

What The Love Of God In Jesus Gives To Us And Asks Of Us.

Text: John 3:16-21

1) Gives To Us

Suggested Hymns:

2) Asks Of Us

127, 130, 134, 300, 154

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 3:16–21, *¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

¹⁸ “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Luther calls the first sentence of our Gospel “*the little Gospel*,” because in it is condensed the whole Gospel truth.

It is, indeed, a text which is fathomless as the depth of the sea, and wider in its range than the ocean. No minister can do justice to this text in a sermon. It covers the whole field of Christian theology.

Here we are told of the love of God; and who can tell all about God’s love? Mention is made of the world, and that brings before our mind the history of man, his creation, his fall in sin, and his relation to the Creator. God’s only begotten Son is referred to, and we are thereby reminded of the fact that there are

different persons in the deity. We are told of our redemption through Christ Jesus, of faith, of heaven, and of hell.

It has been said of this text that it is so vast that it is almost impossible to do anything with it. It hampers a man into silence; it appals him.

There are some sentences that a man can walk around and walk into, and take possession of its truth. This is not such a sentence. There are sentences that are easily explained, but this is not such a sentence. There are some sentences whose meaning we may measure and take their length and breadth. This is not such a sentence. It is immeasurable, and infinite.

But it is in substance the very text upon which the first sermon was preached in the Christian church. It was the foundation of Peter's discourse when the first Christian congregation was being formed in the city of Jerusalem, and is, therefore, a suitable text for Pentecost.

Since the love of God in Jesus is the keynote which sounds in our Gospel from beginning to end, let us consider with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *What The Love Of God In Jesus Gives To Us And Asks Of Us*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. What The Love Of God In Jesus Gives To Us.

"¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." In the fullness of time God had His dear Son become man. This act of love is simply beyond comprehension. There is no language for it.

So great is the love of God, it embraces the whole world, the world of sinners, the fallen race, and it parts with that which is dearest to Him, with His only begotten Son, for our sakes.

Through Christ heaven has come down upon the earth. He has built the bridge leading across the abyss that man's sin has made between his trembling heart and his God. He has effected the holy chain that now reaches from eternity down into time, and with which we can support ourselves in the storms of life, and by which God will in His own time draw us up to His glory above.

For to what purpose did God give His only begotten Son? *"That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not*

send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

It was the salvation of all people, of every individual, even of the greatest sinners, which God had in view when He gave His only begotten Son. In His Son He gave us a prize and a treasure which is of infinitely greater value to us than if He had given us stores of wealth and royal possessions.

You can, indeed, have many things without Christ, such as prosperity and joy at home, honour and reputation in the world, earthly possessions and great power. But when suddenly and without warning all that of which you are proud crumbles into dust; when you are deserted by your best friends and earthly fame fades away; when you begin to feel that the deepest longings of the soul are not satisfied by that which earth can offer you — how poor and wretched must you feel without Christ!

But in Christ you have all that can make you truly happy, even when earthly happiness is turned into misery. Christ has proclaimed to us the good news that God’s love is greater than our guilt; and that, when we have become rebellious and stubborn, He even then still permits His face to shine upon us.

We read in 1 John 2:2, that Christ ***Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*** Christ has paid for us the ransom price and has redeemed us all with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

Christ has successfully combated with the enemies of our eternal welfare, and delivered us from death and from the power of the devil. Christ has worked out for us all a spotless righteousness, so that we would be adorned with the robe of that righteousness, and although we are and remain sinners as long as we live upon this earth, appear before the just and holy God as if we had no sin.

Christ has opened for us the crystal portals of the heavenly city and gained for us all eternal life, eternal happiness and bliss, so that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

Behold, this is what the love of God in Jesus gives to us, offers to us, presents to us: forgiveness of all our sins, life, salvation, peace, and happiness

without end. When God gave His only begotten Son, was not this the greatest deed of love the world has ever witnessed?

2. What The Love Of God In Jesus Asks Of Us

And now, in the second place, let us consider what this love of God in Jesus asks of us.

Does God ask of us that we perform certain acts and do certain things to show that we are worthy of His love? Does He fix certain conditions and say, *'I will love you and give you life and salvation, if you pray to me, worship me, and walk in my commandments?*'

Many people think that they must gain God's favour by their own deeds. They think that they must pray and be good, and then God will love them. No; God loved us first; He loved us before we were born; He loved us in all our misery and sin.

From eternity He loved us and decreed to give us His Son, and actually gave us His Son, when the time was fulfilled. How can we induce God to love us when He has already manifested His love to us in His only begotten Son ?

All that the love of God in Jesus asks of us is that we receive the gift which of in His boundless grace and mercy He has bestowed upon us, that we believe in His Son and, with His Son, all those heavenly treasures conveyed to us by His Son's work.

Our Gospel therefore says, ¹⁸ ***"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."***

By faith we must receive the great gift of God. Hence it is by faith alone that we are saved, not by our own deeds and works of righteousness.

If we do not believe in the only begotten Son of God we thereby openly despise God's love to us and reject the gift of eternal salvation which He extends to us in His Son. Hence it is that the person who does not believe is condemned. His condemnation follows as a matter of course.

He is not condemned because God did not love him. God loved him as much as all the rest of the world, and gave His Son for him as well as for the rest of men.

Condemnation is his own choice, as our text says, “¹⁹ *And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*” ²⁰ *For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

Much has been said and written in defence of unbelievers to make it appear as if, in some cases at least, there was a good moral excuse for man’s unbelief.

But the Word of God finds no excuse whatever for unbelievers. It says, “*men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*”

- If the love of God, which has been made manifest in Christ, and which supports and sustains us, and gives us the best that we could wish for ourselves;
- if the love of God which promises heaven to us as the place where our souls can rest in peace;
- if the love of God, which on the first day of the Christian Pentecost so wondrously manifested itself in the coming of the Spirit
- if this love of God does not awaken a responsive love in man’s heart,

then there must be an obstinate aversion in such a heart to that which is good and a preference to that which is evil.

O let us love God, then, for He has first loved us! Let us believe in God’s only begotten Son and thereby accept the gift of our salvation! Let us not be *of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*¹

And now it remains to be said that this acceptance of the benefits of Christ is not a condition that man must fulfil, but again a free gift of God to man.

The same means of divine grace by which God offers all the spiritual blessings prepared for us, is also the power of God which works in us the acceptance of what is earnestly offered to all.

Natural man, as described in our text, is only capable of rejecting the grace of God in Christ, loving darkness rather than light, yes, being darkness himself, dead in sin, an enemy of God, unable and unwilling to accept the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

But God so loved the world that He also provided the means whereby sinners may be led forth from the thralldom of sin, the power of darkness, to His marvellous light.

It is the Gospel of Christ whereby faith is created in the sinner's heart, and whereby the Holy Spirit preserves us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

Thus it is God who not only enacted the wondrous works of Christmas, and Good Friday, and Easter, but who also works the miracle of Pentecost through all ages and to the end of time. And we, too, are also witnesses.

And hence, to the end of our lives, our prayer shall be:²

And Thou, O Holy Spirit,
My Comforter and guide,
Grant that in Jesus' merit
I always may confide;
Him to the end confessing
Whom I have known by faith,
Give me Thy constant blessing,
And grant a Christian death. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Hebrews 10:39

² Hymn 300 V3