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**God’s Valentine’s Gift**

(John 3:16 KJV)

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

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his is a week where pretty little cards, sometimes with candy attached, are being exchanged in classrooms, moms and dads are having date nights, and many children are waking to surprises expressing that they are loved. It is the week of Valentine’s Day. February is the month of love and Valentine’s Day is at the heart of it all—but what if you do not go to school? Or what if you do not get gorgeous cards? What if you are not married or escaped away on a romantic date? What if you do not receive any chocolate or surprises? I still say to you, Happy Valentine’s Day!

Valentine’s Day is observed in memory of the Saint Valentine who is said to have been executed on February 14th in A.D 470 for performing weddings for Roman soldiers—it was a violation of the Roman law. And maybe that’s why he is called the Parton Saint of beloveds and people around the world celebrate romantic love on the day of his execution.

This text in our study today is one of the most familiar verses in the Bible. You see it inscribed on bumper stickers and banners; you see it waved on posters at athletic events; you hear it quoted by the politicians. It is one of the first verses we learned as children, and one that many adults can still recite from memory—and sadly its sometimes written into very few obituary programs. It is one of the few verses that many people can identify just from the reference — John 3:16. For some people it is the only bible verse they can identify by the reference.

I must venture to say that John 3:16 is one of the most familiar verses in the Bible and deservedly so. It has been called the gospel in a nutshell, a summary of Scripture, and a blueprint for salvation. It is all of those things, but it is also a wonderful verse to reflect on with respect to missions and bringing the gospel to the world. And it is within that context that I would like to preach about, “God’s Valentine’s Gift!”

If there’s any verse known by a wide audience, its John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” It tells the whole Gospel story in a sentence. On the night he presented this simple statement, he was having a conversation with a particular Pharisee, Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews.

The hour is late and the streets are dark in Jerusalem. There’s a warm summer breeze that cuts into the lingering heat from the day. Why is this night different from any other? For one man it would be. Can you see him? He’s winding through the streets with a torch in his hand, walking with a particular purpose. He arrives at the house where he thinks Jesus is and knocks on the door. The last several days raised many questions, and Nicodemus carries the weight of his doubts and fears through the door to see if Jesus really holds the answers. He saw John at the Jordan and heard the rumors about the sky opening up when Jesus entered into the water. He knows the marketplace is full of whispers about miraculous acts and challenges to traditional Jewish teaching. The world seems upside down because of this Galilean, this rabbi, this unique person who claims to be the Son of God.

You get the picture don’t you? If we look at John 3:16 in context, we see that Nicodemus comes that night with some faith. He says to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (vs. 2). It’s an important place to start. Nicodemus makes an effort with his sliver of faith and a whole bunch of questions. And Jesus spurs on the conversation about the very strange idea of being born again. In their exchanges—Nicodemus’s simple but striking questions and Jesus’ heartfelt responses – frame both our points and our application. Their conversation leads us to John 3:16 and the verses that follow.

**I. The Scope Of God’s Love – The World**

(John 3:16 KJV)

*For God so loved the* ***world****, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The first thing I would like you to notice from John 3:16 is the scope of God’s love. And you will see that the scope is very wide indeed. “God so loved the world.” God doesn’t just love one set of people. He does not just love one particular nation or race. God is a universal God, and he distributes universal love indeed. The scope of God’s love covers the whole world – every nation, tribe, language and people.