

INTRODUCTION

1. This morning we have the privilege of studying one of the most familiar passages of Scripture.
2. It is one which many of us learned as a child.
3. It's found in John's Gospel – chapter 3, verses 16-17.
4. Please turn in your Bibles to John chapter 3 as we examine these two verses this morning.
5. Read John 3:16-17.
6. This is the Gospel in a nutshell.
7. In it we find “No Greater Love” than this.
8. Jesus said in John 15:13 (NASB) 13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
9. This is exactly what Jesus did.
10. God sent Jesus as an expression of His love for those whom He would save.
11. This morning, I want us to look at 4 elements of love found in John 3:16-17.
12. The first is *The Person of Love* in verse 16.

I. The Person of Love (v.16a)

Who is the person of love? God.

Verse 16 begins with “For God so loved.”

God is the source of love because He is love.

He defines love for us.

But because “Love is the best known but least understood of all God’s attributes, people in past generations often went to the opposite extreme.

They tended to think of God as stern, demanding, cruel, even abusive. They so magnified God’s wrath that they virtually ignored His love.

Little more than a hundred years ago, nearly all evangelistic preaching portrayed God only as a fierce Judge whose fury burned against sinners” (John MacArthur, The God Who Loves).

God is a God of wrath but He is also a God of love.

A. God is a God of Love

1. This is taught throughout Scripture

- a) Deuteronomy 7:6-8 reveals that He chooses whom He desires to be the objects of His love

This passage, speaking of God’s love for Israel, says, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all

the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

- b) Deut 10:15 - “The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.”
- c) Job 7:17 - “What is man, that You should exalt him, That You should set Your heart on him.”
- d) In Ephesians 2:4-5, when we were dead in “trespasses and sin,” He chose to pour out His love on us.

2. Love is one of His titles in Scripture

2 Cor.13:11 says, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and **the God of love** and peace will be with you.”

3. 1 John 4:16 tells us that love is also His nature

1 John 4:16 says, “God is love.”

B. All of God’s Attributes Are in Perfect Harmony

- 1. His love is in perfect balance with His holiness; it’s in

perfect balance with His justice; it's in perfect balance with His mercy, and so forth.

2. To understand love you must understand God

The very act of God giving His Son reveals what God is by nature and the perfect balance of His attributes.

C. Our Ability to Love Comes from the God who Loves

1 John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."

Where did that love come from? Romans 5:5 answers by saying: "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

II. The Object of Love (v.16b)

"For God so loved *the world*"

A. The Term Kosmos (world) Has Three Meanings in the New Testament:

1. Creation - Acts 17:24 - "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."
2. Satan's evil system - Eph.2:1-2 - "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."

3. Humanity - 1 Jn.2:1-2 - "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

The Greek word, kosmos, also refers to "the inhabitants of the earth — the human race — the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to Christ" (Strong).

B. John Uses the Term Kosmos (World) Eighty Times in His Gospel

1. Out of every usage, kosmos is used to speak of either the creation, Satan's evil system or humanity and mostly it refers to humanity
2. John begins his Gospel using this word to refer to humanity in 1:9 and then uses it to refer both to the creation and humanity in verse 10
3. He uses it again in 1:29 to refer to Jesus whom He refers to as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"
4. In chapter 3 he uses it in verses 16,17, and 19 to refer to humanity

C. God's Love for the World is Not the Same as His Love for His Children

1. God loves His children in a special way reserved only for them. But that love does not make His love for the rest of humanity any less real

2. God's love for His children is an infinite, eternal, saving love

"We know from Scripture that this great love was the very cause of our election (Eph.2:4).

Such love clearly is not directed toward all of mankind indiscriminately, but is bestowed uniquely and individually on those whom God chose in eternity past.

But from that, it does not follow that God's attitude toward those He did not elect must be unmitigated hatred. Surely His pleading with the lost, His offers of mercy to the reprobate, and the call of the gospel to all who hear are all sincere expressions of the heart of a loving God. Remember, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but tenderly calls sinners to turn from their evil ways and live. He freely offer the water of life to all (Isa.55:1; Rev.22:17)" (John MacArthur, *The God Who Loves*, pp.16-17).

J.C. Ryal said, "This wonderful verse has been justly called by Luther, "The Bible in miniature." No part of it, perhaps, is so deeply important as the first five words, "God so loved the world." The love here spoken of is not that special love with which the Father regards His own elect, but that mighty pity and compassion with which He regards the whole race of mankind. Its object is not merely the little flock which He has given to Christ from all eternity, but the whole "world" of sinners, without any exception. There is a deep sense in which God loves that world. All whom He has created He regards with pity and compassion" (The Gospel of John).

III. The Meaning of Love (v.16c)

“For God so loved the world that He **gave His only begotten Son**”

A. This is the Greatest Expression of Love

1. God **so loved** the world that He *gave*
2. True love *gives*

“John's Gospel does not offer the world a superficial idea of the love of God in salvation.

The verbs for "loved" and "gave" here express the genuine self-giving nature of God in having sent (apeteilen) his "only Son" (monogenous huiou) on an unrepeatable mission into the world (3:16; cf. 1:14, 18)” (The New American Commentary).

- a) Rom.5:6-8 - “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- b) Eph.5:25 - “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

B. This is the Greatest Sacrifice of Love

1. He gave His “only begotten Son”

“Only begotten” means “unique.” It is not a reference

to Him being created as some of the Cults want us to believe

- a) John uses this term 4 times in the Gospel of John (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18)
 - b) He uses it one time in 1 John 4:9; the term occurs in the NT 16 times to speak of an “only” child. Some translations translate John 3:16 that way: “only Son” (HCSB, ESV)
2. John’s use of “only begotten Son” should remind us of the story in Genesis 22

In verse 2 Abraham is told by God to “Take now your son, **your only son Isaac**, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

IV. The Appropriation of Love (vv.16d-17)

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**”

A. The New Birth is Obtained By Believing

- 1. John uses the word “believe” (Pistis) 4 times in verses 15, 16, 18, 36
- 2. Believing is “the work of God”
 - a) Jesus said in John 6:29, “This is the work of

God, that you **believe** in Him whom He sent.”

- b) Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9 that this is the “work of God” when he referred to us being saved by grace through faith.

B. Believing in the Person and Work of Jesus is the Call of the Gospel

- 1. John 3:15, 16, 18, 36
- 2. John 5:24
- 3. John 6:35, 40, 47
- 4. John 7:38
- 5. John 11:25-26
- 6. John 12:44-46
- 7. John 14:12

C. Jesus’ Mission was to Save the Lost

He said Himself, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mat.9:12-13).

- 1. His message was to “Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).
- 2. To receive the new birth, one must appropriate this to his life

CONCLUSION

- 1. The question on Nicodemus’ heart is the question on every heart today.

2. How can I go to heaven?
3. The answer is “You must be born again”—born from above.
4. That is appropriated by believing in Jesus, the Son of God, and the work that He has done on the cross for you.
5. 2 Cor.5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
6. Let’s pray.