

God Loved So He *Gave*
John 3:16
April 13, 2008 - Pastor Draeger 10AM

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus, Amen.

God's word for our consideration is the continuing, unfolding of the Gospel in a nutshell. Let's try that one together, let's see if we can all say it together: *God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* How many of you needed the screen to do that? A couple of you, because we threw a newer translation than the one you probably memorized. It's okay, there's a little twist in the words but we're going to tease that out in just a moment as well.

One of the favorite images of God, kind of characteristic of God, is certainly that God is love. And when we talked about that last week, I'm sure that that felt good to most of you - God so loves. And we talked about that for 15 or 20 minutes, whatever it was. And that's always a warm, fuzzy feeling isn't it, to think about the love of God. God is love John tells us. God so loved the world, and God so loved me. God showed His love for us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Those are words that just make us feel good, right? But it's not just a good feeling kind of experience for us -- unfortunately there's more to it than just a feel good. There's something very deep in God's love for us, in fact it would say God so loved the world that He *gave*. And that's what we want to focus on today, that God so loved he *gave*.

To do that though now immediately transitions us into thinking a little differently about ourselves and even about God. If we're thinking that God so loved He *gave*, why did He give and what did He give, toward what end? Well, it says God so loved that He *gave* His one and only Son. Well why would He have to do that? So now we have to talk about something that isn't so comfortable for us. The Bible tells us the reason God gave His Son was because we sin, and right now we're starting to talk about something we don't want to talk about - that 3 letter word *sin*, we like to avoid that.

In fact a number of years ago a famous psychiatrist by the name of Karl Menninger, wrote a book entitled *What Ever Became of Sin?* Karl Menninger, the head of the Menninger foundation back in Kansas, was interested in the fact that even in the church the word sin was beginning to be erased, if you will. And he was talking about how even in the Catholic Church, post Vatican 2, there was a tendency to not want to talk about sin; that you didn't go to confession the way that you used to. And most protestant churches have not had private confessions for years. He's saying, whatever became of sin? And then he goes on to talk about how we have found euphemisms for sin. Instead of sin being sin, sin now is just a character flaw, it's a mistake. It doesn't have such an awesome kind of feeling associated with it, because we want to eradicate feelings of guilt. And how many of you love guilt? You say I can't wait in the morning to wake up and feel guilty. No, of course not - that's not what you want to feel. In fact, you just want to erase all the stuff that's going to make you feel guilty and we call that denial. So "de-

Nile" is not just a river in Egypt - it's that condition of saying things don't exist, saying things aren't true about ourselves. And one of the things that we don't want to be true is about us is our sin.

We'll talk about sin, but we'll talk about *other* people's sin. We will talk about the sin of genocide. So now we'll get off on things like Dakar and Rwanda. Those are things are truly important issues in our life and in our world, and God wants justice to be spread throughout the world through believers. But it's easier to talk about *those* sins, of *those* people. We can talk about terrorists - you know, those terrorists in Ireland or in Iraq, or even on our own homeland. And that's comfortable because we're talking about *others*. And we can talk about the sin of others in our own country and how other people are the bad persons. But when it comes to talking about *our own* sin, we tend to want to live in something called denial, because it makes us feel guilty and we don't want that experience of guilt at all.

Jesus however, comes into the world, and He wants to help us understand that sin is sin, and that's why He came. In fact, He would help people understand sin this way - let me just give you an example. How many of you have had the experience of driving in a parking lot, driving around trying to find a place to park? You've got this one spot that just became available, and you look at it and you've got laser heart, mind and soul dialed in on that parking spot. Somebody comes in the other direction, whips in in a small car and takes that parking spot away from you. How many of you had that experience? How many of you said, PRAISE GOD, I WAS JUST WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO TAKE THAT PARKING SPOT AWAY FROM ME! No, you more likely thought what? Well, you can't repeat it in church, right? It's not a good thing. In fact, it raises up a little bit of something we call anger inside of you, right? You get angry at the audacity of that person. You know, they are just so arrogant, so self centered and so uncaring, what's wrong with that person?! And you have this righteous indignation -- well maybe just indignation -- there's nothing righteous about it, you are angry!

What Jesus says to you about that is it's not a good thing. You think that those people who have been master mind of genocide are bad folks. He says here's the deal: you've heard it said you shall not kill. And I say to you whoever is angry with his brother is a murderer - that's Sermon on the Mount stuff. That nails me, doesn't it? It nails everyone of us who's been upset with that person snuck in that parking spot ahead of us, or anybody else that we've become angry with - within our family, our social networks, people at work, people at church. When we get angry we are breaking the 5th commandment, and the Bible calls that sin. We like to excuse it as righteous indignation; I don't think God buys that, do you? And there are a whole host of other things that may not stack up as real biggies, but as far as God is concerned, even the little ones count -- and they count big. Because He doesn't have a scale of 1 - 10 -- His is simply pass-fail. Rewind to the Garden of Eden, my favorite story - Adam and Eve at the tree. How big of a deal, fruit on the tree, taking it - how big a deal? It's like taking a parking spot -it's not a big deal except it was big enough to catapult the universe into sin and to be broken as a result of that.

But what's kind of cool about God, is that He saw what was happening - He even knew what was happening before it happened, and He had a plan in mind already. And to this flawed woman who led the world into sin by taking that forbidden fruit, he says through His words to the serpent in Genesis 3:15, "The seed of the woman will bruise your head and you will bruise his heel." Those words are fulfilled in John 3:16 when God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. You see, in that moment, God was showing amazing grace to Eve, saying I'm going to use this flawed woman, she's going to be the one through whom I'm going to demonstrate and disseminate grace and love and giving.

Well, He would do that with other flawed human beings too. He would take a guy like Moses who had all kinds of excuses why he couldn't be God's man leading the people out of Egypt, and God had grace for Moses. And God had grace for Abraham who decided he was going to take a little shortcut and kind of protect his interests when he was going into this foreign land. He lied about Sarah, he said Sarah's just my sister, because he understood that if they found out that it was his wife, they would kill him to get to her, but they wouldn't kill him to get to his sister. So he took matters into his own hands, God was not pleased.

Or then you take this guy who was the shepherd, the one who gave us that great 23rd Psalm, and who gave us many great Psalms. King David, who committed adultery and murder and God still used him. He committed the biggies and God still used him - God so loved the world, so loved the world that He gave for Eve and Adam and Moses and Abraham and David, and a whole host of other people right down to our generation, to you and me. God so loved He gave, and He keeps on giving.

I'd like to just sort of tease this out for you a little bit with that word, His one and only Son. That is one word in the original language, it is found ONLY in that place in the bible. It's a Greek word, it's called monogenes. Now let me give you the definition of this very unique word in the Bible, *mono* you understand that to mean one, *genes* - do you understand what that is? Just spell it out *g-e-n-e-s*. We get the English word "genes" from it. We also get the English word *genetic* from it. So here's the monogenetic Son of God, and when you talk about genetics you're talking about DNA. So what we're talking here about is a God who has given His own DNA into this one born of a woman, in this case Mary, that God's DNA is all over this one called *Son of God*, **truly** Son of God. God so loved the world that He gave His monogenetic Son for us because He had a concern about sin and He wanted to reconcile the world to Himself. Jesus had the DNA of God, the same essence, the same eternal quality, the same unending wisdom - every quality of God is also found in Jesus of Nazareth, including the quality of giving.

I'd like to share with you some words from the book of Galatians, Paul's letter to the Galatians. The 1st chapter, the opening words, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins. To rescue us from the present evil age according to the will of God our Father to whom be glory forever and ever." Jesus Christ, who gave Himself. And what's interesting is, not only did He give Himself but He gave Himself for our sins. That little Greek word for is a word we could get hyper over - it's the word *hupere*. You hear the word hyper in it? It doesn't mean the

same thing, it means to “on account of,” it means “in the place of”, it means “for the sake of.” So if you if you translate it this way, kind of literally, it goes: *He gave Himself in the place of our sins, or on account of our sins.* So sin isn’t something we have to deny and run away from. Sin is something we can acknowledge and find forgiveness for. I’m just wondering, is forgiveness better than guilt? I’d sign on for forgiveness any day, guilt stinks! And some of us do guilt really, really well.

And he’s saying, God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, or Jesus gave Himself for our sins. In fact, it goes further when Paul writes in Galatians, the 3rd chapter. It says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us,” or “on account of us”, or “in place of us” or “on behalf of us.” He became the curse. “For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” So He became the curse of our sin so we can be forgiven. There is no need for us to minimize our sin, all we need to do is just confess it, just be honest about it, and tell God “I don’t like what I did either.” We call that repentance. And I believe in Jesus, You’ve done for me everything that’s necessary so that sin is erased and with it so is guilt, I get to live for You. Wouldn’t that be a better way to live than hanging onto guilt? And for you who hang onto guilt, I want to encourage you, ***it does you no good!*** It doesn’t help you take seriously your sin; you take your sin seriously by confessing it, laying it on Jesus and know that He has done it for you, so that you are forgiven. You can just let go of it in the arms of Jesus. In fact hear these words of Jesus Himself as He is preparing His disciples for His departure, and He gives them a meal. And He holds up a piece of bread and says, “This is My body which is given,” there’s that word *hupere* again - on account of you or on behalf of you - and likewise with a cup.

This morning in the sacrament we’re going to hear those words again, and you’re going to receive the very body and blood of Jesus given ***for*** you. If you’ve got any guilt at all that you’re holding on to, I mean ***any*** guilt for ***any*** reason, today would be a good day to let go of it. You don’t need to carry it a second longer. See, God doesn’t teach us about the law so we can feel guilty - He teaches us about the law so that we can acknowledge where we fail, and just own it, and say, “Lord thank You that You have done it for me in my place.” God so loved the world that He ***gave*** His only Begotten Son. And He loved the world so much that He gave that Son to you in the waters of Holy Baptism where you were yoked together with Christ. And He comes to you in the sacrament this morning, and once again He yokes Himself to you and says, I’m going to give you My forgiveness because I have died (*hupere*) for you, I have died in your place.

God is giving you today the benefits of His Son’s death for whatever you’ve said or done. Or whatever you didn’t say or didn’t do and should have. Whatever offense you have given to God, He says, “I am here to forgive you today.” His love and the sacrifice of His Son are supreme, no denying it. So we confess our sin, and we turn back from it. We turn away from the old ways following Christ by His grace.

That’s what John 3:16 is about; we are loved. We are *loved* and we know that because *He gave*. This morning, I trust as you walk away from this church, and walk away from the altar, you’re going to walk away with an amazing feeling. I trust you’re going to feel

loved because of One who gave, and gives, and keeps on giving. And there is no need, **no need**, to hold guilt for a second longer. So you ought to walk out of here with a bounce in your step, in fact, you could even walk away from communion with a bounce in your step. You don't have to look like you've lost your best friend, but rather your Best Friend has come into your life, and He's embraced you, and loves you, and empowers you. ***God so loved the world that He gave His monogenetic Son; that's all we need to know and so it's time to say Amen.***

And now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep and guard your hearts and minds as you live forgiven by His grace and His love, Amen.