

“Life-Saving Love”

John 3:14-21

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This passage caught my attention because it is brimming with life and hope. It is one of the most positive texts you will read.

This is not because John was in denial. He was fully aware of life's struggles and the reality of evil. He knew all too well of those who lived and operated in the shadows and favored darkness over light. He knew what they were capable of doing and the pain they inflicted upon their victims.

However, the reason he was so positive was because he met a man who revealed to him the heart of God. Through Jesus, John discovered a level of love and a way of living he had never known. So inspired was he that he penned one of the most memorable verses in all of scripture.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have everlasting life” John 3:16.

What was it about God's love that impressed John? Perhaps it was that His love was so inclusive. God loved the whole world, including those who lived in the shadows. John realized that God's love did not stop at the boundary of his love. It had no boundaries.

Maybe it was that God's love was so generous. He had never met any parent that would be willing to give his or her child to save others. This redefined generosity and love.

Could he have been impressed with the transforming power of God's love? It brought the best out in those who received it, including him. It breathed new life into dying people by leading them out of the shadows into the light. God's love did all of this, not through condemnation, but persuasion and encouragement.

I am not sure what it was that impressed John the most, but I know this. He believed with all of his heart that entering into a covenant with God through faith in Christ was the wisest decision a person could make. He was convinced that God would bring to that relationship all things necessary to live the best life possible and that relationship grounded in love would never end.

This was why he wrote this gospel. He was an evangelist in the purest sense of that word. His passion was telling people about the goodness of God revealed through His son, Jesus, and encouraging his readers to trust Him.

Look how many times John used the word, believes, in this passage. For that matter, take note of the number of times he used this word or a form of it in his book. He did so one hundred times in his gospel, four of those in our text. I think it is evident that John felt that unbelief put people in great peril and he was determined to do his part to prevent that.

What is it about God's love that impresses you most? Have you responded to His grace by entering into a covenant with Him through faith in Christ? Have you opened your heart and life to Him and decided to follow in Jesus' footsteps? Will you do this now, even as I speak? I believe, as John did, that this is the wisest decision you can make. I encourage you to do this.

Are you following John's example and sharing your faith with those around you? Do the people you rub shoulders with every day know what God means to you and the difference He makes in your life? Do they even know you are a believer? I hope so.

Do you bring life and hope to all your relationships? Do you bring the best out in others? Do you make life better for family members, friends, classmates or co-workers? Do you embody the inclusive, generous and transforming love of God as Jesus did?

Who needs you to love them right now the way that God loves them? Into whose life could you breathe new life? What could you do that would give someone who is reeling in despair a feeling of hope? What could you say that would lead someone out of the shadows into the light? How can you be the presence of God and save someone who is slowly perishing?

Is this going to be a struggle for you? What sacrifices will you need to make to do this? Whose help will you need in order to make these sacrifices? I am confident God will help you and I know this affirming congregation will, too.

Who is your role model for loving others as God loves them? Who inspires you to live out the spirit of John 3:16?

One of the network news organizations has a segment they call, "Making a Difference." Each night, they tell about a person that is bringing life and hope to others. On the night I was watching, they told about Joe Works from Humbolt, Kansas. Joe owns a manufacturing plant that makes trailer hitches. He employs 180 people.

In recent months, he has lost one-half of his business due to the recession. He has decided against laying anyone off, however. Instead, he is sending his idle employees into the community to work on projects that will make Humbolt a better place to live. They are pruning trees, sprucing up playgrounds, preparing ballfields for a new season and giving facelifts to churches.

"I've been blessed over the years," he tells the reporter. "Business has been good and I have the resources to do this. I want to share what I have, not hoard it," he says.

I believe Joe Works is a good role model for all of us, especially in these difficult days we are living. I think that John the Evangelist would smile and say that this is the kind of love that saves people, too.

Do you know about this kind of generous and sacrificial love? Have you personally responded to God's love for you by humbly receiving it and boldly sharing it with those around you? What a difference this will make in your life and those you encounter day by day. As a matter of fact, my challenge to you this week is to go from this place of worship and love people the way God loves them. Live out the spirit of John 3:16.