

**“Worth the Wait: Love”**

**John 3:16**

**Hyattstown Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

**December 24, 2017**

**(Fourth Sunday of Advent)**

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)*

In other words, as was said in today’s ceremony of the Advent wreath:

“In Christ, God shows how genuine love behaves.”

And that kind of love, is worth waiting for.

In this Advent series, I have suggested that in Jesus, there is Hope worth waiting for...and that in Jesus, there is Peace worth waiting for...and in Jesus, there is Joy worth waiting for.

And today? In Jesus, there is Love worth waiting for!.

In 1977, a bunch of young friends in Pennsylvania got together on the day after Thanksgiving for a pick-up football game. It evolved into their annual “Turkey Bowl”. This fall, they held their forty-first straight game, with their families sharing in the reunion. Some bused in from Texas, some flew in from London. Five of the guys have never missed a gathering. “We don’t come back because it’s the best football”, one of the original organizers says, “but because the people are important...and it keeps the friendships alive.”

That kind of love, is worth waiting for...love that is born of God’s love for the world.

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Eric and Lisa So, with 2-year old son Xavier and 1-year old son Felix, moved recently from a comfortable Silver Spring home to the Parkview Gardens Apartments in Prince George's County. The change has introduced them to bedbugs and roaches, leaking pipes and lurking crime, inferior schools and struggling neighbors.

But Lisa and Eric, a pastor, were not able to ignore the circumstances of refugees whose lives were totally uprooted, who were forced to start over in a place strange to them, in every manner imaginable. Eric and Lisa decided that they would not only pastor to such families, but would be their neighbors. People from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Congo now reside in Parkview Gardens Apartments, and the So family is among them. Eric says: "The most compelling reason we chose to move into the neighborhood was really the story of Jesus. From the scripture, I see God sending his Son, Jesus, into the world, so that he would dwell among the people."

Others may turn refugees away. Eric, Lisa, Xavier, and Felix turn towards them.

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Kenya Mayes and her children were homeless two years ago when I came across them in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, DC. Kenya was struggling with the kids and belongings on the way to the apartment of her mother, who had reluctantly agreed again to take them in. Kenya accepted my offer of a ride. That began a relationship that, through twists and turns, remains mutually faithful today. The family is no longer homeless, though their apartment in southeast DC is quite basic and sparse. Two different fathers of the children offer no partnership for this single mother's effort to provide for the kids. I spent Friday afternoon with the family Christmas shopping, sharing lunch, visiting Santa, and

buying groceries. The Pastor's Discretionary Fund of our church has been helpful to Kenya, just as the similar fund at my previous church, just as my wife Chris and me, just as is a friend who owns a business in Olney. With any form of assistance, Kenya never fails to say "Thank you"—a very sincere "thank you"! As I left the family Friday afternoon, Kenya's words were: "I love you, Rev. Jeff."

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At a Maryland hockey rink, the Georgetown Titans were in trouble for a game with the Hagerstown Bulldogs: Their goalie was sick, and they had no back-up. Leopold Hylton volunteered, though he had never been a goalie before, never worn the huge pads, never used the goalie stick. It was a disaster: Leopold could not stay on his skates, and did not know how to properly block shots on goal. Between periods, Kaiden Whaley, the Hagerstown goalie skated over to Leopold. He gave Leopold a quick lesson: how to hold the stick, how to get back up, how to defend. After that, Leopold acquitted himself very well, and the game was much more competitive. The fans cheered equally for both teams; one coach admitted to be near tears; and Leopold's feelings turned from embarrassment to accomplishment. Kaiden was happy to know that he had done the right thing, just as his father had always tried to teach.

That kind of love, is worth waiting for...love that is born of God's love for the world.

In Christ, God shows how genuine love behaves.

"For God so loved the world..."