

## A Reason to Celebrate

by Rick Warren

*“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NIV)*

A few years back I was in Manhattan during the Christmas season. I remember standing in the middle of Fifth Avenue, watching thousands of people bustling around. Nobody looked happy. Everyone looked pressured, stressed, and cranky. That’s not what Christmas is about. Christmas is about the greatest news ever! Our preparation and celebration should be joyful, not sad.

What did the angel say to the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus? “I bring you good news of great joy, and it’s for everybody.” But what is that great news? What are we supposed to celebrate?

**First, God loves you.** The most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, says, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (NIV). That’s why he sent Jesus. He was on a mission of love.

The Bible says God *is* love. It is his nature. God created the entire universe just so he could create the human race, just so he could create you, just so he could love you. God made you to love you. And his love isn’t based on what you do. His love is based on who he is. God is love.

**Second, God is with you.** You may not feel his presence, but that doesn’t make it any less true. The Bible says Jesus’ name was to be called Emmanuel, which means “God with us.” Many of you have been abandoned in life, but you need to know that God will never abandon you. Jesus truly was “God with us.” And he is still with us today.

When God is near, it removes your fear. You don’t have to worry or be anxious about what’s coming next.

**Third, God is for you.** He’s on your side. He wants you to succeed. In fact, Jesus said this: “God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17 NLT). Many people are afraid of God because of their guilt. But the Bible says Jesus didn’t come to condemn the world. He came to save it. That’s good news!

We need to celebrate this Christmas and all year long. Jesus’ birth was — and *is* — good news of great joy. It’s good news of great joy for *all* people because God says, “I love you, I’m with you, and I’m for you.”