

## ***FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD***

John 3:16a

### **Introduction**

In our current sermon series, we are considering specifically the teachings of Jesus. As we anticipate Easter, or Resurrection Sunday, I would like us to consider Jesus' teaching on the love of God. We could say that Jesus' entire life was a practical demonstration of the love of God, and everything He taught was related to this topic.

But in regards to His specific teaching on God's love, perhaps nowhere else did Jesus teach about God's love more profoundly than in what He said to a religious leader by the name of Nicodemus as recorded in John 3:16.

I have three opportunities to preach on Jesus' teaching on God's love from John 3:16 between now and Resurrection Sunday, or Easter. And so I would like to consider John 3:16 in three parts:

First, *God so loved the World*, which we will consider this morning. Then, on Palm Sunday, *God Gave His Only Begotten Son*. And finally, on Easter Sunday, *Whosoever Believes in Jesus Shall Not Perish But Have Everlasting Life*.

How can we consider so great a statement as ***God so loved the world!***? It is so comprehensive (*the world* includes everyone, everywhere, in all times), and it is so extravagant—we might even say excessive, as the little word *so* implies!

I can't begin to even scratch the surface of so great a subject. But I can say this: We are created in God's love, sustained in God's love, and rescued in God's love.

### **CREATED IN LOVE**

I'm sure all of us have those moments when we feel like no one loves us, like we're unlovable. But I want to tell you that the very fact that you exist is proof of God's love for you!

In a perfect world, the greatest result of the most intimate, pleasurable act a husband and a wife can share is the reproduction of another life. What a miracle! And what an amazing gift God has given us. I can't help but think that the ability to produce another life is a part of the "image" and "likeness" of God that we were created in. (see Genesis 1:26-27)

But as the moon has no light in itself, but can only reflect the sun's light, we must understand that our ability to reproduce life is only a dim reflection of God's ability to create life. And the intimacy and pleasure a husband and a wife have in that act is only a dim reflection of the intimacy within the Godhead, and the pleasure God has when He creates each one of us!

The Bible says, “**God is love**” (1 Jn. 4:16). Everything that God does springs from this essence of His being. So, the very fact that He created us is evidence of and testimony to God’s love for us.

At the end of each of God’s creative acts, His Word says, **And God saw that it was good**. (Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25) After He created mankind, it says, **God saw all that He had made, and it was very good**. (Gen. 1:31)

God made you. And what God makes is good. And everything He makes gives Him pleasure because everything He makes, He makes out of the essence of His Being, which is love. God loves you—His creature. And the very fact that you exist is testimony to that fact.

Oh, we may *feel* unloved and unlovable at times, but that doesn’t change the fact that God loves us! He *so* loves us!

Not only were we *created in love*, we are . . .

## **SUSTAINED IN LOVE**

Our continued existence provides opportunity for God to demonstrate His love for us—and for us to realize that love.

As parents, our hope, our goal, all our efforts are to help our children grow and mature, so as to become responsible and fulfilled adults. But all of us know that this is not an easy task! Indeed, it can be one of the most difficult and trying tasks in life.

From the stage of infancy, when our children are absolutely helpless and totally dependent on us, to the toddler stage when they get into everything and know only how to make messes, to the teenage years when they become impossible (as they slip through our hands), to the young adult stage when they leave us and strike out on their own, each stage presents challenges that threaten to overwhelm us.

And yet, nothing our children can do deters us from loving them and doing everything we can to help them through one stage on to the next, and beyond. We do everything we can to care for them and help them because we love them.

Can we imagine that, we, in our inadequacies, our failures and our limited resources, will do more than the One who created us in love!?

And because God is One who can cause all things to work together for our good and His glory, nothing we do can thwart His love for us or His design of helping us grow and mature into the person He wants each of us to become.

And God is far more patient than we are. He has far more energy than we do. He is far more wiser than we are. And He has bigger and better plans than we do!

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:3-6, **3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL CARRY IT ON TO COMPLETION UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS.**

Paul's joy and confidence was because he knew that we are sustained in God's love, and that God will *carry on to completion* the *good work* He's begun in each one of us—the work of His love!

Now, I say nothing can thwart His love for us or His design of helping us grow and mature into the person He wants each of us to become—nothing, that is, except our unbelief in, and disobedience to Him!

But you know what? Because God loves us *so much*, He's even got *that* covered, because we are also . . .

### **RESCUED IN LOVE**

In fact, in our unbelief and disobedience God has demonstrated His greatest expression love!

Though it's true that nothing can deter a parent's love for their child, the fact remains that a parent's love is limited. We may imagine we can love our children out of their rebellious and self-destructive ways, but we cannot. Every child, every person is responsible and accountable for their own actions. And we as parents cannot force our children to do what's best for them.

But here especially is where the love of God is different than our love. There is a power in God's love! There is a depth in God's love that is deeper than our love—deeper even than the depth of our sin.

Someone has said, "Bring forth the most wretched sinner it is possible to find, who cannot fall any deeper into sin, and I will show you something deeper still—the deep, bottomless abyss of God's love." (Lockyer, p.176)

Isaiah 59:1 says, ***Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.***

The Apostle Paul wrote, ***God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*** (Rom. 5:8)

And then he says, It's ***God's kindness [that] leads [us] toward repentance.*** (Rom. 2:4)

What is it that delivers people from unbelief, rebellion, addiction, a life of total selfishness and depravity? It's not coercion, threats, convincing arguments, the fear of eternal punishment, programs or self-determination. These may change some behavior, but they usually just exchange one form of bondage for another.

It's the realization that God loves us—right where we're at, in whatever condition we're in! And it's the realization that God has exercised His justice and His wrath on our sinfulness in Christ's death. And that now He sees in us Christ's righteousness—not our sinfulness!

That's the power of deliverance! That's the power of change. That's the power of salvation! That's the power of love! ***God Sooooo... loved the world!***

### **Conclusion**

You cannot escape the love of God! Nothing you can do—or not do—can prevent God from loving you.

But there is one thing you can do to *hinder* God's love for you: you can reject it. Hell will be occupied by those who rejected God's love. And they will have what they insisted on—for eternity!

God's love not only delivers and saves, it inspires love. John wrote, ***We love because he first loved us.*** (1 Jn. 4:19) God's love for us inspires a love in us . . .

- for virtue (e.g. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness)
- for one another (1 Jn. 4:7-12)
- and especially for God.

And it is our love that is the evidence that we have truly come to know God's love.