

John 3:16 Part 1

Today and on Easter Sunday, we will be using one of the greatest verses in the Bible as our text. It is the most known verse of the Bible. If there is a verse of the Bible that has been memorized the most, it is this verse. Can you guess now what it is? John 3:16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

I am going to divide the verse in half. Today, we will look at the first half. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

On Easter Sunday, we will look at the second half.

The way I have broken the verse helps us understand that this verse is a promise. The promise has a condition to it. The condition is in the second half, the ones believing in Him. The ones meeting this condition will enjoy the promise, "They will not perish, but have everlasting life."

What we will deal with this morning is the reason this purpose if a possibility. A condition has to come about to make the purpose a reality. For us to have eternal life, something has to take place so that we can have eternal life. That is what the first part of John 3:16 is all about.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

This part of the verse states four great things: the greatest good, God; the greatest evil, the world; the greatest motive, so loved; and the greatest gift, only begotten Son.

For God – He is the Greatest Good

God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food. So goes the prayer we learned as a child before taking meals. It is a declaration of the greatest good who is God.

God is good morally. In Him, there is no evil. In Him is only the purity of holiness. God is good in His ways. His thoughts are good. His motives are good. His actions are good.

So many people question the goodness of God. They say, "If God is so good, why does He allow suffering? Why does He allow wars? Why does He allow babies to suffer and die?"

Suffering and death even of the innocent as a baby is not the work of God, but it is the consequences of living in a broken, sinful world.

God's goodness in this verse is demonstrated through a redemptive provision. John 3:16 is the climax of His goodness.

Theologian Michael Reeves notes that many people in our culture who have rejected God may be reacting against a certain *sort* of God—what he calls "a loveless dictator in the sky." Reeves writes:

In my own experience, when I ask atheist or agnostic students to describe the God they don't believe in, I am usually treated to what sounds like a good description of Satan: a self-obsessed, merciless bully. And if God is not an ever-loving Father, eternally pouring out his Spirit of life

and blessing on his Son, then their descriptions are probably pretty accurate. If God is not Father, Son, and Spirit, then he must be an eternally solitary being who has managed to get through eternity without love.

The world – The greatest evil

The world is the creation of God. The world is the object of God's love. However, the world is under the curse of sin. John uses "world" to mean the fallen, sinful world that is dominated by the god of this world who is Satan. It is this world into which we have been born and live. The values, the way of thinking, and the world view as governed by Satan, who is the god of this world is hostile towards God. It hates God.

[John 7:7](#): "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil." [John 14:17](#): "... the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him."

The more time passes by, the more hostile and militant it seems that the world is becoming toward Christians, even in America. There are a few watchdog groups who are watching nations who are hostile to Christian faith. These groups list nations who are hostile or are growing in the hostility toward Christians. For the first time in our history, some of these groups want to add United States to the list.

I am saddened also to see people who professed to be Christian caving to the pressures of the world and call what they once call sin anything but sin. Often they call it normal and alright. It saddens me to know that some who have passed through our church are now those who have turned from the standards of God's Word and have embraced the world.

Before we rush to judgment, however, know that before we came to Christ, we were of the world. Know that if you are not a believer, you are naturally hostile to God. Simply because of His holiness cannot mix with our natural sinfulness. There is a clash of hostility with God. The greatest good has been extremely contrasted to the greatest evil.

For God so loved the world – The Greatest Motive

This part of the verse blows my mind for a couple of reasons. One is the fact that in spite of the hatred the world has for God, God still loves the world.

Now, let's talk about love for a minute. In the past 4 to 5 months, there is a crazy thing going around about how love ought to be the standard of all things including morality. If love is the foundation of a relationship, that ought to make the relationship alright. That is so wrong.

I read something sent to me recently. We as humans do not know the level of God's love. It is impossible to have a full understanding of what is God's love His way. He is so infinite in comparison to our finiteness. Therefore, because we cannot understand fully God's love, God will accept our expression of love in whatever form it comes. That is so wrong. The Bible tells us what God's love is. It is a love that is selfless. It is a love that puts others before us. It is a love that is active, not passive. It is a love that is action, not only words. It is a love that we show towards God

by obeying Him. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Again, something we learned a couple of Wednesday nights ago. Deuteronomy 10:12-13 *“Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to ¹²fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?”*

Let me show you what God’s love is. Philippians 3. Turn to it. If you have been with me for a while, you’ve heard this before. However, repetition is needed to learn something. The fact that God loves the world even though the world is hostile towards him to the point of literally killing His followers, that just blows my mind. The other thing is the intensity in which God loves the world. The word order of this verse along with some words used indicate great, great intensive love God has for the world. So loved God the world.

How great is His love?

He gave His only begotten Son – The Greatest Gift

He gave. Christ descended to earth as a gift from the Father. This gift was more than a life lived. The giving had the ultimate purpose of giving up to death. God delivered Christ over to death.

It was a death Jesus willingly took upon Himself for us. This should come as no surprise to the disciples. Jesus kept making statements along the way of what was going to happen.

Mark 10:45 – The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many.

John 10:11 - “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:15 - even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

John 10:17-18 - 17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

He literally sent His spirit away as an act of His own will. It was a voluntary act. And herein is the great third miracle of the cross. That is this, Jesus' life was not taken from Him, He voluntarily gave it up. And that is demonstrated to us by the fact that He died so very soon, when victims normally lingered for days on the cross. In fact, according to Mark 15 verses 44 and 45, when the word was given to Pilate that Jesus was dead, he couldn't believe it and sent somebody to check on it because it was so abnormal for one to die that soon. And the reason the Scripture says He cried with a loud voice or screamed or yelled is to demonstrate to us that even at the time when He gave up His life, He had the strength to live if He had willed to live.

God gave.

God gave His only begotten, one of a kind, unique, nothing like anything that had come or will come in the future.

Jesus, the Son of God gave Himself up for us in death. The rich took on poverty so that we who are in poverty may become rich.

Listen to these verses very carefully.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and He raise us up with Him,

In her book *Because He Loves: How Christ Transforms Our Daily Life*, author Elyse Fitzpatrick writes:

Just in case you're unaware, identity theft occurs when someone steals your name and other personal information for fraudulent use. Most of us are dismayed by this new cyber-age crime, and we wouldn't assume that the theft of another person's identity is acceptable behavior. The surprising reality, however, is that Christians are, by definition, people who have someone else's identity. They're called "Christians" because they've taken the identity of someone else: the Christ. Not only have you been given an identity that you weren't born with or that you didn't earn the right to use, but you're invited to empty the checking account and use all the benefits this identity brings! This is so much better than identity theft—it's an identity gift!

He loves us, O how He loves us.