

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with Praise

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(Pt 2) The Discourses and Sayings of Jesus - God Sent His Son

December 14, 2025

Sermon Text: John 3:16

Scripture Reading: John 2

This Christmas season we are turning to a very familiar Scripture which is not typically thought of as a Christmas text. And yet it is certainly one of the most “Christmas” of all. It is this, and specifically verse 16 -

Joh 3:16-21 "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. (17) "For

God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (18) "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (19) "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. (20) "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (21) "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

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

This is, is it not, the central Christmas message – that God sent His Son into this world as the Savior of mankind? It is a text which deserves our careful and thoughtful examination. So let's do just that by hearing once more the instruction and correction Jesus gave to Nicodemus.

The Primary Source Salvation

“For God so loved the world that He gave....”

What was the root motivation, the fundamental cause of this good news? Why did the Son of God come into the world as the babe of Bethlehem? Why did the Father send His only begotten Son?

We could perhaps suggest, as some have, that the Son came into the world and went to the cross in order to cause the Father to have pity upon sinners. To suffer on the cross willingly so that “the fierce wrath of the Father might be mitigated by the prayers and tears, the blood and death of His own Son.” [John Brown].

That is to say, Christ's purpose on the cross, these people maintain, was not to purchase salvation for sinners, but to purchase the Father's compassion upon sinners. To induce the Father to have pity upon and save man.

But Scripture denies any such thing. In fact, we learn in God's Word that God is not only a consuming fire in His perfect and holy justice, but that He also is *love, and rich in mercy*. Further, we know from Jesus' own words that there could never be any kind of discord between the Persons of the Trinity. The will of the Triune God is one. Any notion that the Father and the Holy Spirit were opposed to the salvation of sinners while the Son was in favor of such a salvation must be entirely rejected as a fiction of the imaginations of man.

“Christ did not die so that God might love man; He died because God loved man.”

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

1Jn 4:9-10 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

“For GOD so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”

There have been other suggestions as to the originating cause of God sending His Son. Consider-

Man, in his sin, violated the holy Law of the holy, holy, holy God. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins shall die. That is the Law and that Law originates in the very character of God. God's perfect justice must be satisfied. God does not merely “wink” at sin and “let bygones be bygones.” Therefore, it might be suggested, that God sent His Son into the world in order to satisfy and vindicate His Law by

dying on the cross, becoming a curse Himself.

Now that is, of course true. Christ did in fact come into the world to perfectly meet all of the demands of the Law, even death upon a cross.

BUT, consider. Did such satisfaction of His Law and justice require the Son being sent into the world to die? No. If justice were the only motivating factor for the Babe of Bethlehem, *there need not have been a Babe in that manger. God's law could have been met by the sinners themselves paying the wages of sin. The destruction of man rather than his salvation.*

No, there must be more to this matter than *justice*.

Or, we might consider another possible motivation for God sending His Son into the world. Might it be that God did so and through His Son saved the sinner, *so that through saved man's gratitude, obedience and praise for such a great salvation would*

increase the happiness and pleasure of God?

But neither can this be. Why? Because no one, no thing, can every increase OR decrease the happiness of God. God, before any man or any creature was created, was perfectly happy and complete. He was in need of nothing.

Job 22:3 "Is there any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous, Or profit if you make your ways perfect?

Job 35:6-7 "If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? (7) "If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, Or what does He receive from your hand?

“But,” someone else might say, “could it be that God determined to save man in order to put to an end any rebellion against His kingdom?” This is of course quite foolish and even wicked of a proposal, and yet such notions are

always possible in the mind of man in his sin.

It is impossible that God could fear man! Consider His response even to the combined efforts of the nations to overthrow Him:

Psa 2:1-4 Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? (2) The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, (3) "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!" (4) He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.

One little Word shall destroy them. No, any such idea is ludicrous and wicked, that God should fear man. This was not the motivation for the Father sending the Son.

Listen then to John Brown conclude this subject:

“When we thus look upward to God, the giver of the blessings of the Christian salvation, we are

constrained to say, 'Nothing but love could influence Him in bestowing so great a salvation.' And if we turn our attention to the recipients of the blessings of this salvation, we are led to the very same conclusion. There is nothing in the situation or character of man which can lead us to discover any reason in man for these blessings."

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

Look at man in sin and consider this issue further.

Man has no claim upon God. Not even before the fall could Adam have demanded his "due." It was God's pure free pleasure to create Adam or not create Him. It was God's pure and free, sovereign pleasure to make man in the image of God rather than making him a beast or a microbe. This is the point of that parable of our Lord:

Mat 20:11-16 "When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, (12) saying, 'These last men have worked only one

hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.' (13) "But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? (14) 'Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. (15) 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?' (16) "So the last shall be first, and the first last."

If the primary cause of the Father taking action in regard to man's sin were to give man *what he deserves*, He would never have sent the Son into the world to save the world. Man is a sinner. And not only is man a sinner, he is NOT a penitent sinner! He is hardened in his rebellion:

Psa 14:2-3 The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. (3) They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt;

There is no one who does good, not even one.

Man does not deserve to be saved. Only a wicked, crazy person would pray “God, give me what I deserve.” And yet that is the very thing that the sinner, even if he be very zealous in “good deeds” done even in the name of the Lord, insists upon:

Mat 7:22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

And therefore, we ask again –

What could possibly induce God to save such beings? Polluted, rebellious, hates of God, useless beings.

There is one and only one answer – and we have it right here:

“For God so loved the world that He gave...”

Think on this carefully. It was the love of the Father for sinners such as us that sent the Son to save us. The more clearly we see this, the more we are compelled to be astonished, just as John was:

1Jn 3:1a See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are.

Or in the KJV-

1Jn 3:1a Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:

And Paul –

Eph 3:17-19 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints **what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge**, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

There was no other possible...there can be no other possible explanation for God sending His Son into the world. *For God so loved the world....* What manner of love is this??!! His holiness is a reason. His justice is a reason, But LOVE is the root cause apart from which there would have been no Babe in the manger or Savior on the Cross.

God Sent His Son out of His Love for the World

Our church's confession, which is the confession of the doctrines we believe that the Bible teaches, states that (based for instance upon John 17) Christ did not die on the Cross for the sins of every human being who ever lived, but only for His elect. This is the "L" in TULIP – limited or definite atonement.

But Jesus states here that God *so loved the world*, and again 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.

How are we to understand this? God's love for the world? And that the world might be saved through Christ?

Christ, in His first appearance 2000 years ago, came as Savior. Sent by the Father so that "the world might be saved through Him." When He comes again, He will come to judge the world in righteousness and to punish the wicked, casting them into hell. Not so that first time.

Was the world, that is, all human beings and all the nations, saved by Christ when He came? If by "saved" it is meant redemption and universal salvation from sin and hell, the answer of course is "no." So was Christ a failure? Again, that would be absurd – the answer is "no." How then did He come "so that the world might be saved through Him?"

There are other Scriptures which present this same doctrine to us:

2Co 5:19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their
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trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

1Ti 2:3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Tit 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

These verses clearly do not teach universalism – ie, the false doctrine that maintains all people will be saved. What do they mean then? Let's put it like this:

When the Father sent His only begotten Son into the world that the world might be saved through Him, He purposed that while the atonement had a special, saving work for the elect, there was also the fact that the Cross has and has a general reference to all of mankind.

How does the Cross have meaning for all of mankind? In at least these ways:

1. It was a public display of the love of God for the guilty race of mankind
2. The Son was presented to the world as the Savior of the world in the sense that there is NO other Savior. Sinners have only one way, one Savior.
3. Therefore, the cross publicly presented to the world the Savior, and the way of salvation for anyone in the world who believes and trusts in Christ. *Thus, the kindness and love of God has appeared toward man.* Christ appears as the mercy of the God who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
4. Therefore, we must never conclude that because of the doctrine of election we are hampered in fully and freely offering salvation in Christ to everyone who hears the gospel. No sinner must ever

imagine that anything stands in his way of salvation if he will simply turn to Christ in faith.

“It is absolutely certain that a vast multitude of the race of man shall be saved through Christ. And it is as certain that if any one of those to whom that salvation is offered perishes eternally, it will be entirely owing to his own obstinate refusal of what is freely, honestly, presented to him. The kindness of God, as is displayed in the gift of His Son, is kindness to the entire race of mankind....The sinner, thus cordially believing the gospel, gladly and gratefully receives ‘the Savior of the world,’ as his Savior and trusts that by the grace of God he shall partake of that ‘common salvation.’” [John Brown]

The Condemnation for Those Who Reject the Son

While this false doctrine is not new, there have been recent resurgences of it – namely, the denial of eternal punishment in hell for those who reject Christ. Kirk

Cameron, a person who thousands and thousands of people follow online but who is unqualified to be teaching others, just recently announced that he rejects this doctrine and embraces annihilationism. This is the false teaching that the wicked, either at the time of their death or at sometime after – perhaps after a limited time of suffering – are simply annihilated by the Lord into non-existence. Cameron did not of course base his teaching on Scripture but only presented his own reasonings. He is to be avoided and considered a false teacher.

Jesus not only told Nicodemus that the love of God was the motivator for sending the Son into the world, but He also went on to warn those who reject the Son –

Joh 3:18-21 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged **already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (19) "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the

world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. (20) "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (21) "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

We will consider these verses in more detail next time, but for now this –

"he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

What does this "judgement" or "condemnation" entail? First, it means that the sinner (and such we once were) is "already" – even now. Not only will he be condemned on that Day, but he is condemned now, he lives each day under the sentence and consequences of refusing to turn to Christ. We live, you see,

surrounded by men and women on death row.

Furthermore, this "already" condemnation is increased and further pronounced against him because he hears the gospel and rejects God's announcement of mercy for those who believe. In other words, the sinner who rejects Christ when the gospel comes to him, *incurs a new condemnation on account of it*. If a man will not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, his sin is doubly grave and great and so is his condemnation because he will not believe the indescribable Gift by whom he might be saved.

That this present and additional condemnation is a reality – so that the sinner's condemnation is not only incurred at a future time when he stands before Christ, but right now at this moment he is condemned – just as the believer right now *has* eternal life.

When a sinner hears the gospel and refuses to believe in Christ, he very much punishes himself. How? By choosing to exclude himself from

the present enjoyments of God's blessings in Christ which come to the believer. He remains enslaved to the devil. He continues to live in blindness and darkness with a mind that is blinded to the glory of Christ. Light has come into the world but the unbeliever remains in ignorance, in error instead of truth, in the depravity of sin instead of holiness, false happiness instead of genuine joy. And the cause of it all rests upon the sinner. God's revelation of Christ as Savior is not obscure. No, the sinner chooses the darkness instead of the light, and why? Because he loves his sin.

Let's end with one more quote from John Brown in which he summarizes the response to Jesus by the large majority of Nicodemus' fellow countrymen:

"They would not come to the light. They rejected a system which, instead of promising to gratify their fond sinful expectations, required them to repent of them. They had no desire to be awakened from their dreams; and, therefore, they

tried to extinguish the light which threatened to break their repose."

And so it is today.

Joh 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."