

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”:
THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

JOHN 3:16

I. Introduction

II. God So Loved the World (John 3:16)

- A. John 3:16 are John’s own re-statement of what Jesus had said to Nicodemus.
- B. John 3:16 is also one of those passages that offers a very concise summary of the Gospel: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”
- C. Let’s take some time now to ponder what these words are saying to us. There are at least three big questions that John 3:16 tries to answer.

III. God’s Attitude toward the World

- A. First: What is God’s attitude toward the world?
—Ans: *God loves the world.*
- B. This is the world of...
 - pain and suffering
 - reckless driving
 - traffic accidents
 - child abductions
 - back-biting relatives
 - terrorist attacks
 - missing jets
 - cutthroat competition
 - fear-driven career advancement
 - Internet scams, etc.– God loves this world. (What other world could John be talking about?)
- C. To say that God loves the world does not mean that God loves the evil that is in the world.
 - 1. God cannot love evil anymore than he can hate himself.
 - 2. Evil is the cancer that has lodged itself in the arteries of the world. Evil has to be removed. And God is determined to do it.

3. But the world itself is what God loves. God loves his creation. Most of all, God loves mankind.
- D. John uses the word “world” (Gk: *kosmos*) to designate the object of God’s love.
1. This is the same word that we heard from John the Baptist, when he called our Lord, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world [*kosmos*]!” (Jn 1:29).
 2. When we hear the word “world,” our heavenly Father is inviting us to think massively, internationally, cross-culturally—cosmically.
 3. God continues to have a very big heart for his ugly, deformed creation.
 4. God’s desire is not for his creation to be destroyed, but for it to be healed.

IV. Embodying the Love of the Father

- A. To what extent is my own heart filled with the love of God for the world?
- B. The vision of God we hold in our hearts will form the kind of disciple we become.
1. If our idea of God is One who doesn’t love the world much, we could develop a spirituality that tends to view the things of the world with suspicion and disdain.
 2. We may find it hard to...
 - affirm anything in human culture
 - genuinely empathize with other human beings
 - teach out of a warm and sincere love for others
- C. But there is also an opposite error.
1. If we forget that this is *God’s* love we are taking about, we may take God’s love for the world as an excuse to consume whatever the human world produces.
 2. But God’s love is a holy love, a fierce compassion toward sinners, driven by a desire to embrace them to himself.
- D. God loves the world.
1. His love is not endorsement of the world’s sin.
 2. His love is a fiery desire to set it free from sin and restore it to his glory.
- E. When we love the world as God loves it, we will...
1. care more for people than for the things they can produce
 2. look out for the needs of our colleagues, friends, and relatives.
 3. not treat our subordinates and co-workers merely as tools for the job.
 4. not just buy whatever product (read: philosophy, way of life, material good, etc.) the world wants to sell us, but ask more discerning questions:

- “What does this product reflect about the deeper longings of my fellow human beings?”
 - “What possible effects, both good and evil, could this product have on my fellow human beings?”
- (Again, godly love for the world is sincere love for human beings, not merely things)

F. Growing in a true love for the world is the work of God in us.

V. He Gave His Only Son

A. Second: If indeed God loves the world, how does he show his love for the world?

—Ans: “*he gave his only Son...*”

B. Another related passage is in 1 John 4:10: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

1. God shows his love to human beings precisely by giving of himself.
2. He gave his own Son.

C. Who is this Son?

1. He is the divine Son of Man (Dan 7:13).
2. He is the Word of God (Jn 1:1, 2).
3. He is the Light of the World (Jn 1:9).
4. He is the King who will bring the kingdom of eternal life into the world (Jn 18:36).
5. He is the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29).
6. He is the new Bronze Serpent to whom the nations must look if they want to live (1:14).
7. He is the only-begotten Son who has always been at the Father’s side (Jn 1:18).

D. We confess in the Nicene Creed that the Son is “begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

E. When God sends his Son, we must sense the unspeakable intensity of God’s care and concern for us sinners.

VI. Eternal Life through Belief in the Son

A. Third question: What does God give us through the Son?

—“...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

B. This is a restatement of what our Lord said to Nicodemus just a short while ago: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

C. Eternal life, the life of the Spirit, the life of the kingdom of heaven, is what we will gain when we look to the Son, and no longer to ourselves.

D. What does it mean to believe in the Son?

As John Calvin explains, it is “placing Christ before one’s eyes and beholding in Him the heart of God poured out in love. Our firm and substantial support is to rest on the death of Christ as its only pledge” (*The Gospel According to St. John 1-10*, 74).

E. To believe the Son is to hope in him. Then it is to confidently receive the Son for all that he is for us—our Savior, our Source of Life, our Lord, our new Foundational Reality, our new Ground of Existence.

F. Once upon a time, when we were but flesh, we were our own sources of life.

G. When we trusted in the Son, we came under a new regime.

1. This is no longer the regime of our own self-efforts, but of God’s grace; not the kingdom of the flesh, but the Spirit.
2. Jesus is the King, the life-giving Center, of this new kingdom.
3. He says to us, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (Jn 14:27). Why? “Because I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33).

Let us believe in Jesus. Jesus the Son of God is the supreme gift and expression of the Father’s love. Jesus loves us, because that is his Father’s heart toward us. Let us trust in him. Let us place all our hopes on him. And let us receive him as the new life God wants us to have.

Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Was there anything that you found difficult to accept?
3. According to Jn 3:16, what is God's attitude toward the world?
4. What kind of world does God love? Try to express your answer in vivid, concrete terms. (A world of...; a world where _____ happens, etc.)
5. When we hear the word 'world,' our heavenly Father is inviting us to think massively, internationally, cross-culturally, and cosmically. Discuss this.
6. What is the nature of God's love for the world? What is it not?
7. To what extent is my own heart filled with the love of God for the world?
8. How does God's love for the world shape our love for it? What are some tangible ways we love the world in God's way?
9. If God loves the world, how, according Jn 3:16, does he show his love for the world?
10. Who is the Son? How has he been revealed to us thus far in the Gospel of John?
11. What does it mean to believe in the Son? What do we receive when we believe in the Son?