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## **Thanksgiving Expository Sermon**

**I am sending an additional expository sermon this thanksgiving month to remind ourselves of the greatest gift that God ever gave to this world - His One and only Son. Let us unite to lift our hearts in gratitude and praise to God for the incalculable sacrifice He made for our salvation.**

**“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” 2 Corinthians 9:15.**

**WHAT A GIFT!.....WHAT LOVE!.....BE THANKFUL!**

**Scripture Reading - John 3:16-21**

**2 Corinthians 9:15.**

### **Introduction**

We are entering the thanksgiving season, a season in which we gather together as families, many from various parts of the country, to enjoy fellowship and the traditional thanksgiving dinner with turkey and all of its trimmings. It is a time when we specifically give thanks to God for the many blessings we have received from His loving Hand. But we tend to emphasize the physical provision that God gives to us day by day. And it is appropriate that we do this, because every good and perfect gift come from the Hand of the Father. It is important, however, that we lift our minds and hearts in thanksgiving for greatest gift that the God of this universe ever gave to us, not because we deserved it or that we merited it, but simply because God is love and He loves us. This fact by itself is astounding. Charles Wesley caught the essence of this truth when he

wrote **“amazing love how can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me?”** One senses the wonder and awe he feels about this kind of love gift simply because of what it is, and where it came from, and who it is for. We are the focus of His love. It is a personal love. Paul said it so clearly and yet so simply, “He loved me and gave himself up for me.” But it is amplified and described so clearly in the scriptures in the words of Jesus describing a love “so amazing so divine “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.” John 3:16. The Apostle Paul viewing this great gift cannot contain himself. His heart pulsates with gratitude and it overflows in praise as he writes “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” 2 Corinthians 9:15.

Once again this thanksgiving season we need to remind ourselves of the enormity, the magnitude of the gift God gave to this sinful world of ours. And be thankful in word and in deed. I hope that we never lose the sense of wonder of this love. John 3:16 is the most complete verse in the scriptures. It glows with eternal hope, overflows with amazing grace, it promises eternal salvation. It describes mercy without limit, and love without measure and grace without parameters. It is a monument to God’s eternal love. Kingdoms have risen and fallen and their debris lies scattered across the landscapes of history, but the love of God lives on. Systems of thought of come and gone. Human ideologies have risen and fallen. Great men have lived and died, but the love of God goes on. Governments have risen and fallen disappearing into the shadows of history but the love of God holds on. False philosophies like flashing lights on the stage of time, have been extinguished while the light of God’s

eternal love shines on. I cannot be sure of anything in this old world of ours, but there is one thing of which I am unshakably sure, and it is this, that “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son” to die for us. The well known simple yet profound hymn which our children are encouraged to sing, emphasizes this magnificent truth. “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.” It is simple yet profound. God loves us!! This I am sure of. No power in time, no force in history has been able to destroy the eternal dynamic and redeeming truth that “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.” John 3:16.

I suggest to that in this time of thanksgiving we should reflect on it once again and be thankful. Paul did when he wrote “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” Jesus is God’s love gift to us and we should be eternally thankful.

Notice the,

## **1. THE SOURCE FROM WHICH THIS GIFT OF LOVE EMANATES.**

**John 3:16.** “God so loved the world.....” It is redeeming love. But who is the source of this love. Jesus tells us that God is. In saying this we note that there,

**a. A FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION. John 3:16.** It is God who loves the world. This is an important assumption. It is the assumption that God is a fact. He is a reality. He does exist. Immediately you do not accept that truth, you do away with the love of God. There is no debate here. No theories are put forward. There is simply an acceptance or an

assumption that God is. The scriptures tell that “He who comes to God must believe that He is.” The opening verse in the Bible states very clearly “in the beginning God.” This is the fundamental assumption of the Bible. It is declared without apology that the God who is, is the creator of the universe. The universe could not have come into being without a creator. For out of nothing nothing came. The design of the natural world demands the need for a designer. The presence of natural laws necessitates a lawgiver. Our world did not just happen by chance or spring into being by some phenomenal big bang. It takes an enormous amount faith to believe that nonsensical theory. Writing in the American Magazine not long ago, a manufacturer expressed himself in this way: “it takes a girl in our factory about two days to learn to put together the seventeen parts of a meat chopper together. It may be that these millions of worlds, all balanced so beautifully in space-it may be that they just happened; it may be by a billion years of tumbling about they finally arranged themselves. I don’t know. I am merely a plain manufacturer of cutlery. But this I do know, that you can shake the seventeen parts of a meat chopper around in a wash tub for the next billion years, and you’ll never make a meat chopper. There has to be someone to put it together. When you study the immensity of our universe with its complex design, intricate working, systematic events with an open mind, it will force you to conclude that behind it all there is God. A designer, who put it all together, and that is the fundamental assumption of the Scriptures. Then there is in these words,

**b. A FUNDAMENTAL REVELATION. John 3:16.** “...God so loved the world..” This revelation is simple yet so profound. There is mystery about

its depth, a profundity about its meaning yet undoubtedly there is a simplicity about its message. "God loves the world." Try and explain that truth and there are no words in the English dictionary that can satisfactorily define it. This is so because it is the love of God and will not be confined to limited definition. He is not only the source of this love He is love, John in his letters tells in no uncertain terms that God loves us because "He is love." It is difficult to get a hold on the full meaning of His love. When you consider the vast expanses of the universe and our small part in it, His love for us takes on a new meaning and new sense of wonder. You are suddenly overwhelmed with the consciousness of that which is beyond us, yet it touches us and involves us. One has written that "if we were to experience a holocaust that destroyed our entire solar system, the massive inferno or fire would be barely visible from the Andromeda galaxy. It would look like a match flaring faintly in the distance, then imploding into permanent darkness. Within this solar system which seems so large and incomprehensible to us, there lives only 5.4 billion people. To put that into further perspective, all of these people could stand shoulder to shoulder in an area about the size of Jacksonville Florida(800 square miles). From the view point of one galaxy among many, we are but a small spark on a flickering match. Think of how minute that is. Reflect on how small that is. Yet, it was for this minuscule speck of humanity that Jesus Christ the Son of God, wrapped Himself in flesh so that we could unwrap the bounty and the riches of God's unlimited grace and inexhaustible love, and thereby find salvation." "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..." Allow that dynamic truth to emblazon itself on the tablets of our hearts and minds.

The gift of God's love is founded on a fundamental assumption that God is, and on the fundamental revelation that the God who is, is the same God who loves us. "God so loved the world." He is the source from which this gift of love emanates. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."

Secondly note,

## **2. THE SCOPE WHICH THE GIFT OF LOVE ENCOMPASSES. JOHN 3:16.**

Jesus made very clear what the love of God encompasses. "God so loved the world.....that whoever believes in Him shall not perish...." In verse 15 "everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.." This the scope which Divine love encompasses. This love has no discrimination or prejudice. The words of Jesus make this clear when He said "WHOEVER BELIEVES in Him shall not perish."It is important that we see that.

**a. THE LOVE OF GOD IS BEYOND PARTIALITY. John 3:16.** He loved the world...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. There certain popular teaching which tries to argue that the love of God was a partial love. It is love, they say, for the elect only. But God does not by an act of His Sovereign will and desire select or predestine a certain segment of the world's population to spend eternity in hell, and the others to eternal life long before the were born. That would do away with the justice of God and destroy the very meaning and essence of Divine love. What kind of God would He be if He selected some souls to hell and others to eternal life. Dave Hunt commented that if this were true, "it cannot be said that God loves those who He has predestined to hell. How can He. When He sends them to hell by an act of His autocratic will.

Nor is it reasonable that these, whom according to this teaching, He does not love should be commanded to love Him! While all the time He does not love them. Are the ungodly sinners to be more loving than God? But the Apostle John declares: "We love Him, because He first loved us."

1 John 4:19. Thus, those whom God does not love have no basis for obeying this command. But the command is for all, proving that God indeed loves all, and truly desires that all be saved. The command to love God is an invitation to rebellious sinners to repent and return to Him. That

all are commanded to love God makes it very clear, that the Father did not send the Son to die in a limited atonement for only a select group but for all." The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of the "whosoever." His love encompasses the world. The Rabbis of ancient history composed an imaginary look at heaven to convey the extent of God's love. The drama unfolds when the Hebrew people were being pursued by the Egyptian army. The angels were perched on heaven's edge watching the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. When the waters came crashing in on the Egyptians, the angelic host shouted and cheered in victory. God stopped the jubilant celebration with a wave of His Hand. With tears in His Eyes, God rebuked the angels for their perspective on this tragedy. He said the very work of my Hands has been destroyed and you would cheer? God's love is extended to all men, even those who position themselves as His enemies. This is clearly evident in Jesus' request of forgiveness for those who nailed Him to the Cross. God's love is beyond partiality. It has no limits. It knows no boundaries. It puts up no barriers. It lays down no parameters and it builds up no walls. It flows beyond man made limits to include the world. His love is beyond partiality.

Furthermore,

**b. THE LOVE OF GOD IS BEYOND LOCALITY. John 3:16.** God so loved the world. The God of John 3:16 is not merely a local God of a selected place. There was an idea that pervaded some of the pagan nations and still does among many of them today, that the Gods they worshipped were confined to specific localities. When the Syrians fought against Israel, they sought to fight them on the lowland places because they thought that Israel's God was a God of the hills and would have no power on the plains. When young Jacob fled from his father's house, he lay down for the night. The open spaces of the country surrounded him. Above was the star studded sky and that night Jacob fell asleep with a strange sense of littleness and loneliness in his mind. And God spoke to him in a dream. And when Jacob awoke from sleep, he said the Lord was surely in this place and I was not aware of it. Jacob had assumed that the God of his father's house was left miles behind in his father's tents. That night he had made discoveries about God. He woke up to the realization that the God of His father was beyond locality. David the King of Israel hundreds of years later discovered this to be true. He wrote passionately in Psalm 139. V. 7. "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? V.8, If I go to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths you are there." This is a God whose presence and love transcends localities. This is the scope which the gift of God's love encompasses. Finally note,

**3. THE SALVATION THAT THE GIFT OF LOVE INCLUDES. JOHN**

**3:15 -17.** The words of Jesus are important here. v.15. “Everyone who **believes in Him may have salvation..**” “...whoever believes in Him **shall not perish but have eternal life.**” v. 17. “.....God did not send His Son into the world, **but to save the world through Him**”. V.18. “...whoever believes in Him **is not condemned...**” There is an exciting trinity of truths in these thrilling words. **God loves! God Gives! God saves!** The simplicity of these words is more than enough to instill a living hope and certain assurance into the hearts of lost men and women. **God loves! God gives! God saves!** That is a summary of John 3:16, indeed it is a summary of the Gospel message. We have in one concise verse all that is needed to find salvation. It contains great truths which are the heart of this glorious message. What about this salvation that can be ours? How did it happen that salvation came to this planet of ours? John 3:16 tells us. This great salvation was born in God’s,

**a. PASSION FOR A LOST WORLD. John 3:16.** “God so loved the world.” This love is the fountainhead, the first cause, the Divine Holy flame from which all else comes. God loved the world. That means, in personal terms, that God loves you and loves me. Karl Barth, famed theologian, was once asked, “what is the greatest thought you ever had?” His answer; “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.” “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...” Salvation has come to our world because of God’s passion for a lost world. There is a hymn we sing in England which invites us to be thankful for the love of God in Christ. “Come let us sing of a wonderful love, Tender and true; Out of the heart of the Father above, streaming to me and to you; Wonderful love, wonderful

love, Dwells in the heart of the Father above.” Furthermore these these words of the Lord Jesus Christ tell us that salvation is here because,

**b. A PRICE WAS PAID FOR A LOST WORLD. John 3:16.** “ For God so loved the world that He gave His one only Son...” The **word gave** has force to it. He gave up His one and only Son. As one commentator wrote, “God not only gave up His Son TO the world but FOR it.” The story is told of a princess whose child fell ill with an extremely serious and contagious disease. She was forbidden to kiss her child because of the danger of contracting the disease. In one of her wrenching fits of delirium to which the child was subject, the mother was so distressed that she took her in her arms and gently soothed her into quietness. When reason returned, the little sufferer looked up into her mothers eyes and cried “Mama, kiss me.” This was too much for a mother’s heart. Without thinking she stooped and kissed her on the lips. But it was the kiss of death. Before many days had passed, the child was well, but the mother lay pale and cold in her casket. The sacrifice of life was prompted by one moment of an impulse of love. In the same way Christ loved us and while we were yet sinners died for us. He took no account of the cost. God gave the finest, the best, the highest and the noblest in heaven for us. He gave up His one and only Son, who was willing to give Himself in a complete and perfect sacrifice for us. The scriptures tell us that “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” He took the disease of sin upon himself. What a costly price was paid for a lost world. **But salvation has come to us because**

**C. A PROVISION WAS MADE FOR A LOST WORLD. John 3:14-17.** Jesus made this clear when He said in v. 14 “just as Moses lifted up a snake in

the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.” A direct reference is made to the lifting up of a brazen snake which Moses lifted up in the wilderness. In Numbers 21:4-9, the grumbling of the children of Israel against God and Moses brought about judgment; fiery snakes bit the people so that many died. But after the people had recognized what they had done they confessed their sin, Moses was instructed by the Lord to make a snake of brass, and placed it on a pole, and the only cure was that all who looked on it would live. And what Jesus was saying here was “just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness so that those stricken people who looked on it would be saved, so must He be lifted up on a Cross, so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. The lifting up of Jesus refers to the Cross and it becomes central to the salvation of those who are weighed down by the burden of sin, and have no hope of eternal life.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the Regan era, Vice President George Bush represented the United States at Leonid Brezhnev’s funeral. The Soviet leader died during the height of Russian atheism, and before the collapse of communism. At that funeral, Mr. Bush saw one of the most remarkable gestures by Brezhnev’s grieving widow. As the soldiers prepared to close the lid over Brezhnev’s body, his wife quickly reached out and drew the sign of the cross on his chest. It was both a courageous and desperate gesture. She stood at the epicenter, at the very heart of atheistic power yet cried out for the power of the Cross. In one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed she acknowledged, not only a belief in

Eternal life, but that Christ was only One who could provide it. In the moment of death the Cross somehow came to the foreground. The Cross is the centre of the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. As William Law, the 18th century Anglican wrote, “What message from heaven speaks louder to us, that the daily dying and departure of our fellow creatures does? Death is indeed life’s strongest reminder that we need a salvation which only comes through the provision of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. The only hope of eternal life is in the crucified risen Jesus. Jesus said it well “the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal Life.” One has said “Christ died - that is history. Christ died for us - that is Christianity. Christ died for me - that is salvation. The simple message in this message is that Christ died to save you.” Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift.”