usual one knot. A young medical student watching the surgeon asked why he did that. One knot was the acceptable surgical procedure, why three?

"I'll tell you a secret," the surgeon told the student. "That third knot is my sleeping knot. I'm going to wake up in the middle of the night tonight and think about this operation, run through it quickly, coming down to the end of it and wonder if I tied the thread tight so it would not possibly ever come open. And I'm going to remember I did not tie just one knot, I tied three knots. It cannot come loose,

so I'm going to turn over and go back to sleep. That's my sleeping knot.”

“And, let me tell you a great principle of life,” the surgeon said to the student, “If you will always tie three knots where you are required to tie only one, you will find a lot of happiness. It is a great principle of life that applies to everything.”

Christmas is our sleeping knot when it comes to our relationship with God. We can sleep in heavenly peace. Our relationship with God is secure, tied firmly with intention. We can rest easily. God tied the knot at Christmas.

Let Christmas soak in. Meditate on God's great Christmas love story one more time before you are done with Christmas.

Let Christmas soak in.