

“The Love of God to Man”

John 3:16

A sermon by Rev. Bob Kells, based on sermon outline by Rev. Jacob Bachtel

PRAYER: O God, in word and in deed, you are our help in ages past and in our age today. Help us now to understand the depth of your love. Chase fear and doubt away, as far as the horizon may they flee. For your coming crushes sin and opens the gateway from death to eternal life with you. Open our ears that we might hear, our eyes that we might see the wonders of your glorious love for us today. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing to you. In the name of Him who reigns in heaven and on earth forever and ever. Amen.

Brethren, it is good to be with you again here in Mechanicstown. Though it has been several weeks since my last appointment with you, I want you to know you remain in my prayers as I ask God to bless you and keep you strong for the work of the Gospel in this part of Frederick County.

My message for today is called “The Love of God to Man.” It is based on the Gospel of St. John in the third chapter wherein Jesus met at night with the Pharisee known as Nicodemus. During the course of their meeting, Jesus told Nicodemus why he had come to earth—it was to show the love of God to man. This is summed up in the one verse, that is beloved throughout the ages, John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

These words are so well known that we scarce take note of their import. They speak of love, but what know we of the love God demonstrates to mankind?

- What is the object of the love of God?
- How is it evidenced?
- What is the nature of his love for us?
- How is it God’s design (or purpose) that we might come to life everlasting, and...
- How may we avail ourselves of the precious benefits of this love?

Let us begin at the beginning and ask, what is the object of the love of God?

This is answered immediately in the Holy Scripture before us—the object of God’s love is “the world.” Easy enough to say, but what world?

- The Lord God, in his infinite wisdom, created many worlds.
- We have only to look to the stars and ponder there must be thousands, yea even tens upon thousands of other worlds out there.

Here, Jesus speaks not of other worlds, not of the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars in the night sky. No doubt these worlds are loved by the Creator in some fashion of which we cannot fathom, for God made them all and judged them to be good. Yet they are not the object of the love of which God spoke through Jesus.

Neither is heaven the object of God’s love. Heaven itself is already brimming with the love of God amid the presence of the Father, Son, and Spirit. It needs not to be the object of this love of God in Jesus, for Jesus is already there.

Neither is hell the object of God’s love, for fallen angels and lost spirits are there.

- No, beloved, the object of God’s love of which Jesus speaks is not another world but this world, this earth.
- Before Jesus, the condition of this world was not good—it was guilty of sin, filled with darkness, and wretched beyond belief.

- That was then. But now, the world is full of hope! For we know that in Christ Jesus, God still loves the world.

Now we must ask, what is the evidence of this love: “God gave his only begotten Son.”

The evidence is given to us not in the form of legal argument nor by persuasive rhetoric in fancy words, neither is it given us through abstract philosophizing relying as that does on the limits of human reason. The evidence of God’s love is given to us in a person, the person of Jesus Christ. In Him we see all that is divine and all that is human. And this is shown through his life:

- His miraculous birth by the Virgin.
- His disputes with the doctors and “so-called” learned ones in the Temple.
- His baptism by water and the Spirit.
- The miracles he performed, curing many of their ills.
- The prophecies he made about himself as the Messiah of God.
- His Resurrection from the grave by God the Father.

All this shows forth to man the divinity of Jesus.

God gave all to Jesus, and yet...

- God gave him also to a life of poverty: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).
- God gave him to the Temptation, wherein Jesus was tempted of the devil forty days, and prevailed.
- God gave Jesus to persecution by the Pharisees, who said he had a devil.
- God gave Jesus to pain and anguish, and no more so than in Gethsemane where he cried out to God: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).
- And God gave Jesus to a life that ended in Death wherein he was slain on the cross.

All this, God gave to Jesus, the same life we are subject to in our mortal bodies. And yet, God also gave Jesus for God’s greater purpose of showing love to the world. For you see, God also gave Jesus to be:

- Our teacher and our example, that we might learn of him how to be fully human in our love toward God and toward man.
- And to be our Redeemer, to be the one to save us from perishing in the life that leads to death.

Notice, now the nature of the love God gives to man.

- It is unmerited love, for man has no natural claim on the love of God. Indeed, how could we? For all relationship with God had been broken off by man’s disobedience to the law of the Divine.
- It is free love; that is to say, love that is given freely and without price. No money can buy the love of God to man. God’s love is as free as the sunshine—as if anyone could harness the power of the sun and charge money for it. It is as free as the water of the earth—as if to imagine one might bottle water and sell it for a price!
- It is universal love, and this we plainly see from the words of Jesus: “For God so loved the world...” There are no qualifiers here. No ifs, ands, or buts. Nothing to suggest God loves one part of the world or one people of the world more than another part of it or any other people who dwell in it. The “whole world” is the object of God’s love.
- It is love unparalleled, for such love was never known on the face of the earth before God sent Jesus.
- And it is wonderful and incomprehensible love; love that is deeper than oceans and wider than skies; love that is higher than the stars above. This love of God to man cannot be comprehended by the greatest

minds of philosophy, engineering, industry, or science. God's love can only be understood in the human heart; for in Jesus Christ, God gave His heart to humankind.

What is the design, that is, the overarching purpose of God's love to man?

It is simply this: That we might not perish—might not taste the bitterness of the second death.

- For all who have been born have died once to sin.
- When this mortal life is over, we will taste of death again.

But because of Jesus, God has delivered us from sin and death and delivered us into everlasting life.

- When shall we have this everlasting life? Why, here and now, through the Spirit of God who dwells within us. Everlasting life begins when we receive Christ into our lives.
- Where shall we have everlasting life? In heaven, where Christ is now, where he has prepared a place for all who know him and love him. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14).
- And what shall we say of the everlasting life but that it consists in the purity, the knowledge, and the power of God given to us in God's Holy Spirit.

Now we know that God's love is for all the world, that it was incarnated in the man Jesus, who suffered and died that we might have life, that it is the greatest of loves, and that it is designed for our salvation unto eternal life. This knowledge is all well and good. It might even be the greatest knowledge ever known, greater than all the knowledge contained in all the books of the world! But knowledge alone cannot help us, nor strength of body or mind, nor even a good and moral character. These alone cannot save us.

How then may we avail ourselves of the precious benefits of this love of God to man?

Jesus tells us how. Jesus said "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is the key to God's love to man: It is only by faith that we can be saved.

What kind of faith? That which trusts God and Christ, that is the faith that leads to everlasting life. Without faith on our part, Christ's death is lost to us. Without faith:

- In life we would be without hope for Christ preserves us unto eternal life in God's kingdom.
- In death we would be lost for Christ saves us from the misery of death, like that death suffered by the rich man who refused the poor man, Lazarus, even the crumbs from his bounteous table.
- In eternity, we would have no place of comfort to dwell, for it is Christ who creates for us a home with Him in heaven.

Beloved, Christ Jesus came into the world as God's love embodied for all the world that by him, we might be saved. Do we believe on Christ? Do we know him as Lord and Savior?

Is this our faith in every fiber of our being? And if this is our faith, does it purify our hearts, making us holy, making us entirely his?

I invite you, brethren, to consider today: How is it with your soul?

- Have ye faith in Jesus Christ to save you?
- Have ye faith in the blood that was shed upon the tree, the blood that availeth for you and for me?
- Do you trust in his victory over the grave?

I pray that you do, for Jesus Christ has won the victory over the grave.

Trust in Jesus, today and always. Amen.