

The Mystery of Love (Scripture: John 1:1-14)

By Rev. Ruth Wilkinson, Calvary Baptist Church Cobourg

Introduction:

We often speak of the Magic of Christmas: that undefinable something that throws everything into sharper contrast: what's right and what's wrong in our family dynamics; grief; new life; our love life (if we have one); what's in the fridge (if we have one). Every colour, shape, emotion, and experience can be more intense at Christmas. Advertisers know this, as do Doctors, Counsellors, grocery store cashiers, and hairdressers.

The Magic of Christmas brings out what is best in what's best, and what is worst in what's worst.

The Magic of Christmas is not 'Harry Potter.' It is a unique quality that makes an ordinary day seem extraordinary. Better or worse.

The Magic of Christmas allows us to believe the impossible. Santa Claus. Frosty. Rudolph. Hallmark movies. The Grinch's growing heart.

The Magic of Christmas is powered from within us. We know that what we see and touch isn't all there is. That science can't explain everything. That, contrary to experience, people can be wonderful. That we are—that our world is—more than the sum of our senses and experiences, more than atoms and wavelengths. The potential for Magic runs deep through our psyche, equally comforting and unsettling.

When we encounter that kind of **Magicalness**, we don't want to look too closely, for fear of discovering how the trick was done, because we really don't want to know.

Christmas has that kind of **Magic**.

Christmas also has **Mystery**—which is something very different.

When our world speaks of "a mystery" it means something that lies just beneath the surface that we can't quite grasp; a puzzle to be solved; a secret kept.

In the New Testament, "a mystery" is a secret that is being, or even has been, revealed; divine in scope; being made known to us by God through His Spirit. A secret intended to be hidden just for a time, and then shared.

When we experience that kind of Mystery, it demands that we wait... draw close... see what lies behind the curtain.

The **Magic of Christmas** is good. The **Mystery of Christmas** is better.

Background Context: (Trinity)

- John – Who was he? One of the Jesus' closest apostles: Peter, James, John. One of the few present at the Transfiguration, and in Gethsemane. One of the few disciples at the cross. Wrote a Gospel, 3 letters, Revelation.
- Faithful follower, but he didn't always get it right. (Mark 10:35-37, Luke 9:52-55)

John's gospel is the only one that doesn't describe Jesus' birth. Possibly because he assumed his audience knew the story.

Doesn't begin with the **Magic** (angels, fuzzy lambs, magi, young people in love).

Instead, John begins with a **Mystery**... one that the church was just starting to wrestle with... Trinity. Figuring out a doctrine that some have said is, 'not heard in Scripture, but overheard.'

- **Matthew 1:20-23** (God speaks through prophets, sends his Spirit, to give us a Son who is "God with us.")
- **Mark 1:1-2, 7-8** (God speaks through prophets, sends his Son, who will send the Holy Spirit.)
- **Luke 1:35** (Holy Spirit brings the power of the Most High, sending the Son.)
- **John 1:1** (Jesus was the Word who was with God, and who was God (cf Revelation 19:13, John 10:30)).

John was writing at a time when we were just beginning the work that the next few generations of Christians would need to do in order to lean close and uncover the Mystery of who the Trinity is and who they are not.

Without which, most of Christianity doesn't make sense. With which, it fits together.

Ideas to Explore:

The Essence of the Trinity (core characteristic, purest essential truth) is Love.

"Love is the inner life of God, through the mutual relationships of Father, Son and Spirit. ... Love flows from the very nature and being of God as Trinity. Love existed before the world was created, for God is eternally a community of mutual love between Father, Son and Spirit. God did not need the world in order to be able to love: the eternal, almighty God is love."

- Augustine (Message of the Trinity, Brian Edgar, p41)

Trinity Love is seen as the Three:

- A. Know each other...** (1 Cor 2:10-11, Matt 11:27)
- B. Submit to their shared mission...** (John 5:19) Unlike me, as mom/wife/pastor. I am all three but I can't always serve fully as all three at the same time.
- C. Share themselves with each other...** (Matt 3:16-17) Father, Son and Spirit shared the joy of the moment of Jesus' baptism.

Application:

The Mystery of Christmas is that: The same eternal, powerful, mutual Love was born into a human body, spoke to us through human lips, embraced us with human arms, and draws us into that divine, eternal Love.

Teaching us to:

- A. **Know each other** (Matt 28:19-20) Meeting, baptizing, mentoring, and teaching are all relational activities. Things that people do together, requiring time spent getting to know each other.
- B. **Submit to their shared mission** (John 20:21) We are sent to, in concert, do His work in His world, each in our distinct ways.
- C. **Share themselves with each other** (John 13:34) We share each others' lives --griefs, joys, stuff, time, space, energy.

That is the **Mystery of Christmas Love**.

Conclusion:

The **Magicalness of Christmas Love** can be a beautiful thing. It can help us see the extraordinary in the everyday experience of relationship. Whether it looks like the love of Mary for her child, or of Joseph for Mary. Or whether it looks like strangers in line at the grocery store, or sharing with people in need.

The **Mystery of Christmas Love** is so much greater! The Mystery had been hidden for a long, long time, and is now revealed. As we lean close to see, Christmas Love flows out of the knowing love, the surrendered love, the determined love that exists at the core of God themselves, out into the world.

The challenge of Christmas Love is to lean close. To listen. To answer.