

Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2019  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
**God So Loved the World**

Dear Friends in Jesus, who was born to be our Savior,

Recently a fourteen year old student was walking to her middle school in Clive to watch a basketball game. A woman drove her car onto the sidewalk to intentionally run over this student because the student was not white like the driver. Thanks be to God that the student survived her serious injuries and has returned to classes. What would you be thinking about God if your teenage daughter was intentionally hit by a racist driver while walking on a sidewalk? Certainly thanks to God that your daughter is alive but there might just be some questions for God too. Like, why didn't God stop this driver? Where was God to protect my daughter? Does God care about us? What did we do to deserve this? Does God truly love us or just say that he loves us?

When someone goes through a tragic situation it is quite common to have some questions for God. Maybe you have had similar questions. If you haven't yet, the time and situation may come when you want to know if God really loves you or if he just says that he does.

The Scripture passage for us to consider on this Christmas Eve is the well known words of Jesus to Nicodemus from:

**John 3:16 (NIV84)**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

God says that he loves the world. Shouldn't that be enough for us? It should. God is not a man that he should lie. God does not make promises and fail to keep them. The word of God is truth. His word should be enough but our loving God decides to give us something to show his love.

That little word, "so" is an important word. God so loved the world. "So" does not mean "so much" or "so greatly." It is not a measure of the amount of his love. Instead "so" points us to how God showed his love. This is the way God loved the world....he gave.

How would we like God to show his love for us? What would we like God to give to us? Maybe we would ask for God to keep our children safe from the evils of this world. Maybe we would like God to show us his love by making our careers go well. Maybe we would like health for ourselves or parents and loved ones. Maybe we want a long and happy life. Certainly God could give any of those things. But none of these would prove that God truly loves us. For if God gave us a comfortable, successful, happy life for all our days on this earth, without giving us his one and only Son, we would spend eternity suffering away from every blessing of God.

God showed his love by giving us the only gift that would save us from perishing forever. God gave what only he could give. God gave his one and only Son. Christmas is the beginning of how God gave his Son for the world. The conclusion is at the cross as Jesus dies for the sins of the world. God gave

his Son to die for the world. Would any of us give up a child unto death to save a friend? No. Would any of us sacrifice one of our children to save an enemy? No way! But God showed his love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us. The sinful world hates God, hates his Word and hates Jesus. Billions in this world worship false gods. Immorality is praised. God's Word is considered outdated and hateful. People do what they want with no fear of God and no love for God. And we too have sinned against the one and only true God. But God so loved the world that he gave...he gave his one and only Son. The world's hatred did not stop God from loving the world. Sin did not stop God from loving the world.

Christmas proves that God loves the world. God's Son is born of the virgin Mary into this world. Jesus would live among sinners in this world. Jesus would die in the place of all sinners of this world. God wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of Christ. He wants all to know and believe that Jesus was born and died and rose again to give forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Therefore, God gave his Son for the world. This is the way God loved the world.

So how do you know that God loves you? Jesus was speaking to a Jewish leader named Nicodemus. Nicodemus had come to Jesus at night because he didn't want the other Jewish leaders to know he was interested in what Jesus was teaching. Nicodemus needed to know that Jesus was his Savior. Wouldn't it have been comforting for Nicodemus to hear from Jesus? "For God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son." But Jesus did not say, "God so loved you." If he had, we might wonder if we are included in the you. Maybe the you is only the Jews. Maybe the you is only those who believe. Maybe the you is only people who have been good. But Jesus eliminates all doubt.

God so loved the world. You are part of the world. Therefore God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son for you. The birth of God's Son, our Savior, drives away the doubts and despair brought on by this world and our own sin. If you've been bad or good, Christmas proves that God loves the world and therefore God loves you. Whether you've had the best year of your life or the worst, Christmas proves that God so loved the world and so loves you. And whatever happens in the coming year, Christmas proves that God so loved the world and he still loves you. Believe this wonderful truth and you have what Jesus promises, eternal life.

Amen.