

The Greatest Love Story Ever Told

John 3:16

Introduction: We come to one of the most familiar passages in the entire bible. Probably the most famous verse in the bible.

It is important however, to see it in context. The Bible was not written with chapter & verse divisions. (P66 on screen, 200's) While they are a helpful reference tool, We need to be careful to not see the bible as a quote book.

Context: The first word of John 3:16 "For" is a connector word that connects it to vs.15. Don't miss it. It explains what happened in order for one to have eternal life. Jesus has just spoken with Nicodemus. We looked at that encounter with Jesus last week and saw many lessons about the New Birth, (regeneration) that it is necessary for all (religious, education, etc.) the personal nature of the kingdom, and the role of the HS in conversion. God's kingdom is entered by new birth. When new birth is experienced (received by faith) it brings what John calls "Eternal Life" = literally "life of the age to come" or resurrection life. Life in Christ (1:4 "in him was life") that's one reason we have the name "Gospel Life."

Jesus told Nicodemus in vs. 14-15 that this new birth was the made possible because of the "lifting up" of the son of man. Now Jesus explains that that sacrifice, was embedded in a mission of the messiah and grounded in the deep, deep love of God.

Message Plan: This verse will never be exhausted. It is both deep & shallow. (Swimming pool, toddler & Elephant) Because it is important to see this verse in context we will look at the verse itself this week and then the paragraph next week. In fact one commentator I read said that you should not deal with any less than 3 verses hear to gain the correct meaning of the text...well, we're going to do that next week.

Vs.16 = agency & motive of salvation 17 = explains God's purpose in sending him vs 18 = explains the nature of judgment that salvation is from. We'll get that big picture, Lord willing, next time.

Read Text & Prayer:

Love Stories: We love them.

- Sacrificial Love: Mom in Canada
- Promise Keeping Love: Robertson McQuilkin
- Frozen: Moral of the story = true love conquers all.

Many are trite & trivial. Princess Bride...Puppy Love, chick flick.
John's Gospel doesn't offer anything like that.

FCF: We do not recognize the incredible cost and sacrifice that God went through to offer salvation to us. Until we do recognize it, we do not enter into saving knowledge of Christ. & After we are saved we tend to forget it. We need to be reminded of the incredible self-sacrificing love of God for us.

Main Point: (Proposition | Big Idea): We do not know love until we know the author of Love. This is one of many reasons to not be "yoked" with an unsaved person. Girls do not date a boy that is not saved. They do not know what love is, because they do not know love's author.

Transition: This text has been called "the Gospel in superlatives"
It is the most famous summary of the Gospel in the entire Bible.

- Martin Luther called it "The bible in miniature."
- A.T. Robertson called it "the Little Gospel"
- Some have called it, "the mount Everest of the scriptures."
- F.W. Borham called it "everybody's text" a child can understand, yet it is so profound that scholars cannot plumb it's depths.

We will not exhaust this verse in one message.

It addresses many doctrinal issues in the NT. & answers many apologetical questions too.

Jerry Vines, "the phrase "for God" responds to atheism, which claims there is no god. The phrase "so loved" responds to fatalism, which asserts God is an impersonal force. The phrase "the world" responds to nationalism, which says God loves only one group of people. The phrase "that He gave" responds to materialism, which says it is more blessed to receive than to give.

Body:

I. God's Love is Global

- ❖ "For God" = the greatest Lover/person/being.
 - Answers the claim of atheism.
- ❖ "So Loved" = the Greatest Passion
 - Love is an action. -an action of seeking the best for others.
 - This is a little word, but it is a huge word too.

- This phrase responds to fatalism, = the idea that God is some impersonal force.
- 1 Jn 4:10 | 1 Jn 4:19
- This text is inexhaustible because the love of God is inexhaustible. Romans
 - F.M Lehman in the hymn "The love of God"

Could we with in the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill and ever man a scribe by trade. To write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, tho stretched from sky to sky"

- ❖ "The world" = Greatest scope
 - The scope of God's love.
 - A.T. Robertson "The sum of the human race"

Let me say without hesitation that there is no one here this morning that is not the object of God's love.

- Augustine, "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love."
- All.
 - Revelation 5:9 every tribe, nation, tongue.
 - Red & Yellow, black and white.
- ❖ The Scandal of Love:
 - Explanation: It is not typical for John or anyone to speak of God's Love for the World. Jews were familiar to think that God loved the Jews. Here, however, Jehovah's love is not limited to any one ethnic race.
 - D.A. Carson says regarding this, "God's love is to be admired not because the world is so big and includes so many people, but because the world is so bad"
 - That is what "world" usually means in the Bible. Christians, 1 Jn 2:15-17 "love not the world" (
 - Is this a contradiction? No! Christians are not to love the world with a selfish love of participation; God's love is self-less for the purpose of redemption"
 - Even the worst in our estimation.
 - The Hitlers, Stalins. The Rapist, The child abuser.
 - The deadbeat dad, the girl who has had abortions, the financial crook, those that are in sexual sins, living in fornication or adultery, practicing homosexuality.
 - Those that have done the most vile things. Those that have practiced human trafficking like John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace"
 - The drunken dad who burns off the children's fingers. The live-in boyfriend that rapes a young child and gives it AIDES.
 - Danny Akin said, "No One is so bad that they cannot be saved; No one is so good that they don't need to be saved."

- You are not so good that you don't need to be saved either.

II. *God's Love is Sacrificial*

- ❖ That He gave
 - Love is a decision. It is actionable. Agape = spiritual love originates with God.
 - Love from God is spelled G.I.V.E.
 - CF:
 - Ephesians 5:25 "Christ loved the church , and gave himself for it"
 - Galatians 2:20 "who loved me and gave himself for me"
- ❖ He gave definitely.
 - He came to this earth, to a smelly manger, to live and grow up in a hick town, to put up with annoying selfish people that would be disloyal, and rude, and falsely accuse him, and misquote him to incriminate him, and make fun of him, and politically manipulate situations to get rid of him.
- ❖ He gave uniquely. "only begotten" monogenes
 - One of a kind. Monopoly.
 - Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God. According to the Koran, "No son did God beget, nor is there any God along with him" (Surah 23:91). But on nine occasions the Bible refers to Jesus as begotten of the Father. Not only did God declare Him to be His Son at His baptism (Lk 3:23), but also He proved it by raising Jesus from the dead (Rm 1:4).
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- ❖ Gave for sacrificially.
 - "God is the only father who brough a son into the world for the purpose of dying" D.Akin.
 - He died a death that I should have died, for crimes that I committed, not him.
 - Romans 8:32 "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,
 - God's love is not self-centered. This gives us a lesson of how we should present the Gospel.

III. *God's Love is Personal*

- ❖ That whosoever.
 - Anyone. You're a whosoever.
 - Turn to someone and say, "**I'm a whosoever!**"
- ❖ Believes: **This is the link between your soul and God's Love.**
 - Presents a theological tension. This verse gives a great example of the theological tension within the Bible regarding salvation.
 - Note: God is the initiation (he is the primary actor in salvation = for god so loved that he) = salvation does not originate with us. "we love him because he first loved us"
 - BUT...people are responsible for their own belief.
 - If you Go to Hell it will not be God's fault, it will be because you did not believe on His Son.
 - Romans 5:12,18 by one man's sin, sin entered the world, and death by sin.

- The bible does not allow the reader to blame God for condemnation.
“Condemned already”
- Notice the link with God’s Love is “Belief” not church attendance, religiosity, morality, your I.Q. , being “good guy” or “Good girl” . Not as a bad as _____.
- ❖ Object of Faith:
 - It is not just faith. It is the Object of the faith.
 - “In Him” dependence, leaning, trust.
 - Elevator Illustration: “In Him”
 - Argument: Well that’s good for you. , "It's true for me, but I won't make any claims that it should be true for you." Christ is who he is whether we believe him or not. As C.S. Lewis said, I think, "An insane man in a padded cell screaming that there is no sun, has no effect whatever on whether the sun rises and sets on time."
 - Argument: Note that the faith is in Christ. Not a prayer. Don’t look to an event for your assurance, look to a person.

IV. *God's Love is Eternal*

- ❖ This is the ultimate purpose. The salvation of those who believe in Him.
- ❖ Those that put faith in Christ. (seen in different ways in this chapter)
 - Vs. 3,5 experience “New Birth” Born Again
 - Has eternal life vs.15-16
 - Is Saved 3:17
 - Doesn’t perish / “loose” life 12:25/ doomed to destruction ch.17:12
- ❖ Note: There is no 3rd option.
 - No waiting place.
 - No working yourself there.
 - No having others pray you in.

Conclusion:

Application:

- ❖ **Call to Action:**
 - Believe, “In Him”
- ❖ Evangelistic: Because He came we Go!
 - We go to all. The unlovely, the unlikeable, the dirty, the ones we don’t like. To places that we wouldn’t care for. To places where we don’t have the creature comforts we like.
 - This is something that is radical it is worth giving your life for. As missionaries and servants of Christ have done for over 2 millenia now.
 - It is a response to love that lets us know that stuff won’t satisfy. That Money won’t bring happiness. The greatest need is the greatest gift. Because He Gave; We Go!
- ❖ This gives us a lesson of how we should present the Gospel. & live our lives for that matter. The Gospel is presented on the foundational motivation of the Love of God.
 - Our Gospel presentations should be in the spirit of Christ.

- “see how they love each other”
- We should not be happy about preaching on Hell, or telling someone about judgement. Or talking about how we like those preachers, that are “hell fire & brimstone” We preach hellfire & brimstone, but there ought to be a tear and heart of love in our voice. I believe that’s how Jesus would have us be.
- **The Gospel is rooted in God’s love and therefore needs to be presented with the Love of God.**
 - How are you showing the Love of God to our neighbors?
 - They ought to be so weirded out by you.
 - How are we as a church showing the Love of God to our community?
- Extreme Example: Westboro Baptist Church (Message of Christ, but also in the spirit of Christ) Both extremes are distortions of the Gospel.
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- ❖ Believe in the Love of God for You!
 - The biggest enemy of our belief in this doctrine is not liberalism, or atheism.
 - It is not our functioning doctrinal statement.
 - Our problem is us. The inner Pharisee inside all of us.
 - Our problem is not our Confessional theology, but our Functional theology.
 - We are mainly focused on receiving love and affection from other creatures.
 - Oh what limits of petty personality conflicts would be eliminated if we believed God loved us individually and that our worth was not tied to whether or not we were loved by a person or group of people.

Originally published in 1860, tune in 1862

*Jesus loves me – this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to him belong, –
They are weak, but he is strong.*

*Jesus loves me – loves me still,
Though I'm very weak and ill;
From his shining throne on high,
Comes to watch me where I lie.*

*Jesus loves me – he will stay,
Close beside me all the way.
Then his little child will take,*

*Up to heaven for his dear sake.[2]sus loves me when I'm good,
(extra stanza)*

*When I do the things I should,
Jesus loves me when I'm bad,
Though it makes Him very sad.*