

“You Are Valuable”
John 3:1-17
March 5, 2023

Most of us are giving people. We give gifts on birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, Valentine’s day, and other special occasions. Sometimes we give out of sense of obligation, hoping for or expecting something in return. Other times, we give purely out of love and for the joy of giving. This is the giving that best emulates God, and of all the verses in the Bible that describe the giving love of God, our Gospel lesson for today is probably the greatest and most popular description of God’s love for us. In particular, John 3:16 is a verse that I’m sure many of us know by memory. It is taught at every level of Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Christian education classes for children, teenagers, and adults. It is often quoted by pastors in sermons and we even see it printed on posters at football stadiums. Maybe you’ve even had it sent to you in some kind of email or text message with breathtaking pictures, encouraging you to send it on to others.

John 3:16 makes it abundantly clear that we are valuable to God: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...” That verse demonstrates our value to God. But an obvious question can be, “Why? Why would God consider us to be valuable?” After all, we are sinners, we always have and always will disobey God during our lifetime on this earth. In fact, Psalm 5:5 says, “God hates all who do wrong” and Ephesians 2:3 says that “we are by nature objects of God’s wrath.” Therefore, logic tells us that we should expect God to hate us, and yet, John 3:16 tells us that God did something for us that is completely unnatural. It says that He loved us so much that He gave His only Son to suffer and die for us. The Word of God never explains why He loves us or why He finds us valuable, it simply says that God is love. His love for us has nothing to do with who we are. His love is not dependent on anything we do. It is not an

emotional love; instead it is a self-determined and self-giving love that He gives us His Son, Jesus, to live, suffer, and die on a cross for us.

Love in the Word of God is a strange thing; meaning it is something that is very odd to us. Imagine if you damaged your neighbor's fence, and the man who lived in the house next to you upon seeing the damage to his fence took his son out on the street and started beating him right in front of you saying, "I'm beating my son instead of you, because even though you ruined my fence, I love you." I'm sure we would all immediately say something like, "Wait a minute. What are you doing? Stop! Don't hurt your son, he didn't do anything to your fence, I was the one who ruined it." But that's what God did to His Son for our wrongdoing. Since God considered us to be extremely valuable to Him, He willing gave up His perfect Son and allowed Him to be beaten and crucified for our sins. But again, why? Why would God do that to His perfectly obedient, loving Son? What value does He see in us that He would want us to live with Him?

Maybe if we consider the standards that we use to determine the value of something, we will see that God places a very high value on us and loves us tremendously. For example, how much it costs to make or produce an item is important in determining its value. In Genesis 1:26 we get a glimpse of God's plan for us. God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." You will notice in those words there is no hesitancy suggested in any way in the creation of human beings, even though God knew what was ahead for His Son. In other words, He knew how much it was going to cost Him, and yet, He went ahead with the project anyway. Why? Because in His eyes it was worth doing. The cost of creating and saving us was outweighed by the value God placed on having us live with Him forever. Can you imagine God thinking, "Let's see, creating human beings will involve me

having to give up my only Son if I want them to live with me here in heaven. Is it worth it? Absolutely!” Now that’s amazing when you think about it. Would any of us give up our child for another person? No, not a chance. Imagine giving up your only child for murderers, thieves, liars, cheaters, the arrogant, the lazy, the selfish, and others, just like us who fail God every day. And yet, this is exactly what God did for us. Therefore, God’s willingness to give up His only Son certainly shows that we have great value to God.

The second item that we usually consider in the value of something is the actual purchase price that was paid. Some people will pay thousands of dollars for a painting of the mountains. Some will pay hundreds of dollars for the latest electronic gadget. Others will pay a lot of money for the most popular toy of the season. The point is, to the degree that something has value to you, you will pay for it.

How much God paid for us says a lot about how much He values us. In heaven, gold and jewels have little value. In fact, the Bible says we will walk on streets paved with gold. So what is valuable in heaven? If heaven had a vault to protect its most valuable property, what would be kept in it? Not silver or gold or any object of this world. Heaven’s vault would contain just one thing: the person of Jesus, God’s only Son. And yet, God spared no expense in purchasing us. He gladly and willingly emptied His vault of His most valuable possession so that we might be His prized possession. When we consider the purchase price that God paid, the death of Jesus on a cross, then we have to know that we are of great value to God.

The third item that is often involved in determining the value of something is the amount of effort someone is willing to expend to obtain it. Just think about some of the things people will do in order to appear on TV for the chance to win a lot of money. Some will sing and allow themselves to be critiqued and criticized by judges. Some will race with others across the

country or live out in the woods with almost nothing. How far would you go? The amount of effort we are willing to make to get something is a clear indicator of its value to us. And throughout the Bible, God demonstrates that He was willing to go the utmost distance for each one of us. I'm sure we all find it amazing to see some of the outrageous things people will do just to get on TV. But the most outrageous thing ever done by or to anyone to win a prize is when God laid on His perfect Son all of our sins and allowed Him to be killed on a cross so we could live. Now that is love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" clearly demonstrates that when you truly love someone you will give to them and you will want to give to them your very best.

Giving proves the sincerity of our love and in many ways we are very good at giving. The parent who sits up all night caring for a sick child does not call it a hardship or a sacrifice, they call it love. The husband who stays with an ailing wife as her health continues to decline does not call it a sacrifice, but an honor and a privilege to care for her and love her. The wife who gives and gives and gives, so her husband can accomplish a lifelong dream does not call it a sacrifice, she calls it love. Jesus was the ultimate giver. He gave His life to save us and the beauty of it all is that we don't owe Him anything for it. That's why He calls life with Him a gift.

Jesus summed up the entire Bible one day when He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself." That's what Jesus did every day of His life, and when it came to saving us, Jesus gave everything He had. He took a risk that God the Father would accept His loving sacrifice on the cross as payment for our sins. And that sacrifice, that investment, paid great spiritual dividends as God raised Jesus from the dead, showing us that He accepted His Son's sacrifice so we could live. God has given us our time, abilities, and finances; so how can we out of love for Him, not want to give Him our very

best. Following God involves a risk, our lives are not our own and only God knows the future, but when we trust Him with what He has given to us, we will be blessed.