



Series: SEEING IS BELIEVING
(Book Study Gospel of John)

Christ First Church
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Sermon 11: Nic At Night (Part 3)
(John 3: 16-21)

August 16, 2020

INTRO: Turn your Bibles or turn them on once again to John chapter 3. If you have a John Journal, that we made available prior to the start of the series, then use it, it is very easy to make notes in. I would like everyone to take notes. That allows you to go back at some point and take a second look at the sermon. If you would like, you can go to our website, ChristFirstGA.org, find the video of the sermon you would like to study from, and you will notice that all my preaching notes are available in PDF format. Feel free to download those or print them off. Hopefully that will aid you in going deeper with your study.

John 3:16 is where we will start this morning. This is our 3rd week in John chapter 3, and we still have a couple of weeks left in this amazing portion of scripture.

Up to this point, there have only been two players in the narrative of John 3, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruling member of the Sanhedrin. And Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The conversation has the feel of a covert operation, as Nicodemus made a point to come to Jesus at night, presumably, to keep this encounter with Jesus a secret from his fellow Pharisees. Both Nicodemus and Jesus have been asking questions of each other, but when we get to verse 13, Jesus brings Heaven and Earth together in a glorious presentation of God's gift of salvation through His Son.

Today, I am preaching Part 3 of the sermon titled, NIC AT NIGHT. Let me catch you up in case you missed something in one of the prior sermons. First of all, we saw THE INTRIGUE in vv 1-2 associated with this meeting. Secondly, we saw THE INSTRUCTION in vv 3-8 that Jesus gave to Nicodemus concerning the Kingdom of God. Thirdly, last week, we saw THE INQUISITION in vv 9-12, as Nic sincerely seeks answers concerning who Jesus is. And then fourthly, we looked at THE INTERVENTION in vv 13-15, as Jesus spoke of the fact that He has come to intervene on mankind's behalf, to bring us back into a right relationship with God.

So now, that we're caught up, let's move into the last section of this passage, beginning with verse 16. Notice...

V) THE INTENTION: vv 16-18a *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 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. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned..."*

So, here we are, at the most well known, most influential verse ever given by God to man. John 3:16 is the most beloved verse, and the most memorized verse of all time. And it seems that God is driven to reveal Himself to the world using this verse by any means necessary. God, apparently, is not content to fade into the background of history and let His creation forget who He is, and what He has done on their behalf.

V) THE INTENTION: vv 16-18a CONTINUE So, God uses John 3:16 to shout His love for mankind to the masses.

ILLUS: Adam Scheffer - An ESPN Senior Writer, wrote on January 13, 2012, "There's no need to embellish this story. The facts speak for themselves. On Jan. 8, 2009, in the BCS Championship Game, then-Florida quarterback Tim Tebow wore eye black with the inscription John 3:16, a reference to the Bible passage that says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

On Jan. 8, 2012, three years to the date that caused millions of football fans to Google the meaning of John 3:16, Tebow played his first NFL playoff game, against the defending AFC Champions, Pittsburgh Steelers.

Tebow threw for 316 yards. Tebow averaged 31.6 yards per completion, the highest single-game postseason completion average in NFL history. And when Tebow threw the game-winning 80-yard touchdown pass to Demaryius Thomas -- the NFL's longest postseason pass in overtime history -- CBS's ratings were, yes, at 31.6%." In addition, Tim Tebow rushed for an average of 3.16 yards per carry, and the Steeler's time of possession was 31:06.

When asked if he thought all that was a coincidence, Tebow replied, "I say big God."

If I could ask the world one question, it would be... "What do you think is God's INTENTION towards man?" That is both a fair and thought provoking question. Let's face it, God gets accused of a lot of things. How can a good God...?, If God loved me..., It's fair to want to know what God's intentions are toward us. I mean, we have here an omnipotent, all powerful, being, who possess the ability to wipe all of mankind off the face of the map with just the snap of a finger, with just one cataclysmic event. And if that's true, and it is, wouldn't it be advisable to know the INTENTIONS of this being, if it were possible?

Well, it is possible, so let's see what He says...

V 16 "For God so loved the world..." Let's start with the little word "For". For (Gr. gar) is a term of explanation. It's a conjunction, a connective. It's connecting one thought with another as a means of explanation. Jesus has just stated in vv 14-15 that just "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." You will remember from last week in Numbers 21, that the Israelites were dying, being bitten by fiery serpents, because they had spoken against God and Moses. They came to Moses and said, we have sinned, please intercede on our behalf for God to save us. Moses prayed and God told him what to do, make a serpent and place it on a rod, and anyone that is bitten and dying who looks at the serpent on the pole, will live. When Jesus references this OT phenomenon, He is making the point that people in the world are still dying. They are dying from the poison of sin, and they need to be saved, they need someone to look to. Jesus will say in John 10:10, "I have come that they might have life", that the people of the world might live.

Nicodemus had come to Jesus because he wanted to know if Jesus was the Messiah. He wants to know if the time has come for God to restore the kingdom of Israel. He speaks of the signs/miracles that Jesus had performed and said, we know you are from God. Can you see HIS intentions? But Jesus takes control of the conversation and

V) THE INTENTION: vv 16-18a CONTINUE says, my intentions aren't the same as yours! You are concerned about this life and physical things, I'm talking to you about greater things, about saving people from their sin, from death.

Oh, this verse is so big!!!

V 16 *"For God so loved the world..."* Who is it that loves the world? GOD! And it took God. For no one else's love, but God's, was sufficient to save us. No one has ever loved the world like God does. When WE love the world, we do so out of our lust and selfish desires. That's why we read in **1 John 2:15** *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* **BUT** When God loves the world, He does so out of the pureness of who He is, *"for God is Love."* (**1 John 4:8**)

"For God so loved the world..." You, undoubtedly, have heard me say this before, but when I think about the word, SO, in this verse, I can't help but want to hold it out at great length, soooo, "For God soooooo loved the world". And no matter how long I hold it, it doesn't seem to be enough to express the amount of love it took for God to give His son for me.

The construction of the Greek sentence stresses the intensity of God's love. God SO loved the world, that He gave His best, His unique, and only Son, for a world that is evil and hates Him. The love of God is amazing not so much because the world is so big, but because it is so bad!

"For God so loved the world..." "Loved" is the Greek word, agapaō. And it means to love unconditionally and sacrificially. Agape love is not just a feeling, but is associated with action. *"For God so loved...that He gave..."* It is easy to say I love you, but God showed, He proved, that He loved the world, by sending His Son. **Romans 5:8** *"But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Agapao "expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven. It's an unconditional love that requires no reciprocation or merit on the part of those being loved. Aren't you glad of that?!!!

"For God so loved the world..." When Jesus spoke these words, it rocked Nic's world-view! Like most all Jews of his day, he was, practically speaking, a "racist,". He would have harbored an abhorrence for the Gentiles. But now Jesus makes eternal life a possibility not just for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles.

Leon Morris - "The Jew was ready enough to think of God as loving Israel, but no passage appears to be cited in which any Jewish writer maintains that God loved the world. It is a distinctively Christian idea that God's love is wide enough to embrace all people. His love is not confined to any national group or spiritual elite. It is a love that proceeds from the fact that he is love."

APPLICATION: For most, when they hear that God loves the WORLD, they don't really grasp that they are included in that account. But when God loves the world, He does so one person at a time. He loves me, you, us, them, all those, and He continues until every man, woman, boy, and girl of all times is loved. He loves the world, but He does so individually. TODAY, you need to know, GOD LOVES YOU! And He loves you so much, He sent His son to die for your sins.

V) THE INTENTION: vv 16-18a CONTINUE Let's look at one more thing. I'm not going to get done with this verse today. **V 16** continues to say, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" Focus on that phrase, "that He gave". What I want you to do, is put yourself in God's place for just a moment. Those of you that have children, think about the ramifications of this verse. Think about someone who hates you, or a group of people that hate you, would you ever be able to sacrifice your child for people like that? What about a great person, adored and loved by millions, a hero, would you be able to give your child for even a great person? Now think about what God did for you. What response should His love, and gift of love, provoke in you?

ILLUS: We owe so much to the Lord for what He did for us. Unfortunately, the world is either ignorant of what the Lord did for us. Or, it does not care, or believe the Gospel. I want to close with a story of an tragic incident that took place years ago...

John Griffith grew up with one dream in his heart—a dream of travel. He wanted to travel to faraway places and see exotic sights. Those strange-sounding names of strange-sounding lands—that's what he dreamt about. That was his whole consuming passion of life, but that dream crashed with the stock market in 1929. The Great Depression settled like a funeral cloak upon the land. Oklahoma, his native state, was turned into a swirling dust bowl by the dry winds, and his dreams were swept away with the wind. So he packed up his wife, his tiny baby boy, and their few meager belongings in an old car and drove away to find greener pastures. He thought he might have discovered those on the edge of the Mississippi, where he got a job caring for one of those great, huge railroad draw bridges that cross the mighty Mississippi.

It was in 1937, Dennis Hensley tells us, when this true story took place. For the first time, he brought his 8-year-old son, Greg Griffith, to work with him to see what Daddy did all day. The little boy was wide-eyed with excitement, and he clapped his hands with glee when the huge bridge went up at the beck and call of his mighty father. He watched with wonderment as the huge boats steamed down the Mississippi.

Twelve o'clock came, and his father put up the bridge. There were no trains due for a good while, and they went out a couple of hundred feet onto a catwalk out over the river to an observation deck. They sat down, opened their brown bags, and began to eat their lunch. His father told him about some of the strange, faraway lands that some of these ships were going to visit. This entranced the boy.

The time whirled by, and suddenly they were drawn instantly back to reality by the shrieking of a distant train whistle. John Griffith quickly looked at his watch. He saw that it was time for the 1:07, the Memphis Express, with 400 passengers, which would be rushing across that bridge in just a few minutes. He knew he had just enough time, so without panic but with haste he told his son to stay where he was.

He leaped to his feet, jumped to the catwalk, ran back, climbed the ladder to the control room, went in, put his hand on the huge lever that controlled the bridge, looked up the river and down to see if any boats were coming, as was his custom, and then looked down to see if there were any beneath the bridge. And suddenly he saw a sight that froze his blood and caused his heart to leap into his throat. His boy! His boy had tried to follow him to the control room and had fallen into the great, huge gear box that had the monstrous gears that operated this massive bridge. His left leg was caught between the two main gears, and the father knew that as sure as the sun came up in the morning, if he pushed that lever his son would be ground in the midst of eight tons of whining, grinding steel.

V) THE INTENTION: vv 16-18a CONTINUE His eyes filled with tears of panic. His mind whirled. What could he do? He saw a rope there in the control room. He could rush down the ladder and out the catwalk, tie off the rope, lower himself down, extricate his son, climb back up the rope, run back into the control room, and lower the bridge. No sooner had his mind done that exercise than he knew—he knew there wasn't time. He'd never make it, and there were 400 people on that train.

Suddenly he heard the whistle again, this time startlingly closer. And he could hear the clicking of the locomotive wheels on the track, and he could hear the rapid puffing of the train. What could he do? What could he do! There were 400 people, but this was... this was his son, this was his only son. He was a father! He knew what he had to do, so he buried his head in his arm and he pushed the gear forward.

The great bridge slowly lowered into place just as the express train roared across. He lifted up his tear-smearing face and looked straight into the flashing windows of that train as they flashed by one after another. He saw men reading the afternoon paper, a conductor in uniform looking at a large vest-pocket watch, ladies sipping tea out of teacups, and little children pushing long spoons into plates of ice cream. Nobody looked in the control room. Nobody saw his tears. Nobody, nobody looked down at the great gear box.

In heart-wrenching agony, he beat against the window of the control room, and he screamed, "What's wrong with you people? Don't you care? I sacrificed my son for you. Don't any of you care?" Nobody looked. Nobody heard. Nobody heeded. The train disappeared across the river.

CONCLUSION: I wonder what God thinks about a world that doesn't care that He sacrificed His Son for them? I wonder what God thinks about how I live my life in light of what He's done for me? GOD HELP US

VI) THE INDICTMENT: vv 18b-21