

The Measure of God's Love

by Paris Reidhead

The measure of God's love is seen in the gift of his son, Jesus Christ, who came to redeem humanity and uphold the holiness and justice of God.

Duration: 33:44

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 5:48, Matthew 22:37-39, John 3:16, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 5:20

Topics: "Love Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of sin and its consequences, emphasizing that the penalty for sin is death. However, God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but rather to offer forgiveness and eternal life to those who believe in Him. The preacher highlights the measure of God's love, stating that God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. The sermon also emphasizes the nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and how Jesus Christ pleased the Father and was the only one who could fulfill the law's penalty for sin.

Transcript

While you are turning to John chapter 3, verse 16, I'd like to use this opportunity to take us back to Thanksgiving Sunday. You may recall that on that occasion I spoke to you about that marvelous truth in everything, giving thanks, giving thanks always for all things. And I mentioned at the time that all of us will have abundant opportunity to practice that.

And I told you how that in my case, it was probably the most difficult verse in all the Bible to consistently obey. I would just assume the Lord would let up a little bit. This week has had marvelous privileges for me to practice that.

I'm sure that Isabel Hall has also joined me and joined us in the exercise of that. And perhaps you have, giving thanks always for all things. Let's do it together, shall we, before we go to the word.

Our Heavenly Father, how we do rejoice that thou in thy great wisdom and love have prepared for us this marvelous answer to so many of the problems and difficulties that we encounter in time. Thou dost love us, that thou hast demonstrated and proven. Thou hast set thy love upon us, and therefore we dare believe that nothing can touch us.

But at first it's gone through the nail-pierced hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who sustains all things, governs all things, who has all authority in heaven and earth, who has demonstrated to us his great love for us. And so that which touches us must have come from thee, permitted by thee, allowed by thee, whoever the messenger might be, whoever the servant that might be, whoever it is that thou dost use to bring it is unimportant.

What is important is that we realize that all things work together for good. To them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose, for whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many forever. A cry of our hearts today is, O to be like thee, O to be like thee, blessed, redeemer, pure as thou art, come in thy fullness, come in thy pureness, stamp thine own image deep on my heart.

We love thee, Father, we worship thee, so as a company of people, for whatever the week may have held or the week to come may hold, we give thee thanks, we trust thee, we love thee, we adore thee, and in everything we would glorify thee. With thanksgiving in the name of the Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.

John chapter 3 verse 16. You need to turn to it because there's a verse that I will in due course be calling to your attention. Last week we considered the fact of his love, for God so loved the world.

But today I think we will be improved and benefited if we think for a few moments about the second clause in this wonderful verse, namely the measure of his love. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Now remember who God is, I just refresh your memory from last week.

The God of the Bible is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's so easy for us to read this, the Father loved the world and gave his Son. But that's not what it says.

It says God so loved the world and gave his only begotten Son. And the God of the Bible is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now I say this, I repeat it, you've heard it, I do it deliberately because I want it to grip you, I want you to grip it.

The Father is God, but God does not exist alone as Father. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son is God, but God does not exist alone as Son.

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, but God does not exist alone as Holy Spirit. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now wherever God is manifest as Father, the Son and the Spirit are there. And wherever God is manifest as Son, the Father and the Spirit are there. And wherever God is manifest as Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son are also there.

Now understand that it says God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit loved the world. So in tri-unity the decision was made. The first thing in the measure of God's love, therefore, is in terms of time.

When did God begin to love the world? Well, we are told that he has loved us with an everlasting love. There never was a time when God began to be loved, and there never was a time when God began to love the world. But rather, this has always been part of his being.

And so from eternity past, God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has loved the world. But how has it been measured? Remember that verse that says that he was the lamb slain from before the foundation of the

world? Well, before the world began, God the Son had consented to become flesh and dwell among us and die and be raised from the dead. Now we're going back a long time in our thinking.

We're going back before there was one little speck of dust in his vast empty universe. Before God had made anything, when he existed entirely in and as and of himself. Then there came a time when with this yearning of love, God the Father wanting children, yearning for children, God the Son wanting brethren, the eternal bridegroom wanting a bride.

And again I emphasize something you've heard me say in the past, and that is that love is never complete without an object, without a beloved. So God, triune God, certainly the Father loved the Son, and the Son the Father, but that is in triunity. Now the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yearns for one in the image of God, made like unto him.

And I just touched the point passing, why did he have to sometime ultimately make a being in his image, in his likeness? Because we can only love that which is like us. You can't love things because they don't understand it. You can't love animals because they can't return it as human love.

Oh, there can be affection and appreciation and and gratitude and begging. How often the cat, the house cat will come and rub your legs as you're approaching or standing in front of the refrigerator. Well, don't think it's so much poured out affection as it is poured out anticipation.

Looking forward to such goodies as may be forthcoming. We don't understand just what it is that animals give back to humans. That's not the purpose of the discussion.

But we do know this, that the only being that a human can love is another human or God, in whose image we are made. Two directions for love from man can go out toward others or up toward God. And the God as God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yearn for, long for a being like himself, which he could love.

Now, love is not in the emotional sense, and of course there is emotion involved in it, but love of the in the biblical sense. To seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being and joy and delight and satisfaction. So for the highest good of the universe, the highest possible good of all creatures including God, before the world began, God loved the world.

God gave his son in that intent and purpose, even to the death of the cross, so that it could be said he's loved us with an everlasting love, and he was the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, in the purpose of God. Because God anticipated and knew that this would be the only means by which such a beloved could be obtained. Then he created the world, and then he created, or there were beings that were created, I don't know the sequence, it doesn't tell us, but we do know that there was a battle.

The battle was when Christ said he saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven. In my own personal metaphysics, and I tell you, you do not have to agree with that for us to have fellowship, is that Satan was cast to earth and it became his domain. And that's what happened in Genesis 1-2, when the earth became without form and birth point, because the God of death and darkness and lie and hate was cast here.

So when God wanted to make man, instead of using this as that devil's island, that prison island in space, God came right down where he cast his ancient foe. And he recreated it and prepared it as a fifth habitation for man. And then he made man in his image with the ability to think and to feel and to choose.

And he permitted his foe, Lucifer, to come to man to beguile, to entice, to seduce, to tempt. And Eve listened and she imagined and she chose and she sinned and she came under the sentence of death. And Adam listened to Eve and he imagined and he felt and he chose and he died.

And the scripture tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It doesn't tell us why Adam did or Eve did or we did, it just tells us that we did. Men have speculated and philosophized and gone beyond the scripture and tried to explain why, but the scripture itself doesn't tell us why.

It tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And death passed upon all for that all have sinned. Now God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

That's the measure of the love of God in terms of time. But now in terms of scope, for whom was the gift of God's son given? Augustine and those who followed him and built their thinking on his theological framework dared to say the only ones for whom God loved and for whom he gave his son were those which had been sovereignly selected before the foundation of the elect. And there were those that concurred with that in spite of the difficulty that it entails when you see and read that whosoever believeth on him should not perish.

It's a contradiction in terms. No, the world that God loved and for whom he sent his son is the world of sinner folk, the world of men, the world that have rebelled against him and chosen or sinned and come short of his glory and are under the sentence of death. We are told explicitly that God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world.

That is not included in the measure of his love in terms of its scope. His intent was not to condemn the world. Why? Because the world was condemned already.

He did not send his son into the world to condemn the world because the world already was under condemnation. I've heard some in their zeal I think saying the only sin that ultimately damns a person is a rejection of Christ. And I have to disagree and say that which damns a person is sin because the soul that sinneth it shall die.

And if Christ had never come into the world, the world would have been condemned because the scripture is so absolutely clear, the soul that sinneth it shall die. The day thou eatest thou shall die. The penalty of sin is death.

He did not send his son into the world to condemn the world because the world already was under condemnation. He sent his son into the world that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. The scope of God's purpose therefore was all that breathe the breath of human life and all that company are under the sentence of death and that all of that company might because of the gift of God's son, the Lord Jesus Christ has the possibility, the possibility of forgiveness, the possibility of eternal life.

But not to condemn it, explicit and clear. He did not send his son into the world to condemn the world and if Christ had never come all would have perished and God would have been absolutely just because all have sinned and are under the sentence of death. But remember from eternity past God has wanted an object, a being like himself that could be the object of his love so that he'd have someone that he could love, reveal himself, share himself and then to have the return of that love so as to satisfy the ancient longing in the heart of God.

So before he made the world, he loved the world and before he created man, the son became in the purpose of the triune eternal God, the lamb already slain in intent and in purpose. Now look for a moment at the measure of God's love in terms of the requirement of the gift of his son. You see the scripture is so exact, the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.

There's nothing said in there about the soul's substitute dying. You don't visit the sins of the father onto the children. If a man sins, he dies for his sin is what the scriptures say.

You don't go to the family, it's the one who does it. So here is the dilemma. All that have been born of human parents from that first birth have sinned and are under the sentence of death.

So there isn't any hope that from any who are born of human parentage and yet if there is to be deliverance, it must come from the one who is so like unto his brethren that he can perfectly identify to what happens. How did God give his son? Did he let him come attended by those angels that sang in splendor of the illumined heavens and chariots that had been seen by the prophet Elijah as he swooped down into Israel? Is that how he came? No, not so. Because had he come, it would have been revealed right from the very outset that he was totally other than man.

But what happened? How did God give his son the measure of this love, this great condescending love? Mary, chosen of God, overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, one cell in her body quickened, not by male sperm but by divine power. So that that which was born of Mary could be and was indeed very man, a very man. The one who had made man in his image and likeness now quickens that one cell so that that which is born of Mary is God come in the flesh.

Very God of very God. Very man of very man. Now he had to be perfectly man.

He had to be as it were a root out of the dry ground. No beauty that we should desire him and nothing to distinguish him from his fellows. But he had to be nonetheless God because he has a responsibility.

He must therefore be subjected to all of the temptations that came to Mother Eve and all of the temptations that came to Father Adam, to all of the changes and the pressures and the difficulties and the privations that have incurred to any who've been born of human parents. So did this one, the Lord Jesus Christ. The measure of God's love that he let his son be born in humble circumstances so that he was going to know pangs of hunger and pangs of rejection and of all the other pressures that occurred to the poor and the needy, to men.

The Lord Jesus Christ now is as we are here in Luke, Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, in favor with God and man. Nothing to distinguish him from his fellows save that in all things he pleased the Father. He chose to please the Father and after 30 years tested, tempted in all points like as we are, the silence of heaven is broken as he steps down for the water's edge of the Jordan near Jericho and the voice of the Father declares, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

There's no other one who walked and left footprints in the dust and sands of this earth of whom God would have said, I am well pleased at three much less 30. Only this one, the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because God has a problem that has to be solved.

God has declared and has written the law that the soul that sinneth it shall die. How then can God be just and still forgive? The penalty of the law must be carried out. The law's penalty must be satisfied.

Its law must be vindicated. It must be upheld. It must be proven that God's law is just and it's holy and it's good and therefore it's necessary for someone against whom the Lord has no claim and has no whole, someone who's never broken the law and under the sanctions and sentence of the law to stand and thus to publicly vindicate the holiness of God and the justice of God.

That God might be just and the justifier of him that repents and believes savingly in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So in terms of the scope of God's love, the measure of his love, it was that not only man might be redeemed but that God's holiness and God's justice and God's righteousness might be upheld. Because if God were to forgive at the destruction of his own character, at the default of his own attributes, then that which was purported to be grace would have been the greatest travesty the world could have known.

It would have meant the destruction of God as well as the loss of all things for man. So the Lord Jesus Christ on whom the law has no claim and no whole, now as because he has come as he has come, live as he has lived, obeyed as he has obeyed, now he can vindicate the law. Let's look at it this way.

When Moses went to Sinai he met with God, God the Son, and the very finger that had pointed and brought the worlds into being rested upon the tablets of stone and etched and engraved in those tablets of stone the Decalogue. God made the Decalogue. Moses didn't sit there and hammer it out with a chisel, God etched it, he made it.

That's the lawgiver, God the lawgiver, God who says to Adam, the day thou eatest thou shall surely die. But now look again and here is one who is stooping and writing in the sand. They brought a woman to be stoned, taken in adultery, breaking the commandment that he so that same finger that engraved the tablet of stone now moves the grains of sand on the ground and he looks up and says he that is without sin cast the first stone.

Who is it? It's the law keeper, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who's come into the world to perfectly keep the law, to vindicate the holiness of God. Now the law giver became a law keeper that he might satisfy the law in behalf of the law breakers. Why could he write in such a way that he could say neither do I condemn thee go and sin no more? Because he is the one who's going to vindicate the holiness of the law and satisfy the righteous demands of the law.

He is the one that's going to die, he the just one for her and for me and for you the unjust that he might bring us to God. So the measure of God's love as seen here is that he gave his son the law giver to become a law keeper to die for law breakers. And such were we.

And as we bow before the manger, let us see beyond it and bow at the foot of the cross. It's in for me, my death, he dies for me, he came that he might die. You cannot understand Christmas apart from Good Friday and apart from Easter.

I used to think that the Messiah was doing us a bit of damage because it had such marvelous music telling us about the birth of Christ. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And I thought what a pity it is that it has to bring in music of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ until I realized one day that there's no meaning to Christmas unless you also understand Calvary and the resurrection, the measure of God's love.

Hoffman the great painter drew a picture, painted a picture of a mean, humble carpenter shop in a little village called Nazareth. And he had a young man in his early teens who'd been helping in that shop with

shavings and clinging to his hair and on his garment, his robe. Today's work is over, the tools have been laid down and he stands in the doorway and he does his work whenever he can and he stretches an honest release of muscles long tense with tasks.

And then Hoffman said, he lived in the shadow of the cross. We're back against that carpenter shop wall. It was a cross.

And so as you come to the manger, see the shadow of the cross. That was the measure of God's love. Father in heaven, breathe upon us again until as we go into these next days when our hearts shall be reminded again of those events that occurred so long ago.

We will understand afresh anew what it cost thee our God to give the Lord Jesus Christ, what it cost the Lord Jesus to come and what it means to us today. Should there be someone here who does not know him, whom to know is life eternal. Might this be the time, the moment when they open their heart to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, his sovereign Lord, his suffering savior, his conquering victor who triumphed over sin and death and hell in the grave.

Open their hearts now to so receive him. For it's thus as we bring ourselves, we bring the only gift worthy of the king, not gold, not frankincense, not myrrh, but ourselves and offering in love to him. To that end, bless us, we ask for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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