

“FLOODING THE PEOPLE WITH THE LOVE OF GOD”

John 3:16

When I was in seminary, I had a professor of Systematic Theology; his name was Dr. Harold P. Nebelsick. He was well versed on was Dr. Karl Barth, a great 20th century theologian. One day this famed theologian was asked, “What is the greatest thought you ever had?” His answer [and I just love it]: “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” - Dale

Galloway, *Rebuild Your Life*

J. I. Packer is a British-born Canadian Christian theologian who currently serves as the Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is considered to be one of the most important evangelical theologians of our day. In his book, *Knowing God*, he writes, “What matters supremely, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—that He knows me. I am graven on the palms of His hands. I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me.

I know Him because He first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when His care falters. This is momentous knowledge. There is unspeakable comfort... in knowing that God is constantly taking knowledge of me in love and watching over me for my good. There is tremendous relief in knowing that His love is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion Him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench His determination to bless me."

Over the last few weeks we have been talking about flooding people, in a positive way, ever since we began our contemporary 11:15 a.m. service called "Flood," on Sunday, April 11th. Last Sunday we talked about flooding people with the grace of God and today we want to talk about flooding people with the Love of God.

Our passage today, this one small verse, and now I am going to step out on a limb and do something I don't do, I am going to bet that the overwhelming majority of you have heard or seen this verse at one time or another. For this one verse that has been memorized by countless people of the Christian faith, is said to be one of the greatest verses in all of scripture. It has been said that all people have had their favorite Bible text; but this has been called "Everybody's text." Because, found in this one verse, is the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me take a moment and put this verse in its context. Jesus has been talking with a man under the cover of darkness, because the man he was talking to, Nicodemus, was a religious leader of the Jews, a Pharisee. And he has come to Jesus by night so that no one would have any knowledge of them meeting because the Pharisees were in opposition to Jesus.

And they are talking about the Kingdom of God and Jesus is explaining that one can enter the Kingdom of God, not through any kind of moral achievement but by an inner transformation, a spiritual birth where a person is born from above. Where the person has a new heart and understands that when they open up their heart to Christ, they become a child of God who seeks to live in joyful obedience to God's will. And it is in this context of Jesus explaining how one can enter the Kingdom of God that Jesus shares this verse that the great Reformer, Martin Luther of the 16th century called "the Gospel in miniature."

There have been many a sermon preached on this passage but let me share just three simple truths that pop out at me from this one verse. First, **this verse tells us that the plan of salvation starts with God.**

It doesn't say that humankind so loved the world; that mankind or womankind or somebody's kind or someone with progressive thinking one day because of their love decided to try to save us from ourselves through some concocted plan. It says that God so loved the world.

Sometimes I wonder if people hearing the message of salvation ever think that God had to somehow be coerced or persuaded to forgive. It is almost as if some people have God, over here, and they see Him as a God of wrath; an angry, stern, unforgiving God. And then over here we have this gentle, loving, all-forgiving Jesus. And some way, we have Jesus who got the attention of God, got the ear of God and eloquently persuaded this angry God to have a change of heart from one of condemnation to one of forgiveness. And yet if people have come to this conclusion, they have it all wrong because our passage is very clear that it was God who took the initiative and who sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, all because He loved us, He loved the world.

Folks, God had a plan, and Jesus Christ was the one who came to bridge us and God through His death on a cross. So it all began with the love of God and His plan for the world.

Second, **this verse tells us of the nature of God, and that is**

LOVE. "For God so loved...." It would be so tempting, yes, even easy to think of God looking down on humanity and what we do to ourselves and what we do to each other, looking down on our disobedience and outright rebellion and saying (now this is God talking), "I'll break them, I'll get even with them, I'll discipline them, why, I'll afflict them, I'll bring heaven and hell down and up on them until they return to me." It would be easy to think of God responding like this, would it not? And yet we read in Romans 5:8 these amazing words from the Apostle Paul when he writes, "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." Folks, God took the initiative and sent His only son, to die in our place- because we really deserve Christ dying for us?

I know I really didn't deserve Christ dying for me. For what I really deserve is death. And yet God sent His only Son out of His love for me, out of His love for you; He didn't do it for Himself, but for us.

This is how I figure it- God is our Heavenly Father who can, in no way be happy until, until His wayward children come home to Him. And the good thing is that our God is not one who lowers the hammer on us to bring us into submission but rather He has compassion over us and He almost, in a way, is courting us into love. See, it all comes back to the love of God for the world; for you and for me. And friends, it is when I look at the cross that is so apparent that God's love has been demonstrated dramatically in Christ, and it is shaped by His cross. And I pray that you have experienced the love of God through Jesus Christ.

And third, **this verse tells of the amazing length of God's love.**

Friends, Jesus doesn't say that the love of God is just for the Jews. He doesn't say that the love of God is only for the people of that region of the

country. Jesus doesn't say that God is in the business of picking and choosing who He loves and who He doesn't love. He doesn't say God only loves the good people. No, Jesus says that the love of God is for the whole, the entire, the top of the North Pole to the bottom of Antarctica and everything in between, the whole world. God's love is for the unlovely, God's love is for the lonely who have absolutely no one else to love them, the person who loves God desperately and the person for whom God never comes up on their radar screen, the person who rests in the love of God and the person who pushes away the love of God and even rejects God's love. The point I am trying to make is that everyone, everyone is included in the length of God's love. It was the early church father, Augustine who put it best when he said, "God loves each of us as if there was only one of us to love."

Do you know how much God loves you? Have you experienced the wonderful, the amazing love of God even if there has been sorrow or tragedy

or trials in your life? Maybe you have resisted God's love because of some baggage you are carrying around that hasn't been unpacked. Maybe you have not been able to see and experience the love of God because your earthly father wounded you or maybe even abused you or some other male that you trusted or relied upon or looked up to. For whatever the reason I invite, I ask you to give God a chance today. Let God embrace you with His love, a love like no other and let the healing, let the loving relationship begin or be restored or continue today.

A certain medieval monk announced he would be preaching next Sunday evening on "The Love of God." The night he was to preach, as the shadows fell and the light ceased to come in through the cathedral windows, the congregation gathered. In the darkness of the altar, the monk lighted a candle and carried it to the crucifix. First of all, he illumined the crown of thorns, next, the two wounded hands, then the marks of the spear wound.

In the hush that fell, he blew out the candle and left the chancel. There was nothing else to say. Source Unknown

And so there isn't except, "Thank You God for loving us and may we, in turn, flood people with the love of God, Amen."

“FLOODING THE PEOPLE WITH THE LOVE OF GOD”

John 3:16

Introduction: Dr. Karl Barth when asked, “What is the greatest thought you ever had? His answer...

Flooding people with the GRACE of God, flooding people with the LOVE of God

Our passage- John 3:16
The context...

Three simple truths from this one verse

First, **this verse tells us that the _____ of salvation starts with**

_____ It doesn't say...

An angry, unforgiving God and a gentle, loving, all-forgiving Jesus?

Second, **this verse tells us of the _____ of God, and that is**

_____ It would be tempting to think of a God who says...

Romans 5:8

Third, **this verse tells of the amazing _____ of God's Love**

Conclusion: Do you know how much God loves you? Have you experienced the wonderful, the amazing love of God?