

How He Loved Us

John 3:16

As we continue our worship by focusing our minds on the word of God, I would invite you to open your Bible with me to John 3 for this message entitled, “How He Loved Us.” Our text for today is John 3:16 and in this text we see the love of God on display through the gift of his Son to rescue sinners from death and grant them eternal life.

Follow along as I read John 3:16. . . .

Have you read the news from around the world lately? Here’s a sampling of headlines from this week: “French farmers close in on Paris as government struggles to calm protests.” “Iran threatens to respond to any US strikes as Biden weighs how to react to base attack in Jordan.” “Israel Raids West Bank Hospital as Clashes Erupt With Hamas in Northern Gaza.” “U.S. travel advisory for Jamaica warns Americans to reconsider visits amid spate of murders.” “The feud between Ukraine’s president and army chief boils over.” “Myanmar, 3 years on: Resistance gains raise specter of splintered nation.” “North Korea continues testing new nuclear-capable cruise missile, conducts two tests within a week.”

If you could bring all the world, national, and local news under one headline, what title would cover them all? I would propose the words of Genesis 6:5, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

The world is at war—individuals are at war with each other, and nations are at war with nations. Why is it that though the headlines change and the featured nations change, these headlines represent the status quo in the world? It’s because the world is at war with God. You can define the word “wickedness” in various ways, but one definition might be this: wickedness is to be at war with God.

All violence and hostility and suffering exists as the result of the world’s rejection of God’s authority and design for human life. Alexander Solzhenitsyn explained the 20th century atrocities in Russia with the simple statement, “Men have forgotten God, that’s why all this has happened.” But it’s not just that mankind has forgotten God unintentionally. There has been and is a purposeful decision to reject God that goes all the way back to the beginning.

In the beginning Adam and Eve were at peace with each other, with creation around them, and with God. They enjoyed harmony and productivity and happiness and freedom. Life was simple when it was just the two of them and there was only one rule—stay away from the tree in the middle of the garden—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They had a multitude of trees they could enjoy, just one that was off limits.

But then the serpent came to Eve and planted seeds of doubt regarding the goodness of God, the generosity of God, the trustworthiness of God. She began to look at that one tree in a new way, and concluded that, indeed, God was not good, not generous, and not trustworthy. So she took of the fruit and ate, and gave some to Adam and he ate. That act of rejecting God's authority over their lives launched the world into a state of chaos.

That very moment Adam and Eve perceived each other to be a threat—they were ashamed of their nakedness and they made coverings for themselves. And then when they heard the sound of the Lord in the garden they perceived him to be a threat, so they hid from him.

Corruption entered the world, and like a cancer it took over the world such that there is nothing in all creation untouched by the curse brought about by Adam and Eve's rebellion against God. Genesis 6:11-12 describes the state of the earth after hundreds of years, "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth." All flesh in that verse includes all humanity and all animals—everything that breaths.

This has never changed. Time and time again in Scripture we're reminded that the world is at war with God. Psalm 2 is both a statement of the universal condition of mankind as well as a prophecy of the future when it says, "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." The human heart is bent on wrenching itself away from the sovereign rule of God—something that of course it cannot do.

Then Paul writes in Romans 1:18-23, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they

did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”

This suppression of truth, the refusal to acknowledge God and give thanks to him for the very life that he gives, and the replacing of God with idolatry leads to irrational and vacuous living. Paul describes this kind of life in Ephesians 4:17-19, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” He puts it this way in Titus 3:3, “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.”

The Bible does not portray humanity in a positive light! So much so that something within us cries out, “Now, come on, it’s not that bad—there’s a lot of good people in the world.” It’s true that because every person is made in the image of God we are capable of kindness and love and generosity and empathy and sacrifice for the good of others.

And we’re not only capable of those things, you see those qualities on display throughout the world. There are soldiers and medical professionals and first responders and good Samaritans who do heroic things for the good of others. There are kind neighbors and loving families and happy children and life-long marriages.

There is much good in the world, and we can be thankful that the curse of sin has not made mankind as evil as we can be. But even in the good, evil exists alongside the good and beneath the surface. Our world is filled with babies who are aborted, children who are abused, women who are objectified, and men who hate one another. Gangs destroy cities, corrupt politicians ruin nations, and terrorist groups wreak havoc on the world.

Though there is much good in the world, evil is pervasive and growing. That nearly 80 years has passed since the last World War isn’t explained by sustained peace. No, the world is always on edge because everyone knows that WWIII will be catastrophic for the planet.

What is to be done to the world? If we could hear the collective cries of suffering and see the collected acts of evil, and if you had the power, the right, and the desire to respond to world-wide corruption, how would you respond to such endless evil? There can be no doubt. Condemnation. Judgment. No matter how sentimental we might be, the overwhelming evidence makes the outcome certain.

If God the Creator can be said to be good in any sense—if he is just and righteous; if he cares at all about what is good and right—condemnation must come to a wicked world and all the corruption within it. All humanity, save for him who was born of a virgin, are sinners and equally deserving punishment. From the very beginning God made it clear that the wages of sin is death—it has been, and it must be.

Like the laws of the Medes and the Persians that cannot be changed after being signed, the world must perish because it has turned away from the living God who made it. The justice and righteousness and goodness of God must see it done.

So why hasn't he done it? It's not because he lacks the power. The plagues he brought to Egypt showed his power over creation and life and death. The Lord says of himself in Isaiah 45:7, "I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things." And then in vs. 12, "I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host." In Job 38-41 the Lord rebukes Job by reminding him of his sovereign control over every creature and aspect of creation. God has the power to judge the whole world and bring it fully under his just wrath.

So why hasn't he done it? It's not because he doesn't have the right. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." He made it and therefore he owns it. God is like the potter who has every right to do what he wants with the clay. The prophet Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 18, "I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do. Then the word of the Lord came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

The apostle Paul makes this very argument in Romans 9:21-22, "Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God,

desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?”

The world and all of us who are in it deserve the wrath of God to come upon us, and even though God has the power and the right to do it, he hasn't given us over to his wrath. Could it be that though he has the power and the right he simply doesn't have the will? For some reason he just can't stomach the thought of condemning the world and all who are in it? No, that's not it. Revelation 20 tells us that his will is to one day exert his power and right to bring judgment.

It tells us what that will look like. John says, “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

So God has the power, the right, and the will to judge. Why hasn't he done it yet? Because there is more to the nature and character of God than justice and righteousness. Not only is there more to God than those two qualities, when God wants to put the glorious refractions of his character on display, he front-loads the list with all the qualities that keep him from bringing the full fury of his justice on us.

The Lord declares about himself in Exodus 34:6-7, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

“I am abounding in steadfast love,” the Lord tells us. “That's all good and fine,” you might say, “but what's love got to do with it? Justice is justice—A judge might have love for his daughter who committed a heinous crime, but justice still must be done or else he's a corrupt judge.” That's right. That's exactly right. Love cannot thwart justice. If it did, God would no longer be God. If God's love undermined his justice, he would no longer be just. And if he is no longer just then what he says about himself isn't true.

And if what he says about himself isn't true then he's untrustworthy. And then no matter how loving he claimed to be, he would be cruel because we wouldn't know what to believe about him.

John 3:16 is the explanation of how God's love and God's justice meet in perfect harmony to satisfy the justice of God while providing an escape from condemnation. With the events we had on Friday and Saturday, we're focusing this weekend on missions and the heart of God for the world. John 3:16 conveys to us the heart of God for the world shining in all its splendor through what he has done to bring redemption.

We're going to walk through this verse under four headings: 1) The World God Loves; 2) The Son God Gave; 3) The Life God Offers; and 4) then we'll close by considering the Response God Requires.

The World God Loves

We begin with the world God loves. I know you're familiar with the words, but LOOK at the first phrase of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world."

Our familiarity with this statement blinds us to the wonder of it, so I hope that going through what we did up until now helps us understand just a little bit of how shocking it is that God would love the world. When you and I make something that turns against us, we're glad to get rid of it. When a plant fails to thrive, we'll uproot it and throw it away. When a car breaks down on us, we'll get rid of it. When a pet becomes violent, we put it down. And it's not uncommon in the world that when a child brings shame upon their parents, the parents will disown their child. When an enemy stands against our nation, well, they won't be standing for long.

God looks upon the world that has corrupted itself, is filled with violence, would be glad to be rid of him, and is worthy of his just wrath which is he more than capable and willing to measure out, and yet his love extends his love. His love is not an emotional feeling, it's not a sentimental mood, it's not an infatuation, or a blind romantic attachment. God doesn't look at the world with rose-colored glasses, nor is he needy such that his love is a desperate attempt to get the world to love him back.

God's love—get this—is God's unilateral undying commitment to work for the good of his creation. God's love is unilateral—that means it is his own decision and not explained by anything in those who are loved. It is undying—that means that God's love doesn't rise or fall, come and go, increase or decrease—it

remains constant. God's love is a commitment—it's not a feeling or emotion; it is a decision to which he is freshly committed every day. And God's love works for the good of his creation—his love is aimed at benefiting those who are the object of his love.

Speaking of God's unilateral love for Israel, the Lord said to them in Deuteronomy 7:7, "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." As God's love is for Israel, it is for the world—it is unilateral.

Speaking of God's undying love, Lamentations 3:22 says, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end." Psalm 136 declares in each of its 26 verses "his steadfast love endures forever." God's love is undying.

Speaking of God's committed love, Lamentations 3:23 says, referring to the Lord's steadfast love and mercies, "they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Time and time again in the Old Testament God remembers and acts upon his promises. In Ezekiel 16, after rehearsing in vivid metaphor Israel's extensive history of idolatry, the Lord promises judgment but then he says, "yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant." God's love is a committed love.

Speaking of God working for the good of his creation Jesus says in Matthew 5:45, "For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." And in Luke 6:35, "he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil."

God's love is his unilateral, undying commitment to work for the good of his creation—not just those he intends to save, but even the unjust, the ungrateful, and the evil. What the world deserves from God is his judgment, but what the world receives from God is a love that gives them life, breath, and all things.

God's love causes the rain to fall so that food can grow and rainbows can be seen and plants and trees can be green and water can be collected to drink. God's love causes the sun to shine so that we can feel its warmth and measure time and collect its energy. God's love causes our hearts to beat and our lungs to breath so that we can live and move on the earth and experience his goodness.

But what's amazing is that as undeserved as these benefits are, God's love goes far beyond the blessings of daily life. Those expressions of love can't stop the tsunami of judgment from crashing over us. There is yet a greater expression of God's love that John points us to in this verse.

The Son God Gave

In this simple phrase John says, "For God so loved the world." The word "so" in the original is not a word of measure or degree as if to say that God loves the world *this much*. It is a word that means "in this way." "God loved the world in this way." What way? In this way, LOOK at the text, "That he gave his only Son." We've considered the World God Loved, this is now the Son God Gave.

God loved us by giving his Son. The Son of God shares the divine life with his Father. They are co-equal and co-eternal. They equally share in the divine essence of all that it means to be God and they've existed together for all eternity.

Though it is beyond our comprehension, the Bible teaches that the Father and the Son as well as the Holy Spirit are persons who exist together as one God. There is one God in three persons. This is not a contradiction because they are one in one way—divine essence—and three in another way—personhood. This is the doctrine of the Trinity. The triune God subsists in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Just as insects who cannot comprehend all of what it means to be human, so it is that the divine nature is exceedingly beyond our ability to comprehend. But God has condescended to us to reveal aspects of himself that we can understand. In the Bible he has revealed certain dynamics of the relationship we can wrap our minds around to some degree.

For example, the Father and the Son have relationship with each other characterized by shared glory. Jesus says in a prayer to the Father in John 17:5, "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." Then in vs. 22 we learn that their relationship is characterized by unity. Jesus says, "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one." And finally for our purposes today, in vs. 24 we learn that their relationship in eternity was characterized by love, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."

So the Father and the Son reveal to us that they have had an eternal relationship characterized by shared glory, shared unity, and shared love. As the infinite God, the Father and the Son enjoy infinite glory, limitless unity, and boundless love. No matter what your relationship experience was with your father—good, bad, or non-existent—we can conceive of a Father-Son relationship where there is mutual praise for each other's greatness. We can imagine a relationship where there is unity and not conflict. And we can picture and maybe even emotionally connect with a loving Father-Son relationship that endures every test. But understand that whatever you imagine to be the best Father-Son relationship, God the Father's relationship to God the Son is infinitely greater.

So when we read here that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that should stop us in our tracks. What do you mean "he gave his only Son"? And how does giving his Son solve the problem of the world?

Well, we've already established that the world is hopelessly lost and corrupt, right? And as a result of the pervasive evil in the heart, every person is under the just condemnation of God who cannot simply sweep away the guilt of sinful man and still be just, agreed? The only way, then, for sinners to be saved from judgment and God's justice be upheld is if someone else satisfies the just requirement of God's law.

The problem is, there is no human capable of serving as a substitute because all are under sin. And make no mistake the substitute must be human to satisfy the natural law of justice sometimes called *lex taliones*—eye for eye. The scales of justice must be balanced. And for justice to be balanced, an animal cannot satisfy God's justice against a person, nor can God as God do the same—either option would leave the scales of justice grossly unbalanced in either direction.

So what is the solution to this dilemma? The infinite wisdom of God came up with a solution in eternity past. The Father and the Son agreed together to send the Son into the world, whereby he would become a man without losing his deity. Being born of a virgin he would not be stained by sin, and being truly man and truly God he lived a life of perfect obedience to God.

And though he did not deserve it, because sinful man is hostile to God, they hated Jesus and nailed him to a cross. And as he hung on that cross, the Father took all the sin of those who would believe and placed them on Christ. And he poured out his wrath, satisfying his justice to the last drop.

As truly man Jesus served as a lawful substitute for sinful man, and as truly God he was capable of absorbing the infinite wrath of God on behalf many. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The holy Father looked upon his holy Son with whom he shared eternal glory, unity, and love, and he treated him as though the Son had lived the collective wicked life of a multitude of sinners. Though for all eternity they had known nothing except perfect joy and love, the Father treated his Son as though he were a vile criminal. This was not cruelty on the part of the Father—it was to fulfil the plan established before time began.

So Jesus was not a victim in this. He made it clear to all in John 10:18, “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” So he was not victim—he was a willing participant in the plan of salvation.

Jesus died on that cross, and he was buried. But on the third day, declaring that he accepted the payment made by the Son, the Father raised Jesus from the dead showing him to be victorious over sin and death. The justice of God had been met, sin had been paid for, and forgiveness and freedom from condemnation was won.

This is what it means that God gave his only Son. He gave his Son who is of inestimable value and worth to save sinful man.

The Life God Offers

We’ve seen the world God loves, the Son God gave, and now LOOK again at John 3:16 to consider the life God offers. . . .

The purpose of God giving the Son is to rescue mankind from perishing and offer us eternal life. To perish means to be destroyed, to have the ultimate sentence of death carried out on us. But death in this sense is not ceasing to exist—it is living forever apart from the glorious and loving presence of God. Scripture says “it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” So to perish is to live forever under God’s punishment for sin.

The book of Revelation tells us what will be the final end of the devil himself. It says in 20:10, “and the devil who had deceived [the nations] was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” And then vs. 15 describes the fate of everyone else who dies apart from Christ. “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

So to perish is to be thrown into the Lake of Fire—a place of darkness and torment and sorrow over sin and yet seething anger at God. The Lake of Fire is not the Devil’s domain—it is God’s domain—it is where his justice will rule over every inhabitant for all eternity.

This punishment lasts forever not only because sin is an offense against an infinite God and thus the punishment is infinite, but also because all those in hell continue to sin forever and so their punishment is justly compounded.

This is what it means to perish, and everyone is destined to perish. But God gave his Son to offer escape from his wrath, escape from hell and the Lake of Fire, escape from an eternity of perpetually existing under the fierce wrath of God’s holy justice. And that escape is here called “eternal life.”

Whereas the Lake of Fire is eternal death, God gave his Son to offer eternal life. If everlasting death is living under the wrath of God and separation from the mercy and love and grace of God, everlasting life is living under the mercy and love and grace of God and separation from the wrath and justice of God.

Jesus defined eternal life this way in John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Knowing God here is not knowing *that* God exists or knowing things *about* God, but rather having a relationship with him—a relationship where your life is shaped by the reality of who God is what he has done and what he has revealed in his word.

Eternal life is an entirely new life that involves far more than we have time to explore in detail today, but just consider these elements. To have eternal life is to have a new life. Ephesians 2:5 says that God “made us alive together with Christ.” To have eternal life is not only to have a new life, but also a new identity. Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Eternal life is a new life, a new identity, it’s also a new citizenship. Colossians 1:13 says, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”

Eternal life is a new life, a new identity, a new citizenship; it also gives us a new master. Romans 6:22-23 says, “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Instead of the cruel slave-master of sin, we are now the slaves of the perfectly good and benevolent God whose yoke is easy and burden is light. Eternal life is a new life, a new identity, a new citizenship, a new master; it also makes you part of a new family. Romans 8:16 says, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

Eternal life is a new life, a new identity, a new citizenship, a new master, a new family; it also provides a new power. In Ephesians 1:19 Paul prays that we would know, “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.”

To a new life, identity, citizenship, master, family, and power, we can add a new purpose. 2 Corinthians 5:15 says, “and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” In living for him we are to live for His glory and praise and honor and the spread of his name and gospel.

And though there is more than that we could add, for now I'll round out this list with this: eternal life grants us a new future. 1 Peter 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” This new future is the certain hope of an everlasting life free from the curse of sin and the suffering that flows from it. And because we will be completely freed from the presence of sin in the future we will be able to dwell with God in love and joy and peace forever and ever and ever.

As should be obvious by now, this is not a life that begins when we die, but it begins today. The moment a person receives everlasting life they immediately come under God's loving gracious rule and the accumulated debt of an entire life of sin is wiped away once and for all.

Forgiveness from sin is not a future hope, it is a settled reality. Freedom from condemnation is not something that will happen, it is something that has happened. Experiencing the abundant grace of God

is not something that we anticipate, it is something we receive today. And all that is new immediately goes into effect and what is to come in the future is secured.

Conclusion (The Response God Requires)

That is the life God offers as a result of the Son he gave because of the love he has for the world. The question begging to be asked at this point is how does one get this eternal life? How do you go from the condition of death and destiny of perishing to the everlasting life God offers?

John 3:16 answers that question. LOOK at it one more time. . . .

The response God requires to the Son he gave in order to receive the life he offers is to believe in him—to believe in the Son. Yes, it's that simple. You don't need to do good works; you don't need to sell all your possessions; you don't need to give money to the church; you don't need to clean up your life; or do anything to make yourself acceptable to God. To try to earn eternal life is to further offend God because he's already told you you're a sinner and your guilt can't be wiped away by anything you do.

No, there's nothing you can do in terms of earning or working for eternal life. There's only one thing God requires—believe. Believe means to accept the truth of your sin and need for forgiveness from God; it means to accept the truth of who Jesus is and what he's done for sinners like you; and it means to embrace his sacrifice as the only means by which you can have your own sins forgiven.

To believe is to place yourself in the merciful loving hands of God and accept what he says is true about himself and you, and acknowledge that to him. Romans 10:9-10 says, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

If you have never believed in Jesus Christ and placed your trust in his substitutionary death on the cross, believe in him today—right now. In your own heart confess to him that you're a sinner deserving of his wrath and express your trust in Jesus whose death paid for sin. Acknowledge to God that Jesus' resurrection proved that God accepted his sacrifice, and then ask him to forgive you and give you eternal life.

You may not know what words to use, but that's ok, just talk to the Lord in your own heart and know that God knows your heart and will hear your prayer and respond.

I know that most of you have already believed—keep believing. Keep trusting in Christ. Don't be swayed by the temptation to start relying on yourself. Don't believe the lies that you need to make yourself acceptable to God. Keep trusting in Christ's finished work knowing that there is no condemnation left for you.

But don't stop there. Let the truth of God's love for the world stir your heart toward those who are far from Christ. There are millions of people around the world who have never heard the good news you've heard today. There are people in our community who have never heard the gospel, and there are many more people around the world who have no exposure to God's revelation of his love for them.

All of us are called to support the work of evangelism here and abroad, but maybe some of you are called to go—to be equipped and prepared and follow in the footsteps of the Wreesmans and Theresa Guillory and Juan Moncayo who sat where you sat and raised their hand to say, "I will go." I will proclaim Christ. I will be trained and prepared and I will forsake the comforts of this life and tell the nations that God loved them by sending his only Son so that they would not perish but have eternal life. May we be a church that goes deep into the Scriptures so that, whether at home or abroad, we can go far in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions:

- If this is such great news, what keeps you from sharing it with everyone?
- If God loved the world, why isn't everyone going to Heaven?
- What is one way that the truths of this passage, mainly God's love for you, will affect your life this week?
- Pastor Gabe challenged at the end of the sermon that some are called to be missionaries: Would you go if God called you?
- Read Romans 8:31-39. How does this relate to the work of Christ on the cross? What does this mean for our eternal security?

