

God's Valentine To Us
February 14, 2010

Turn to **John 3:16**. Jesus is talking to a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus came at night to see Jesus. He was afraid people would think badly of him because he was coming to see Jesus. Look at what Jesus said to this religious man in **John 3:16**. I know you know this scripture, but let's look at it again fresh. **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."**

There isn't a person in this house that I would give any of my children for. There isn't one of you, nor would you give any of your children for me; and God didn't give us Jesus in order to make us gods. Jesus is the **ONLY** Son of God, and God gave His Son so that we could become children of God. **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him (Jesus) should not perish but have everlasting life."**

Verse 17: "For God did not send His Son (Jesus) into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him (Jesus) might be saved." Verse 18: "He who believes in Him (Jesus) is not condemned, but he who does not believe (in Jesus) is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved. You don't get saved just because you are a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, or Catholic. You get saved because you trusted in Jesus. We're not here to make you religious. We are here to give you the ability to have a relationship with Jesus.

I want to share with you this morning about God's Valentine To Us. It's found in **John 3:16**. As we look at that scripture, we see that **GOD'S LOVE IS EXTRAVAGANT**. It's all about love. Valentines Day is all about love. It came from a priest whose name was Valentine. Claudius, the Emperor of Rome, made a decree that no one could get married. He had an army, and none of the men were joining the army. So he decided that, if he forbade anybody to get married, the men would join the army, but they didn't.

Valentine, being a priest, continued secretly marrying people; but one day he was caught, arrested, put in jail, and sentenced to die. People that loved him would come and throw flowers toward the window where he was.

The chief jailer's daughter got permission from her daddy to visit Valentine, and on

February 14th, the day he died, Valentine wrote a letter to her and signed it, "Your Valentine." From that day, Valentines Day came about. It's about love. **God so loved**, and you want to stretch out the word "so" loved, because God's love for us is **extravagant**.

I know there are people that give extravagant gifts especially for Valentines Day, and men should go out of their way on that day. When you're in love, love is extravagant. **1 John 4:8** tells me that **God is love**. "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." That doesn't describe God. That is who God is! **God is love**. It isn't a part of His nature. It is who He is, and I know that is hard for us to comprehend, because we are in a world filled with hatred, strife, anger, rage, and violence.

Every day in our country there are violent acts that occur. Yesterday a professor in a college killed other professors in that college. Here we are in church on a Sunday morning, and it is hard for us to get hold of the fact that **God's love is extravagant**.

God's love is unexplainable. You can't explain it. **God's love is unmerited**. You can't earn God's love. When talking to people out in the world about Jesus, they will say back to you, "Well, I'm better than so and so." So we have the idea that when we face a Holy God in judgment that we are going to be able to get into Heaven because we were better than somebody else, but I tell you that will not happen; because all of us have sinned, and all of our righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight. We have to be clothed, or covered, in someone else's righteousness. **We cannot explain God's love, and God's love is unmerited**.

God's love is unlimited. It's unchanging. It's unspeakable. It's unselfish. It's unearned. His love is supernatural. Most of the time our love is physical. When young men are out on a date with a young lady and they tell her they love her, let me interpret to you ladies what he said. He said, "I want you," because men use the word "love" differently than women.

To ladies it is an emotion. It's a commitment, but men are turned on by sight. Women are turned on by romance. In the Greek language there are rankings or different words that mean love. We Americans have one word for love. The Greeks have four words for love, and the highest love is agape love. So our definition of love doesn't mean what God's word for love means. **God's love is supernatural**, because it doesn't deal with the flesh.

God's love is sacrificing. He didn't send us a card and say, "I love you." **He gave Jesus!**

It was a sacrifice. **God's love is satisfying.** I have performed a lot of weddings, and these couple know this love is going to satisfy. Marriage is ordained of God, but the love level in marriages is up and down. A couple goes through stages and seasons. There are all kinds of variables that happen in a marriage relationship, but God's love stays the same, and only **God's love satisfies.**

GOD'S LOVE IS EXPRESSED. He gave. He gave His only begotten Son. What does that mean? Look at **1 John 4:9.** John was the only apostle that died of natural causes. Every apostle died in martyrdom except John. I believe the reason why John lived a long life is this. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He told John to take care of His mother; and if you will read the Word, there was a promise connected to it. He told John that she was HIS mother from that day on.

John was boiled in oil, but it didn't kill him. So when you read John, you will find that he used the word "love" over and over and over again. He talks about love more than any writer in the New Testament. He says, "**In this the love of God was manifested toward us.**" It became visible. It was **expressed.**

Men, women love for you to express your love. God loved us and expressed it. How did He express it? Look at **1 John 4:9.** He expressed it by sending Jesus! "**In this the love of God was manifested (expressed) toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.**"

I'm alive! Some of you are not alive, and I'm not talking about being awake or functioning. I'm talking about the only way we really live is when we have life on the inside, and the only One that can give life on the inside is Jesus! When this body stops functioning, I'm going to be more alive than you think, because I have life on the inside of me.

This expression of **God's gift, Jesus, is the perfect gift.** You can't give a perfect gift. I don't know if you know this or not, but perfection only lies in God's perfect gift.

God's gift is precious. We need to hold Jesus as precious. People pollute His name. Doesn't that bother you? I don't know how you were raised, but no one talked about my mommy. My mommy died when I was five, and I don't remember my mommy; but when I was a little kid, one of the neighbor boys came up to me and said, "Ha, ha, my mommy is alive, and yours isn't!" Brother, those were fighting words! No one talked about my mommy, and it's amazing how we will defend our mother; but, yet, when someone uses our Savior's name in vain, we let it go. Church, we have to take a stand and not let

people talk about our Savior.

You don't hear people using Mohammed or Confucius or Buddha like they profane the name of Jesus. Why is that? It's because there is only one name the devil wants in the gutter.

You can go to some churches today, sit there, and week in and week out never hear His name. I don't care how much longer it may be, but as long as there is somebody in this pulpit and people are still coming through those doors, I pray that somebody in this pulpit keeps telling people about Jesus! **Jesus is a perfect gift, a precious gift, a powerful gift, a permanent gift, and a pleasing gift**, and God expressed that gift to us.

Look at **John 3:16** again. **GOD'S LOVE IS FOR EVERYONE**. It is for "whosoever." **Romans 10:13** says, "For whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I'm a whosoever.

There are two basic theological groups in Christianity: the Calvinists and the Armenians. The Wesleyans is another word used for the Armenians. So there is the Wesleyan theology and the Calvinistic theology, and there is a mixture here in this church.

Ultra-Calvinism teaches that God predestinated a certain group to be elected to go to Heaven and predestinated another group to go to hell. If you're predestinated to go to Heaven, what will happen is the irresistible grace of God will get hold of you, pull you into the kingdom, and you will have no choice in the matter. Those going to hell will have no chance of Heaven. That is what ultra-Calvinism teaches. You can believe that if you want to, but I don't believe that!

I believe that God gave man a choice. I believe we have a choice, and I believe **God's love is global**. I can go anywhere in the world and tell people that Jesus loves you, Jesus died for you, and if you will believe in Him He will save you. You don't have to wonder if you're elected or not elected. You have a choice in the matter. I believe you have a choice in the matter. If you don't believe that, that's your opinion; but I believe **everyone is called**, and I believe **everyone can choose**.

Joshua was the man who replaced Moses at the end of his ministry. Moses gave the people the law. Joshua gave the people the land. At the end of his ministry, in **Joshua 24:15**, Joshua stands before the people as an old man, getting ready to die, and says,

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." You have a choice. You can choose the world, the flesh, the devil, or you can choose Jesus!

Then Joshua said, **"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."** We have a choice. I believe God calls, and I believe **God gives everybody a chance.** God is not partial. He gives everybody a chance. My cry for you today is please don't let your chance slip by you. It's either God or the devil. You can't be neutral about Jesus.

I wonder what would happen if God took your last decision as your final decision. You're thinking you have tomorrow or next week or next year. No, no. All you have is right now. "Today is the day of salvation." Not tomorrow, not next week, not next year. It's today, and everyone has a chance because God is gracious. I don't know if you know this or not, but He even gives second chances! I'm going to step out a little further and say that He gives third chances and fourth chances!

Go back to **John 3:16. GOD'S LOVE MUST BE EXPERIENCED.** Verse 16 says to **"believe in Him."** Jesus said in **Mark 1:15, "Repent and believe in the gospel."** Jesus paid the price that I owed on the cross. He was the perfect sacrifice. So, to believe the gospel, you have to believe in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. My Savior is alive! He doesn't die again when you take communion. He died once and for all. He's alive. That's the gospel!

John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Jesus, to them He gave the right (the permission, the authority) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." What is in His name? His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and He is at the right hand of the Father.

When you trust and believe in Jesus, the Father is now pleased because you are believing in the name of His Son. If my son died for you, if my son sacrificed for you and you never spoke about my son, I guarantee, if I had the authority, you would be in trouble.

Do you think you are going to get to Heaven when you have neglected and rejected the sacrifice of Jesus, God's only Son? Let's get real. Do you think God is going to smile at you and say, "Come on in," when you rejected Jesus? Let me tell you something that is 100% true. You are not going to make it! There is only ONE way in because Jesus said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life." That may be ridiculous to you, but it's life-saving to me. **God's love must be experienced.**

Salvation is an experience. Baptism doesn't save you. You get baptized after you're saved. After you have believed and trusted, you get baptized. Baptism is an act of obedience to the fact that you have repented of your sins, confessed Christ, and accepted Jesus.

Let's look at the experience in **Romans 10:9-10**. It says, **"If you confess with your mouth."** Confess what? That you're lost, that you're a sinner, and that you need to be saved. **"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."** God couldn't raise Him if He didn't, first of all, die.

Verse 10: "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." That is an experience! There are churches that believe if you come to an altar and shake the preacher's hand, you're saved. You can come up here and shake my hand, but that is not going to save you!

First of all, you have to realize who you are. You're a sinner! Then you have to realize who HE is. Savior! Then you repent from your sins. Repent means that you once were going a certain way, but now you are going in a new direction. We repent by confessing our sins, confessing Christ as Lord, renouncing the old way, and beginning to go a new way. "Any man (or woman) in Christ is a new creation. The old things are passed away, and behold all things have become new." That is as simple as I can put it.

GOD'S LOVE IS EFFECTIVE. Go back to **John 3:16**. God promises that when you believe, you will not perish. I like the effectiveness of that. It isn't maybe, or perhaps, or I hope so. When you place your trust in Christ, the effect of that trust is that you will not perish. **Jesus offers us the assurance of salvation**, that we will not perish. What does "perish" mean? Perish means you will go to hell, but my God is a promise-keeping God.

1 Kings 8:56 says, **"There has not failed one word of all His good promise."** When God promised that I will not perish, that promise is sure. My God is a promise-keeping God. I hold onto that promise. "If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness." That is a promise, and I grab it. The only thing I can hold onto is the Word of God, the promises of God. We cannot hold onto anything else, and by God's mercy and grace I am going to Heaven.

John 3:16 says, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."** **GOD'S LOVE**

IS ETERNAL. It never ends. It is everlasting.

John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting (eternal) life." Every Christian who has accepted Christ as their Savior has eternal life. You're not GOING to have it. You have it right now!

This body is temporary. We will get a new one, but our spirit is eternal. It hasn't aged one day since God spoke your spirit into existence. The Bible says that the outward man is perishing, but the inward man is renewed daily. When I was lost, I was dead inside in sins and trespasses; but when my sins and trespasses were cleansed by the blood of Jesus, my spirit became alive with eternal life.

What about the spirit for the lost man? The lost man will have eternal existence, but there is a difference between eternal existence and eternal life. Eternal existence will be spent in a place of torment with feelings. The same is true for Heaven. In Heaven you will feel love and peace, and in hell you will feel the torment. Heaven is a place of joy everlasting.

One last scripture is **Jeremiah 31:3**. It's a love letter from God to you and me written hundreds of years before Christ appeared. The Prophet Jeremiah got to write it down for us. This is what it says. "The Lord has appeared of old to me saying, 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness I have drawn you.'"

The love call goes out everyday. God draws with His love call. God doesn't want you and me to come just because we are scared of hell. He wants us to come because Jesus came. God didn't come to condemn us. God came to save us, and the love call is tender and gentle. You can feel love, and you can feel hatred.

This may sound kind of mushy to you, but God likes to put His arms around you. You can feel God. This altar is not a magic place, but it is a place of God's loving kindness. He has been drawing you even when you haven't been kind to yourself. Right now God is drawing people to accept Christ.

God says to the widow that He is your husband. He is married to you, but He is also married to the backslider. You can sense God's love call, but it is always up to us as to what we do with it. **God's love never stops, and God's love never fades.**