

The God of Love and the Love of God

(December 17, 2023, Glen G. Scorgie)

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-14

Text: John 3:16

SERMON SUMMARY

During this Christmas season, it is worth pondering that event some two thousand years ago when, incredibly, the God of the Universe relinquished his Son to our tiny planet to become one of us. John 3:16 is best known for succinctly summarizing the plan of salvation. But it also illuminates the spiritual dynamics behind that original Christmas.

It reveals in the first place *a God who loves*, a God whose whole being is animated by a loving disposition. This can be a transformative view of God once we are able to internalize it. This famous verse also reveals how extravagantly God loves—*God so loved that he gave*. Radical giving is the telltale expression of such deep and genuine love. And finally, it is worth noting that God so loved *the whole world*. His love is not a narrow or tribal variety, but broad and inclusive of even the unimportant and unlovely. Christmas reminds us that God loves like *that*, and then it inspires us to pass on this very kind of radical love to others in his name.

These are certainly unloving days. We live in a time of escalating anger and hate, violence and war. As Christians, we must once again ask ourselves: What does it mean for us to be the people of such a God as we find revealed here? What should it involve, what might it require, for us to imitate him, to be *like him* in our own character and conduct? What might it take for us to shine, as he did, like candles that the darkness cannot overcome?

GROWING DEEPER (Reflection & Application)

1. What was your main personal takeaway from the message this week?
2. Why is it often difficult to believe that we are loved by God in the way that John 3:16 and Christmas assure us that we are?
3. The message described three dynamics of the love God shows toward human beings (being drawn toward them, delighting in them, and giving of himself for their sake). Which of these dynamics or characteristics do you find most appealing or encouraging, and why?
4. Why is it so hard to give? What are the obstacles that must be overcome in order to be able to give, and especially to give of ourselves for the sake of others?
5. The love of God is characterized by radical self-forgetful, self-giving concern for others. Is it even possible for human beings like us to ever truly love anyone in this God-like way? Realistically, should we set a more modest goal for ourselves? If so, what might that be?

6. What spiritual resources do we need in order to live in this radically loving way that God the Father himself displayed in sending his Son to earth? Or is loving this way simply a matter of our choice and our personal will power?

7. What might it take for us to shine, as he did, like candles that the darkness cannot overcome?