

“How Much Does God Love the World?”
(John 3:14-17)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

So far we've seen in John 3,

Jesus saying that you need a second birth

If you are to see and enter God's kingdom.

Your first birth brought you into the world –

Even as Nicodemus' brought him into the line of Abraham –

But that doesn't save you any more than it saved him.

You have to be born again.

You must have a spiritual rebirth –

A change of heart,

A spiritual resurrection,

Something that changes the whole direction of your life.

This second birth is the only thing that can open your eyes

To see the beauty of God's kingdom,

To desire that kingdom,

And so to trust Jesus to enter it.

You can believe it exists without this work of the Spirit,

But you'll never want it enough to pay the price Jesus calls you to pay

Unless He shows you just how precious it is.

But don't forget what else Jesus said about this new birth –

It's something the Spirit gives where and when He wills,

Usually under the preaching of the Gospel.

You don't have any control over it.

You can't make it happen simply by praying "the sinner's prayer."

You need to ask God in His mercy to give it to you.

And since you don't know where or when He may give it to you –

It's not something you can afford to put it off

Until it's time for you to leave this world –

You need to seek it now, if you don't have it.

You should listen to what Jesus says –

He came down from heaven to tell you –

He became one with you,

So that He could explain it in your language.

He made it as simple as He could –

Using images you're familiar with

To describe the things you're not familiar with.

It's the same message He taught from the beginning –

He told the Jews they needed to circumcise their hearts;

He promised He would do it in the Gospel;

That's what He was showing Ezekiel

When He gave him that vision of the Valley of Dry Bones.

This isn't something new –

It's the only way you can enter His kingdom.

B. Preview.

This morning, Jesus goes on to tell Nicodemus

Why God can give this new birth,

And *how you can know* you have it:

1. He can give it because He loved the world so much He gave His Son to die on a cross,
2. And you can know you have it if you believe and receive His Son, Jesus Christ.

Let's consider these two things this morning.

II. Sermon.

A. Why can God give this new birth? Jesus tells us why.

Because He loved the world so much that He gave His Son to die on a cross.

1. Let's consider first, that He loved you so much – if you are trusting Jesus this morning – that *He gave His Son*.

Jesus says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son”
(v. 16) –

The One who was most precious to Him.

Any Christian parent will tell you

The most precious thing in the world to them –

Aside from their Lord, whom they love with all their soul,

Only because of His grace,

And their spouse, whom they committed to Him to love second most –

Is their children.

The same is true for God –

There is nothing He loves more than His Son.

By God, John clearly means the Father.

It was the Father who gave you His Son: Jesus Christ.

Jesus is God's Son in two senses:

With regard to His deity and His humanity.

He is the Father's eternally begotten Son as to His deity.

He is the Son of God from eternity, who became man in time.

By eternally begotten, we mean He has always existed,

And He has always existed as the Son of the Father.

We don't fully understand this anymore than we fully understand anything about God.

But we know it's true.

Paul writes, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

Jesus didn't become God's Son when He came into the world,

The One the Father sent into the world was His Son.

Jesus is also God's Son that was begotten in time as to His humanity.

Gabriel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

The child that was conceived had God for His Father –

Jesus literally is God's Son.

The point is, Jesus is God's Son in both senses,

Which is why the Father loves Him so much.

When Jesus was baptized, He declared,

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matt. 3:17).

The word “beloved” means more than that He merely loved Him,

It refers to a unique and special love: Jesus is His only beloved.

And “well-pleased” means Jesus is the One He takes pleasure and delights in.

Why does the Father love Jesus so much?

For much the same reason we love our own children –

Because they bear our image –

Jesus bears the image of God.

Paul writes, “He [*i.e.*, Jesus] is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).

And the author to the Hebrews writes, “He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb. 1:3).

There is nothing God loves more than His own image,

Which is why He loves His Son so much.

How great is God's love for you, if you are His this morning?

It is so great He was willing to give the One He loved *most of all for your salvation*.

2. This becomes even clearer when you see what He sent His Son to do that He might save you.

God loved the world so much that He gave His Son *to die on the cross*.

Jesus says, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life” (vv. 14-15).

The OT is filled with pictures of Jesus.

They come in the form of prophecies –

Such as that of the seed of the woman crushing the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15) –

In the form of promises –

Such as the one God made to Abraham on one of the mountains in Moriah that He would provide the sacrificial lamb in the place of His Son (Gen. 22:8, 13-14) –

In that of institutions –

Such as the tabernacle/temple and priesthood –

And of events –

Such as the serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness.

When the Jews were wandering in the wilderness of Sinai –

Because they refused to believe that God could bring them into the land He promised –

They began to complain about the way the Lord was taking care of them.

In Numbers 21:5-9, we read, “The people spoke against God and Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.’ The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.’ And Moses interceded for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.’ And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the

standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.”

Jesus tells us this event looked forward to how He would save the world.

The people had sinned against God

And brought His judgment down on themselves in the form of fiery serpents.

All they did was complain about the cuisine.

Why was God so angry?

Sometimes things we consider small

Are much larger in God’s eyes than we might think.

Even the smallest sin deserve damnation,

Because they are all committed against Him.

But when they cried for mercy, God showed them mercy.

He told Moses to make an image of one of the serpents

And had him lift it up on a pole

With the promise that whoever believed Him

And looked to that serpent in faith, would be healed.

Those that looked were saved.

We didn’t even cry for mercy, but the Lord showed us mercy.

He sent His Son into the world,

And lifted Him up on the cross to take His judgment in our place.

Jesus says whoever believes His promise,

And looks to Him in faith, will be saved.

God loved you so much,

He sent the One He loved the most to die for you.

That's how great His love is.

3. Third, God loved *the world* so much that He gave His Son to die on a cross.

God's love is demonstrated by the worth of the gift – His Son.

It's demonstrated by what He sent Him to do – to die on a cross.

Finally, God's love is demonstrated by who it was *for whom* He sent His Son to die.

“For *God so loved the world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (v. 16).

Jesus isn't saying here what most think He is:

That He came to die for each and every individual –

As hard as it is for some to hear this, He didn't.

When He came, there were many who were already in hell –

Who had no chance of being saved –

He didn't die for them.

There were many alive in His day in far away nations

That would never hear the Gospel

Because it would be many centuries before it would reach them –

He didn't die for them.

And there were many who would hear the Gospel –

In His day and to the present –

Who would never believe and receive it –

He didn't die for them.

The Bible is quite clear that He died for His people and only for them.

Gabriel said to Joseph regarding Mary, “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for *He will save His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21).

Jesus tells us quite clearly that He came to lay down His life for His sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life *for the sheep*” (John 10:11).

He goes on to say there are those who are *not His sheep*,

“The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, ‘How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. *But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand*” (John 10:24-28).

And Paul tells us that Jesus died for His people/sheep to make them righteous,

“He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

If Jesus had laid down His life for all –

If He had made everyone righteous –

Everyone would be saved.

But that's clearly not the case:

John writes, “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

The Father did not give His Son for everyone who ever lived –

That’s not what He means here by *world*.

So what does He mean? Two things.

1. That God’s love extends to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews.

His sacrifice is for the entire world,

Not just for the physical children of Abraham –

In other words, it’s also for us.

2. And He means He was willing to do this for us in spite of our condition:

While we were under the sentence of death.

Jesus says in verse 17, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

Jesus didn’t come to condemn us –

We were already condemned for our sins –

He came to save us from our sins.

This is perhaps His main point –

God’s love is so great,

That He would give what is most precious to Him,

To die an excruciating death on the cross,

For those who were His enemies.

Paul writes, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

B. How can you know that God has loved you and sent His Son for you?

As Jesus told Nicodemus, you only can if you have been born again,

And you can only know that you have been born again, if you believe in Jesus.

Jesus says, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; *so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life*. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, *that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life*” (vv. 14-16).

Believing isn't how you *receive* the second birth –

That, as we've seen, is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit –

It's the *evidence* you *have received* it.

You *can't see* the kingdom of God *or enter* it

Unless you are born again of the Spirit.

Since you can only enter that kingdom through faith in Jesus,

Faith is the evidence of that new birth.

If you believe in the Son of God,

You have been born again.

And so in closing, let me ask you this simple question:

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

Are you trusting Him to get you into heaven?

Is He your only hope of acceptance with God?

If He is, then you have experienced the new birth.

You can know God loves you and sent His Son for you.

But if you don't, then you can't know unless and until you do believe.

If you don't, turn from your sins and trust Him now.

If you can't, then ask Him to give you the grace of His Spirit so that you might,

And keep asking until He does.

There's so much more that needs to be said about this faith that saves –

That it isn't just a bare believing of the facts,

But something that changes the whole course of your life –

But we're out of time, so we'll leave this topic for the evening.

I would encourage you to return

And examine your life in light of what the Bible says.

But for now, let's pray and ask the Lord to show us where we stand with Him –

Whether we have believed,

Or whether we need the new birth,

And then ask Him for the grace to respond accordingly. Amen.

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