



A purpose beyond the manger!

What's the point ...? ... and how it pertains to YOU

today!

In previous chapels we talked about several important truths that pertain to every one of us:

- 1) You and I were created for a *relationship* with God.
- 2) Our sin separated us from that *relationship*.
- 3) There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this *relationship* on our own.
- 4) Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:17–18)

Why does Jesus say this? Why does he stress his willingness to die? Because if it weren't true—if his death were forced on him, if it weren't free, if his heart weren't really in it—then a big question mark would be put over his love for us. The depth of his love is in its freedom. If he didn't die for us willingly—if he didn't choose the suffering and embrace it—then how deep is his love, really? So he stresses it. He makes it explicit. It comes out of me, not out of circumstances, not out of pressure, but out of what I really long to do. Jesus is stressing to us that his love for us is free.

He seems to hear some enemy slander saying, “Jesus doesn't really love you. He's a mercenary. He's in it for some other reason than love. He's under some kind of constraint or external compulsion. He doesn't really want to die for you. He's just got himself somehow into this job and has to submit to the forces controlling him.” Jesus seems to hear something like that, or anticipate it. And he responds, ***“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”*** So he is pressing this on us to see if we will believe his protest of love, or if we will believe the opposite—that his heart is really not in this.

Anybody who makes a statement like that is either mentally deranged, or lying, or God. I have authority from inside death, as a dead man, to take life back again, when I please. Now what's the point here? Well, which is harder: to control when you die, or to give yourself life again once you are dead? Which is harder: to say, ***“I lay my life down on my own initiative”***? Or to say, ***“I will take my life back again after I am dead”***? The answer is obvious. And that's the point. If Jesus could—and did—take his life back again from the dead, then he was free indeed. If he controlled when he came out of the grave, he certainly controlled when he went into the grave.

Key Truth: Jesus rose from the dead that we might have eternal life.

While Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin, it is His resurrection that brings us the hope of eternal life. **Without the manger, there is no cross. Without the cross, there is no grave. Without the grave, there is no hope. And without hope, there is just no point!**

Make it personal:

- * Have you ever viewed Christmas through the lens of Easter? From what you understand, how do the two relate? How does that possibly change the way you celebrate both?
- * What do you make of Jesus' statements in John 10? How do you respond to the repeated claim of His to “have authority”? What does He have authority over? What consequence(s) does that have for you?



A purpose beyond the manger!

What's the point ...? ... and how it pertains to YOU

today!

In previous chapels we talked about several important truths that pertain to every one of us:

- 1) You and I were created for a *relationship* with God.
- 2) Our sin separated us from that *relationship*.
- 3) There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this *relationship* on our own.
- 4) Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:17–18)

Why does Jesus say this? Why does he stress his willingness to die? Because if it weren't true—if his death were forced on him, if it weren't free, if his heart weren't really in it—then a big question mark would be put over his love for us. The depth of his love is in its freedom. If he didn't die for us willingly—if he didn't choose the suffering and embrace it—then how deep is his love, really? So he stresses it. He makes it explicit. It comes out of me, not out of circumstances, not out of pressure, but out of what I really long to do. Jesus is stressing to us that his love for us is free.

He seems to hear some enemy slander saying, “Jesus doesn't really love you. He's a mercenary. He's in it for some other reason than love. He's under some kind of constraint or external compulsion. He doesn't really want to die for you. He's just got himself somehow into this job and has to submit to the forces controlling him.” Jesus seems to hear something like that, or anticipate it. And he responds, ***“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”*** So he is pressing this on us to see if we will believe his protest of love, or if we will believe the opposite—that his heart is really not in this.

Anybody who makes a statement like that is either mentally deranged, or lying, or God. I have authority from inside death, as a dead man, to take life back again, when I please. Now what's the point here? Well, which is harder: to control when you die, or to give yourself life again once you are dead? Which is harder: to say, ***“I lay my life down on my own initiative”***? Or to say, ***“I will take my life back again after I am dead”***? The answer is obvious. And that's the point. If Jesus could—and did—take his life back again from the dead, then he was free indeed. If he controlled when he came out of the grave, he certainly controlled when he went into the grave.

Key Truth: Jesus rose from the dead that we might have eternal life.

While Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin, it is His resurrection that brings us the hope of eternal life. **Without the manger, there is no cross. Without the cross, there is no grave. Without the grave, there is no hope. And without hope, there is just no point!**

Make it personal:

- * Have you ever viewed Christmas through the lens of Easter? From what you understand, how do the two relate? How does that possibly change the way you celebrate both?
- * What do you make of Jesus' statements in John 10? How do you respond to the repeated claim of His to “have authority”? What does He have authority over? What consequence(s) does that have for you?