



Love Made Flesh

By: Mark Kruger

At twelve I fell in love at youth camp. Like many twelve-year-old boys, I paid little attention to girls who did not punch me. I spent my time at camp fishing for bluegill and avoiding showers and deodorant. On the second to last day of camp, I was walking to chapel with a girl named Angel. It was probably "Angie", but in my sepia-toned memory, it's Angel. I can't recall what Angel-Angie looks like either because my memory is all of glowing golden hair and a stupor that left me speechless. It's a mystery how I happened to be walking with her, but at some point, she simply took my hand in hers. Wow! You know that feeling you get when you make warm chocolate chip cookies, and you sit down and gorge on 7 of them? It's an upset stomach and a sugar coma that hits the top of your cheeks just below your eyes, but that warm, melty, gooey taste just rides right over it like a monster truck and makes it all worthwhile. That was this. I was gobsmacked with puppy love.

Of course, it wasn't "real love". I don't remember Angel-Angie. I'm not sure I could have picked her out of a lineup a month later. What is left in my brain - cemented by teenage hormones - is the intensity of being in love. Live long enough and you learn to recognize the selfish nature of this kind of infatuation. *I loved being in love* (for all of 2 days) but I did not love Angel-Angie. And I'm quite sure her life didn't spiral out of control when I failed to send her letters after camp. Yes, we wrote letters back then... well... someone wrote letters I'm sure.

As we grow up we learn that love is not an accident. The best kind of love is when we *choose* to love. It is the reason we have marriage "vows" rather than marriage "expressions of emotional hyperbole". When we find that one person we *choose to love them always*.

God's love for you is no accident either. He didn't *fall* in love with you - He *chose* to love you fully. Christ came as a gift of pure sacrificial love. Everything about His coming was *intentionally designed* to demonstrate His commitment to being Immanuel - God with us (Matthew 1:23)! He did not come as an elitist. He didn't arrive on the scene messiah-splaining the arc of history to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. His small body was brought into this world like all of us - through the painful process of human birth. He left the warmth and safety of the womb naked and shivering. Mary wrapped him in soft strips of cloth and kept him in a manger because that's all they could find. Ahead of Him were the years of a child - to learn to walk and talk and grow.

The manger, the stable, the frail body of a child, and the poor carpenter's family were

circumstances He orchestrated. Each of these mundane, ordinary things demonstrated His commitment to love his bride. He chose to be Immanuel - to *be with us and to love us always* by sharing in our suffering and our humanity. He lived and taught and finally died as the perfect sacrifice of love for our sins. This gift was given to those who would accept Him and even to those who would reject Him. Paul wrote in Romans 5:7:

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God's gift was an unrestrained commitment, not an accidental encounter. He knows your name and whether you are near to Him or far from Him, His commitment - His vow - is the same. Of course, he delights in us. Psalm 147:11 (NIV) says:

The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

His grace, compassion, and affection show he has strong feelings for His children. Yet His love is not a **feeling**. It's a rock-solid, iron-clad **covenant**. He chooses... He vows to love you.

This is good news for those of us constantly striving to earn His love and fearing we have lost it. God's love for you depends, not on His feelings, but on His word. This is why Paul could write so eloquently in Romans 8 that nothing - not trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, or war can separate us from His love. God vows to love and His word cannot be shaken. His word is made flesh in the person of that child who came down, naked and shivering, into a troubled world that had yet to recognize Him.