

11. He Loves at Great Cost

John 3:9-21

Intro

- What is love? It's really difficult to define, but we know it when we see it:
 - We all admire love that comes at great cost...
 - Opposite of love at great cost is selfish gain at the expense of others
 - Exploitation; slavery; oppression;
 - A spectrum in between
 - We don't admire (as much) love at little cost...
 - I have \$2000 in pocket and I so generously let you borrow \$20 while making sure you know how generous I am
 - We don't admire 'false love' at great cost...
 - Doing something good and bringing your press team w/ you
- How does God love us?
 - Does he give us what we earn? Does he give us what we deserve? Does he just love everyone the same like a big hippie in the sky?

John 3:9-21

[9] Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

- All of these teachings concerning being born again

[10] Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"

- Steve last week → Nicodemus didn't know where to find this in the OT

[11] Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

- You need to believe me. I am not making this up. I am telling you what I know, what I have seen, what I now bear witness concerning. You don't want to believe me b/c you didn't think of it or didn't know it, but it's true, and if you'd seen it, you'd believe it too
 - See to believe ex: The earth is round; A hunk of metal can fly through the sky;

[12] If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? [13] No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

- Nobody has ever gone to heaven and returned to tell about it (sorry heaven is for real, kid), but that doesn't matter because the Son of Man descended to tell you about it
- The title Son of Man appears 13 times in John's Gospel and comes from 'the son of man' figure who appears in Dan 7:13-14 and is granted universal Kingly authority.
- *Daniel 7:13-14, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples,*

nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

- The emphasis in this title is not on Jesus’ humanity, but on his heavenly origin and divine authority. Nicodemus would have picked that up - that Jesus is referring to the Messiah

[14] And 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.

- The backstory: *Numbers 21:4–9, [4] From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. [5] And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” [6] Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. [7] And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. [8] And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” [9] So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.*
- The people sin → judgment for sin → people need a mediator → Moses mediates → God makes a way (look upon the sign of their sin) → the people live
- The parallel: serpent → people sin → people need a mediator → God sends his Son as a mediator → The Son becomes the curse of sin on the cross → In his death and resurrection, God makes a way → all who turn their eyes to him in faith will live
- Unstated question in between vv15 and 16 = Why? What’s the point?

[16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- For God so loved ≠ Because God loved the world SOOOOO much
 - In John, world always means kingdom of Satan. God doesn’t love the kingdom of Satan soooo much. He isn’t pleased with sin.
 - BUT God is love - as his character - so he does give love, show love to it, even to his enemies
- Better translation would be, “For this is the way God loved the world...”
- As the ESV Gospel Transformation Bible explains: The greatness of God’s love is measured in terms of its unsearchable riches as well as in terms of its unimaginable reach. The “world” spoken of in verse 16 is the rebellious world of God’s image-bearers. God loved rebels, fools, and idolaters so much that he gave his only Son, Jesus, to redeem them—to actually purchase a pan-national, trans-generational family for himself (Rev. 7:9–10). Everyone the Father gives to Jesus will be saved (John 6:37–40; 10:14–18). There is no other way. There is no greater love.

[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, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

- People have all kinds of crazy views about Jesus: He came to show us how to live, he came to provide a new religious system, he came to point towards a future teaching
- Jesus came not to beat people up w/ a new system, but to rescue people
- He didn't need to come to condemn - we stand condemned already b/c of unbelief!
- And you say, "On what basis do you judge me?!"

[19] 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. [20] For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. [21] 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."

- God shines his light (revelation, the Word, the Word made flesh, conviction, illumination)
- People are exposed in the light b/c it reveals all their sin (e.g. your thoughts, your internet history, your flirtations, fears, doubts, etc)
- They cower, and run to the darkness. Why? Lest they be exposed...
 - Why some of you don't want to come to faith, it would require you to acknowledge things you don't want to acknowledge
- But the one who has the light shown on him and does not run but turns and surrenders...

DBS

What does this teach about people/us?

- **We love the darkness because we don't want our evil hearts to be exposed.**
 - Would require us to make a choice, to acknowledge something about ourselves, and then to deal with it.
 - But don't take my word for it. *Hebrews 4:13, And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*
- V9-10, Even with our great learning or experience we don't understand basic things, but when challenged on them we get defensive or doubtful
- V11, When pressed, we tend to not believe it unless we see it with our own eyes - even if the witness couldn't be more reliable! We make our decision and then we adapt the story to bolster our opinion (e.g. The guy who paid off everyone's student loans - people on both sides were complaining about him)
- V12, We set ourselves as the standard of all things - if we don't believe it, it must be unbelievable
- V13, We won't believe the most reliable witness, but then we fall for snake oil salesman
- V14, We willingly embrace sin, thinking it will help us, but it only leads to pain and death (e.g. Gen 3; Drugs), we blame God, we refuse to come to him and ask someone to go on our behalf (knowing we are covered in shame)
- V15, Even though belief is the way to eternal life, we would rather try to do something
- V16, We were (are) - by nature & by choice - God's enemies. Though he shows us love, we spit in his face.

- V17, Even though he came to our rescue, we point at him w/ accusatory fingers and condemn him. How dare he come and tell ME what to do.
- V18, We stand, confidently, in our unbelief, even when we are well aware of the cost
- V19-21, We love darkness b/c we hide in it... (give examples)
- That's what the word of God exposes regarding us (and that's just this passage!). But the Word of God reveals more. It reveals God's response to our chaotic mess.

What does this teach about God?

- **God shows love to his enemies.**

- Jesus taught it... Jesus did it...
- *Romans 5:8, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners [enemies], Christ died for us.*

- **God loves at great cost to himself.**

- *2 Cor 5:21, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- This love isn't reckless. It is intentional, planned, deliberate, thought out, and the only way. People look at the cross and say, "See how much God loves you," perhaps more aptly stated, "Look at what your sin cost God."

- **God gives GRACE - God's riches at Christ's expense.**

- Salvation is by grace, not by works. It is a gift, not earned. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life!

If this is true, what do we do?

- Process we see: Exposure → Confession → Choice: Repent or Flee

- **Be exposed.**

- See the evidence, light, the exposure: Jesus, testimonies, the Bible, all creation

- **The proper response to exposure is confession.**

- Confession alone doesn't mean you're okay. Many confess when caught.
- Confession = A self-awareness of who I am before a holy God without Christ; to respond to the light of exposure;

- **The proper response to confession is repentance.**

- Godly sorrow vs. worldly sorrow
- Worldly sorrow says, "Stinks I got caught. Back to the darkness I run. I will learn from this and not get caught again."
- Godly sorrow says, "I have done wrong. I need to change but can't. I need help."

- What do you do?

- **Turn your eyes to Jesus, and the gaze of faith will save you.**

- HW: Ask God to open your eyes and give you the saving faith that you need as you read, obey, and share the Word
- Grab DBS rack card

- Believers: **Fix your eyes and love at great cost, just like him.**

- HW: Fix your eyes by reading reading, obeying and sharing the Word
- Then, and only then, can you love like God - can you love at great cost, not out of the overflow of your earthly riches, but out of the overflow of his heavenly grace.