

Sermon John 3 1 17 2d S in Lent

Sermon: 2nd Sunday in Lent

Text: John 3:1-17 (v.16)

Theme: God's love

Goal: To assure that we are saved by grace because God loves us in Christ.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The text of John 3:16 is the most well known text of the Bible. But few people realize that Jesus said these words while He was talking with Nicodemus! - Nicodemus was a leader among his people and in his church. Jesus showed him that salvation is not just the matter of status, of being member of a church or of being member of the family of Abraham. Salvation is a matter that belongs to God! That begins in God's heart! He works out our salvation and invites us to be members of His kingdom here and in the eternity. .

A) God so loved...

We read about the call of Abraham in the Old Testament reading (Gn 12). There was nothing special in Abraham why he was chosen by God. It was God's decision to show His love to Abraham. It was by God's grace that Abraham was called, as Paul wrote so emphatic to the Romans (4). God was building up His salvation's plan and He wanted to form a people for Himself. God's beloved Son should be born from that people.

You cannot explain love. It just happens, as in our lives as well. We can only thank God for His love and trust in Him above all things. “God so loved...”

B) “...the world...”

God loved not only Abraham, but He loves the world! When he called Abraham, He promised him: “All families on earth will be blessed through you.” This promise includes us! We are not part of Abraham's family as blood descendants, but we are part of his family by faith. Paul wrote (Rm 4): “Abraham is the father of all who believe..who walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had.”

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He said to His disciples: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” (Mark 16:15). God is not exclusive to one people, as it seems to be in the Old Testament. His plan was to reach all the nations through one specific people: Through the Jews, from whom God's Son was born. We are part of God's salvation plan from the very beginning, because “God so loved the world...”

C)- ... that He gave His one and only Son...

When you love someone, you are willing to give him/her the best you have. When a man loves a woman, and vice-verse, he gives her the best he has: his life. This means: everything he has: his time, his possessions, his present and his future...

“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.” He gave us His Son at the first Christmas, He gave us His Son on the cross, he gave us His Son on Easter Sunday... He still gives us His Son in the Holy Communion: The body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

“God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”, affirms Paul (Romans 5:8).

We don't deserve such a big gift; on the contrary: We deserve condemnation because of our sins. But without deserving, God gave us His Son! This is grace! Not by our own merit, but by pure grace and

love God gave us His Son! “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...”

D)...that whoever believes in Him shall not perish...”

When you feel that someone loves you, you trust in him. Nobody who loves you will cause any harm or damage to you. The children know that mom and daddy love them; and they trust them!

God, our heavenly Father, made everything for us out of love. He doesn't want us to walk in the wrong way that leads us to disgrace. But we need to trust in Him above all things! Abraham wouldn't have left his country, his people and his father's household if he hadn't trusted in God. His obedience to God's command was a consequence of his faith in God and in His promise.

When we believe in God's fulfilled promise, Jesus Christ, we don't perish but we receive all the blessings that Jesus has to give us: Blessings of forgiveness, blessings of a new life, blessings of being member of a new family, God's family.

But, like some children that despise their parent's love and go astray, unfortunately many despise God's love in Jesus Christ. “Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son” (v. 18). God is waiting and is calling them back. “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”

“God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish...”

E) “...but have eternal life.”

God called Abraham and put a goal in front of his eyes: To reach the

promised land! And not only this, but to form a big people and, above all, to have a descendant that would bring blessing to all the families on earth: Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. - And Abraham walked by faith all his life and he is a pattern of faith to all believers. It is written about him in Hebrews 11:8-10: “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

When God promises us eternal life through faith in Jesus, this means that our life here is not permanent, is not eternal. We know how fragile our shelters are... just look at what happened in Japan with the earthquake and the tsunami... God promises us a permanent and eternal house in His heavenly kingdom. Jesus didn't come to give us just some years of good life on this earth. His promise is bigger! He lifts our eyes to the mountains, from where our help comes (as we read in the Psalm 121).

Conclusion: Sometimes I ponder: How can some people live without hope? without a secure hope? without an eternal hope? Just running after riches, pleasure, and power... Everyone knows that life is short. And then???

God gives us the best guarantee we could never ever expected, sealed by His love in Christ Jesus. Just believe and follow His call. Abraham's journey was not an easy one; he had several problems during his life. But he trusted the Lord and he got God's promises. His blessings are our blessings, as it is written: “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace, and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.” Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle
Cape Town, 20th March 2011