

February 3, 2019

“The Greatness of God’s Love”
John 3:16

FCF: Uncertainty of how God sees us
PROPOSITION: (anchor) God wants us to know
 (magnet) the greatness of His love.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Valentine’s Day is approaching. It reminds me of a silly game where you try to see if the object of your affection returns your affection. I’m sure you know it. Holding a flower, a girl says, “He loves me. He loves me not,” plucking a petal with each phrase. The phrase spoken with the pulling of the last petal is her answer. It’s a dangerous game, filled with uncertainty.

For if you don’t know how someone feels about you, it makes a relationship hard. Which is true not just with one another but with God. Thankfully, He has not left us to guess on this.

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 3:1-16](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Surely, love is in the air this time of year, bringing a surge of marriage proposals. A headline I saw last week - “10 Over-the-Top Ways to Propose - And What They Cost” ([READ](#)):

A professional photographer or videographer - \$25 to \$1,000. A hot-air balloon - \$200 to \$400 for a 60-minute private ride. The jumbotron at an MLB game - \$50 to \$2,500. A skywriter - \$1,500 to \$2,000. An airplane banner - starting around \$500. Musicians - \$150 to \$300 an hour for a soloist. A glass slipper from Disney World - \$375 plus the cost of admission. Fireworks - \$2,500 to \$6,000. A flash mob - at least \$2,000. A mock movie trailer - around \$5,000.

Why go to all that trouble and expense? To make an impression, to build a case, to make it clear how you feel. God wants us to know the same. And He has gone to the greatest lengths.

The context of our text is worth knowing. Jesus is in conversation with this man named Nicodemus. He is setting before this man both the necessity of a new birth and the assurance of eternal life. That leads us into v.16. “How is all this possible?” The sheer greatness of God’s love. The greatness of God’s love. And clearly, God wants us to know the greatness of His love.

This verse is the most famous in the Bible. It shows us three aspects of God’s love. First, its unimaginable reach. Second, its unspeakable cost. And then, third, its unsearchable riches.

I. UNIMAGINABLE REACH

First, its unimaginable reach, how far God’s love actually goes ([READ John 3:16a](#)).

A) To the Nations

For starters, despite Nicodemus’ assumptions, this love reaches to the nations.

1. What had been said

God had said that through one nation and one people, all nations and peoples would be blessed. From the beginning, He had in mind one family made up of many races, cultures, and stories.

2. What had been heard

That’s what God had said. But what had been heard was an inordinate focus on Israel being a chosen race, that this was all about them. Which led to a posture of pride and presumption.

B) To Sinners

So this love reaches the nations. But not just that. This love also reaches sinners.

1. The world

This reference to the world is not geographical. It is spiritual. Jesus is speaking of fallen man - rebels, fools, idolaters. Later on, He speaks of the world loving the darkness and hating the light.

2. The reader

And the reader is meant to understand that they are included in this grouping. We are meant to understand that. This is not a matter of a line drawn between “them” and “us.” No, it’s just “us.”

This is the unimaginable reach of God’s love - not just to the nations but to sinners.

Application:

All this is to say that the greatness of God’s love is not as limited as we think. It is far more expansive (**READ John 3:16a**). This is us. This is what makes the good news good. God’s love is indiscriminate and gracious. No matter who you are or what you have done. This is us.

God’s love is great. And He wants us to know the greatness of His love.

II. UNSPEAKABLE COST

Its unimaginable reach and its unspeakable cost - the price paid (**READ John 3:16a-b**).

A) Eternal Worth

It doesn’t take much reflection to get a sense of the eternal worth Jesus is speaking of.

1. Trinitarian mystery

The Trinity - certainly there is mystery. One God in three persons - Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

2. The Son

The Son, the Father’s “only begotten” Son. The word conveying how special and beloved He is.

B) Priceless Value

This cost then has an eternal worth. And, with that, an absolutely priceless value.

1. “He gave”

The Father “gave” the Son. The idea being a submitting, yielding, offering, and sacrificing.

2. Historical memory

Now Nicodemus knew his Old Testament. This would have prompted memory of Genesis 22 when Abraham’s faith was put to the test. God told him to go to Mt. Moriah and there to make a sacrifice, a burnt offering - his beloved son, Isaac, the one on whom all the promises hinged. But the angel of the Lord stayed Abraham’s hand and a ram was sacrificed instead of his son. There would be no staying of the hand for the Son of God. For Jesus was the ultimate ram for us.

This is the unspeakable cost of God’s love - its eternal worth and priceless value.

Application:

My friends, you need not wonder if God really loves you. The cost could not be higher. His love could not be greater. Let that salve and settle into your deep worries, fears, and doubts.

God’s love is great. And He wants us to know the greatness of His love.

III. UNSEARCHABLE RICHES

Which brings us to its unsearchable riches - what He offers us ([READ John 3:16](#)).

A) *The Greatest Hope*

1. Quantity of life

This is the greatest hope we could have. Life never-ending. Put another way, life everlasting.

2. Quality of life

But eternal life is more than just quantity of life. It is quality of life as well - knowing, sharing, and entering into relationship with God. Earthly entry now into the life of the age to come.

B) *The Simplest Means*

The very greatest of hopes. And how? Through the very simplest of means.

1. "Whoever believes in Him"

"Whoever believes in Him" - through faith. Simply accepting, trusting, relying upon something someone else has already done. Not naked raw faith in anything or anyone. But faith in Jesus.

2. Historical memory

([READ John 3:14-15](#)) Nicodemus knew the Old Testament. He would have thought of Numbers 21. As the people of Israel were traveling toward the Red Sea, they become impatient and began to grumble. They spoke out against God and Moses, complaining of the manna. So God sent venomous serpents into the camp. Many of the people were bitten and died. Owing their sin, they asked for the snakes to be taken away. The Lord then had Moses make an image of a serpent, place it on a pole, telling the people that any who looked at the serpent would be healed. All of which was a picture of our own plight, the plight of us all, and our one sure salvation.

This is the unsearchable riches of God's love - the greatest hope and the simplest means.

Application:

Let's be clear. There's no point in ducking anything here. There is a sense of exclusivity to this. The Israelites had to look to that serpent on the pole. And we must look to Jesus. That is the only way we can have eternal life. That simple means is the only way to this great hope.

That said, there is also a sense of inclusivity here. For whoever looks to Jesus has this hope. This is far more open and free than any other religion, any other way to God. All others demand certain acts, great works and sacrifices. Not here. Jesus has done all that already for us.

God's love is great. And He wants us to know the greatness of His love.

CONCLUSION:

He wants us to know its unimaginable reach, unspeakable cost, and unsearchable riches. All so very surprising to Nicodemus. And to us. For this is "agape" love - the strongest and noblest kind. Far beyond a feeling, whim, or infatuation. This is sacrificial action. We struggle with believing this could be true. But in His love for us He wants us to know His love for us.

And great changes can come as we do. Listen to this article excerpt ([READ quote](#)):

I know a family who adopted an older child from an unspeakably horrific orphanage in another country. When they brought her home one of the things they told her was that she was expected to clean her room every day. When she heard about that responsibility, she fixated on it and saw it as a way she would earn her family's love. In other words, she isolated the responsibility and applied it to her existing frame of thinking that was shaped by life in the orphanage. Thus, every morning when her parents came in her room, it was immaculate and she would sit on the bed and would say, "My room is clean. Can I stay? Do you still love me?"

Her words broke her new parents' hearts. Eventually, the girl learned to hear her parents' words as their unconditionally beloved child who would never be forsaken, not as a visitor trying to earn her place in the family. After she knew that she was an inseparable part of the family story, even correction and discipline did not cause her to question her family's love for her; she understood correction and discipline to be part of what it meant to be in the family.

Friends, we are so often so very much like that once orphaned child - insecure, uncertain, wondering if God loves us. This is what makes the good news good. He does. And He wants us to know. God's love for us is that great. His love for us is that great. And He wants us to know.

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