

Sermon: Crazy Love

Crazy Love that is the title of my sermon for this my first Christmas Eve late night service here at Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church. Crazy love – do you know how many different songs and artists use this phrase or sentiment? For example....

Van Morrison - Crazy Love. I can hear her heart beat for a thousand miles And the heavens open every time she smiles And when I come to her that's where I belong Yet I'm running to her like a river's song
Chorus: She give me love, love, love, love, crazy love She give me love, love, love, love, crazy love

Crazy In Love – Beyonce. Looking so crazy in love's Got me looking, got me looking so crazy in love

Crazy In Love – Eminem. And no matter how much Too much is never enough Maybe cuz were crazy in love

Crazy – Patsy Cline. Crazy I'm crazy for feelin' so lonely. I'm crazy, crazy for feelin' so blue. I knew you'd love me as long as you wanted and then some day you'd leave me for somebody new.

Queen – (SING) Crazy Little Thing Called Love. **I gotta be cool relax, get hip Get on my track's Take a back seat, hitch-hike And take a long ride on my motor bike Until I'm ready (Ready Freddie) Crazy little thing called love...**

Picking up on an idea from author and preacher Barbara Brown Taylor I want you tonight to imagine God addressing you and all humanity with this impassioned plea: “I am so crazy in love with you that I will come all the way to where you are to be flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone. I will do it all, and all you have to do is believe me – that I love you the way you are, love you enough to become one of you, and I love you to death.”

In Jesus,

God’s Crazy Love comes to and for each and all of us. It is sometimes difficult for us to embrace that we already have our place in the events we celebrate tonight.

For example, some of us are still trying, so hard, to earn God’s love, assuming we need to score points to win God’s favor, we attend worship, we work on a mission project, we help a neighbor, we give a donation, but at the same time we feel that we’re not quite good enough, that we just “don’t measure up” to God’s yardstick.

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Or we have become wary of God or faith because people who claim faith have let us down, sometimes quite badly, by their attitudes or actions.

Or we have our issues with what we call, “organized religion”! If this is you, I have good news for you because here at OAPC we go in for some disorganized religion. Being Presbyterians, we are never as organized as we think we should be! Further God often disrupts our well-intentioned plans, calling us to accept a degree of chaos, a reminder that it is God who needs to be in charge - not us!

The Christmas headline is this: Jesus Christ is for everyone.

For Mary and Joseph! For every family and couple and person.

For Basil Fawlty, that less-than-hospitable Innkeeper, for Sybil his much put upon wife!

For shepherds and shepherdettes!

For Men who stare at goats; Old Dogs; Princesses and Frogs; Heroes and Villains; Heroes who become villains; Villains who become heroes.

Jesus is for all people.

Jesus arrived for angels and sinners, for insiders and outsiders, for Jews and Gentiles, for people from every place and time.

Jesus is for Tigers and Gamecocks, for Eagles and Blue Hose, for Bulldogs from everywhere – heck Jesus is even for those folks from out of state - for Tar Heels and Gators, for Cavaliers and Hokies, for Volunteers and Crimson Tiders, and, yes, even for Yellow Jackets!

Jesus is for Kings and Queens and Princes and Emperors!

For Centurions and soldiers in the army of oppression, and for those they abused! Jesus is for Iranian Stargazers, world travelers riding on camels and for the curious folk from down the street who heard Mary scream and a baby cry!

Jesus came for us all, offering to us, God’s crazy love!

Jesus is God’s crazy love, God’s crazy love for the world.

God’s crazy love for us in Jesus Christ brings Hope. Tonight is a night of great hope, tonight hope bubbles to the surface ready to erupt in joy and love. Hope embraces us as we welcome Jesus Christ, come to abide with us. It is this Jesus, born as THE expression of God’s crazy love that we are asked to follow and serve. God’s crazy love for us all asks all of us to do something in response, to believe, to trust, to follow, to serve, to live out God’s crazy love for the world by how we live our lives.

God’s crazy love, given to us in Jesus asks us to be changed and converted to a new way of living. God’s crazy love is unchanging, unwavering, unending, and calls us to see where we need to make

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changes in how we live, to do new things with a new spirit, to revise and set new priorities that express God's crazy love for the least and the lost.

God's crazy love is for you all, for those of you who this year are grieving the loss of a loved one, for those of you who are currently facing or dealing with tragedy, for those who have lost a job or fear the loss of your home or business; for those of you who find the most precious relationships in your life under real stress, for those of you who have worries that seem so huge that you cannot bear to share them with another living soul, and so you ache them to God in the darkness and silence of loneliness.

My friend, whoever you are, whatever your situation, God does not change, God's crazy love in Jesus, is for you now and always.

Your God, our God, is with you, still, loving you, watching over you, even in the midst of heartache and pain. I say this not to be flippant but to be real, not because it is the sort of thing pastors are meant to say, but because it is how I experience and understand God, and how I make sense of the trials and temptations of my own life.

My hope is that through some of these words you will discover God's crazy love, for yourself. Our hope as a church is that all of you, and everyone who is drawn to this community of faith in the weeks, months and years to come, will enter into a living encounter with God's crazy love. That either little by little, or all at once in some blinding moment, you will see that God's crazy love can permeate your life, despite all your insecurities and aches and pains. There is so much at stake— who God is, who you are – and this is why all of us need to get acquainted and better acquainted with the One whose birth we celebrate tonight!

A woman was doing her last-minute Christmas shopping at a crowded mall. She was tired of fighting the crowds. She was tired of standing in lines. She was tired of fighting her way down long aisles looking for a gift that had sold out days before.

Her arms were full of bulky packages when the elevator door opened. It was full.

The occupants of the elevator grudgingly tightened ranks – you can see it in your mind's eye - allowing a small space for her and her load. As the doors closed she blurted out, "Whoever is responsible for this whole Christmas thing ought to be arrested, strung up, and shot!" A few others nodded their heads or grunted in agreement. Then, from somewhere in the back of the elevator came a single voice that said, "Don't worry. They already crucified him."

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The real story of Jesus will stretch from Bethlehem's stable to Calvary's. The version of Christmas on offer at the mall is all about nostalgia, endless carols, and candles, and the glow of the faces of happy children in the warm firelight. Resist that story - there truly is no such thing as a real old-fashioned Christmas, Christmas and the Christ of Christmas is forever fresh and new as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Savior of the World, the One in whom God's crazy love entered the world never to be withdrawn. There is so much at stake tonight since each of us needs Jesus in our lives, so much at stake because all of us are being invited to follow and obey and love Jesus.

Without this night, without this birth, without Jesus, God is incomprehensible, inconceivable, inexplicable.

Without this night, without this birth, without Jesus, God is unseen, unknown, unreachable.

But because of this night, this birth, in Jesus, God's crazy love has come crashing into our world, whether we are ready for it or not. In Jesus, God's crazy love comes to and for us all, bringing us hope, and promising that no matter who we are or what we have done, no matter what we have left undone or where we have been undone by the vagaries of life, in Jesus, in God's crazy love we are held and embraced and healed and comforted and challenged and changed.

Held, embraced, healed, comforted, challenged and changed by and in God's Crazy Love - that we might go and share God's Crazy Love in how we live our lives.

To you in David's town this very night – a Savior, Christ the Lord!

God's crazy love, God's crazy love for you, God's crazy love for all, God's crazy love for the world.
Amen.