

**PP The Light Has Come! *All Glory to God!***

**Text John 3:16-21**

**12/9-10/2017**

We are about to look at what is probably the most familiar verse in all the bible, **John 3:16**

Let me explain how we are going to approach the text

Ladies, when you get engaged, people constantly want to look at your ring, and they look at it for 15 seconds or so, ooh and ahh and then talk about wedding dates

But when people look to buy a diamond engagement ring, they spend more time looking at it from various angles, examining its shape and luster, talking with the jeweler, imagining it on the finger

But when a jeweler buys diamond rings, they put a loupe to their eye, grading the diamond, checking the settings, and a whole lot more

This passage in John 3 is like a diamond, with I think, unlimited facets, its beauty unparalleled I believe I could preach it repeatedly, and likely find new facets of truth that it contains

So we won't be the friend that grabs the finger of the newly engaged and gawks at the ring

And we won't be the jeweler that gets all the equipment out to evaluate it

We're going to be the couple looking to buy the ring, trying it on the finger, admiring its beauty, and choosing it for life

Let's look and see how incredible this passage really is!

**PP 1-The Father's Love**

***"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*** **3:16**

We are so familiar with this verse, that I really believe most of us are no longer amazed by this I read that during WWII, at Fort Hancock off Sandy Hook, NJ, a local man wanted to share the good news of John 3:16, but the authorities wouldn't allow him to enter the base to do so. So he contacted a firm that created novelty items to make several thousand 3 inch round mirrors. On the back of each he had printed John 3:16, and beneath it, these words, "If you want to see whom it is that God loves, look on the other side."

God loves you, God loves the world of humanity

And today as much as ever, people need to know how great the Father's love is for them

In **John 3:16**, a word that seems so inconsequential that I've never heard anyone focus on it

***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son..."***

**PP** You see, '**so**' means to the degree of something, or in this way

The degree of His love is measured by the degree of His gift: ***'He gave His only Son'***

**PP** ***"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*** **1 John 4:9-10**

Life through the Son is why John wrote, ***'whoever believes in Him should not perish'***

In one sense the salvation of God is as wide as the whole world, but in another sense is as narrow as those who believe in Jesus

God loved the world...wide...whoever believes in Him...narrow

The great factor that determines if a person will not perish is *will that person believe in Jesus*  
 All the world needs rescuing, and the only anyone who will not perish is by believing in Jesus  
 But not only does all the world need rescuing, God is willing to rescue

This is more significant than you may know for never was the world more racially divided than  
 the century Christ came

Jews were taught that God despised the Gentiles and created them to fuel the fires of hell  
 It was an ethical dilemma whether a Jewish woman should help a Gentile woman give birth  
 Their conclusion to the debate was no, for no Jew should help bring a Gentile into this world  
 They wiped the dust off their sandals when they re-entered Jewish-owned land, for even the dirt  
 from the land of the Gentiles was repugnant to the Jews

But the love of God for all the nations was proclaimed all through their Hebrew Scriptures, but  
 they had been blinded to that by their rabbis

Roman philosopher Seneca said, *"the way of life of this accursed group (the Jews) has gained  
 such influence that it is now received throughout the world"*

Roman emperors twice expelled the Jews from Rome (once in 19 A.D. by Tiberius, and again in  
 49 A.D. by Claudius

Mass killings of Jews, genocide even, have been attempted throughout history  
 What a terrible divide there was, anti-Semitism raged, as well as hatred toward the Gentiles  
 But God loves the world, Gentiles and Jews, and sent His Son into this world on a mission

## **PP 2-The Son's Mission**

As familiar as **3:16** is, most have no idea what the next verse says, yet it is amazing as well  
***"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world  
 might be saved through him."*** **3:17a**

This is the Son's mission...to save, not to condemn the world

**PP 'condemn'** conjures the image of a courtroom where judgement is handed down and we get  
*critic* from this Greek word

Jesus did not take on humanity and live among us to criticize, judge or condemn  
 One might wrongly conclude then that Jesus doesn't judge at all, just loves and accepts everyone  
 and anyone into eternal heaven

Jesus will come a second time, and His mission will be different than the first  
 The first time we see Him robed in humanity, the second He'll be in the robes of the Judge

**PP "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" John 5:22**

But Jesus was born for a mission...to rescue the world, every person who will come to Him  
 Friends, park your theology train at this station: every single person needs saving  
 The only way to be saved is through Jesus Christ

This is proof positive that we can deal with the topic of sin without being condemning  
 Jesus did and we should...He did not come to berate a dying person for life choices that lead to  
 sickness and death, but to offer a way for that person to be saved

*An old legend tells of a traveler attempting to circle the globe who found himself trapped in  
 quicksand. As he slowly sank, Confucius came by and said, "Confucius say, it is evident man  
 should avoid such situations." And he went on his way.*

*Mohammed came by and said, "Alas, it is the will of Allah." And he went on his way.*

*Buddha came by, and said, "Let this man's dilemma be an illustration for many." And he went on his way.*

*Krishna came by and said, "Better luck next time." And he went on his way.*

*Jesus Christ came by, reached out to the man, and pulled him out.*

Jesus is the God of love Who saves people whose sin has already condemned them

### **PP 3-The World's Choice**

***"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."*** 3:18

We have already seen the word **'believe'** but now we need to pause to understand what it means  
To believe in someone and have faith in someone is the same thing

John, in all his writings, uses the word **'faith'** only once, as he prefers the verb form, **'believe'**

In fact, he uses the word **'believe'** 98 times in this gospel alone...a massive amount of times

Especially since chapter 20 tells us he wrote his gospel to help us **'believe'** that Jesus is the Christ

But faith has generally been ripped from its biblical meaning in our modern world as something I  
subjectively wish to be true, rather than what is objectively true

**PP** The scriptures define faith as ***"the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction things not seen."*** Hebrews 11:1

Faith is the heart—mind, emotions and will—coming into agreement with God's truth to produce  
a submission to His will

I recently read of missionary John Paton who in the late 1800's was translating the Bible on  
Aniwa Island, hundreds of miles east of the coast of Australia. Being obviously necessary to  
translate the bible into their own words, Paton could not find a word in their language for the  
concept of believing. One day while he was working in his hut, one of the islanders ran in and  
flopped into a chair, exhausted. He said to Paton, 'It is so good to rest my whole body in this  
chair', and suddenly, Paton knew he had his word for faith. Resting the whole weight of your  
self on God. That translation helped bring thousands of Aniwans to faith in Christ.

**PP** Friends, believing is resting from the endless effort of trying to rescue yourself

It is resting from trying to deal with the problem of sin that every soul knows is there, and knows  
that it will bring eternal judgment, whether they can verbalize it or not

This is the condemnation in every person who will not come to Christ for salvation

Jesus didn't need to place the weight of guilt on them, they are already bearing it

Every sin they have ever committed is a weight on their souls, every new sin adds to it

They cannot truly feel peace, or the purity of the joy that can only come through Christ

But to those who believe, who rest their souls on Christ, they have the assurance that God has  
forgiven them by accepting the sacrifice of His Son Who died in our place for our sins

And the True light of the world, Jesus Christ, has come to show us the way through that door

### **PP 4-The Light's Purpose**

***"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."*** 3:19

Light in the Scriptures symbolizes, among other things, the presence and holiness of God  
 One rabbi commented that *'The Hebrew word for light has the same numerical value in Gematria (the assigning of a number to each Hebrew letter) as the word for secret'*

How true it is that light brings all the hidden secret things in a person to light

You see, this is why the world of fallen humanity hates Jesus Christ

His presence reveals what is in secret, in the hearts of people, and they despise that light and flee to the darkened shadows

The Light of Christ is not final judgement, but like in a courtroom, all the evidence is brought into the light, the evidence that our sin condemns us, and we need a mediator

And that is precisely where John goes next as he shows us 2 parts to this final facet

### **PP a) To reveal and convict**

Alcibiades, the spoiled genius of Athens, was a friend of Socrates, and often said, 'Socrates, I hate you, for every time I meet you, you let me see what I am.'

Last week we saw that John often uses light as a symbol for moral understanding and the ability to know God and to see with spiritual discernment

And John points to Jesus as the True light, the light of the world who has come to show us God, and to shine in the hearts of all people to reveal the presence of sin

Imagine for a moment what you would do if you could make yourself invisible?

I read something this past week that I found interesting, largely because I am a Lord of the Rings fanboy...books and movies

What I read was a possible source idea for Tolkien's ring that made Bilbo (and Frodo) invisible when he wore it

Now if you have no idea what I am talking about, you are likely an incredibly joyless person

But I digress, and back to the point with JRR Tolkien, who was a Professor of Anglo Saxon at Oxford, and his familiarity of course with the writings of Plato

Plato, the Greek Philosopher in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, wrote a story about a humble shepherd who discovers a ring inside a bronze horse that cracked open in an earthquake

Learning that it can make him invisible, the shepherd commits all sorts of evil acts

The point Plato is making is that people act morally only because they are held responsible for their deeds, but immorality would happen if that accountability were removed

***"For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed."*** **3:20**

The power of light is to make all things visible, and it is why the world will not come to Jesus

The truth of this came to a stark reality when famous atheist, Aldous Huxley

**PP** *"I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning: consequently I assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption...for myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was...liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aldous Huxley, Ends and Means

For some the light of Christ is an inconvenience and a terror, but for the Christian, it is a clear sign of God's Work of redemption and it brings Him great glory

**PP b) To glorify God**

***"But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."** 3:21*

This seems a strange verse, and one that makes salvation feel like it is done in our own effort. Simply, the one who ***'does what is true'*** is the one who comes to the light, believing on Jesus. That work, coming to faith in Jesus, clearly shows that he has ***'been carried out in God'***. or literally translated, ***'accomplished in God'***

If you come to the light doing what is true, not living in darkness rejecting Jesus, it will clearly show that God was at work in your life

God will get the credit because your rescue was done in His great power and mercy

4 facets to the diamond of this great passage, and as we have looked with interest rather than intense scrutiny, I would ask you to ponder a question

**PP** At the bottom of your sermon notes there is a question: ***"How has Jesus brought light into your life?"*** Tell us by emailing [Christmas@CornerstoneChurches.org](mailto:Christmas@CornerstoneChurches.org)

This will be put on our social media streams today, and your answers will be compiled anonymously into a video for our special Christmas service at the State Theater

This is an opportunity for us to testify to God's glory the great things He has done for us through the True Light Who has come into the world, Jesus Christ

Amen?

Pray