

S.N. Dec 13, 91

"THIS IS OUR FAITH"

John 3:16

I once heard about a homeless boy who drifted into a certain town and found his acquaintances in the riff-raff of the community.

A convert of a mission passed -- one who had been genuinely reclaimed -- saw the lad and recognized him as a stranger in the area. Not wanting the boy to fall into harmful habits, the man directed him to the mission where he had found new life.

"Just tell the people - John 3:16 - when they come to the door," he advised.

The lad went and found understanding and compassion. This was expressed by a tub of warm water, a plate filled with food, and a bed for the night. Too, a generous portion of love attended these practical ministries.

The (following) day, as he journeyed looking for a job, he met some friends of the day before. This time it was his turn to be a sharer.

(Everything is different) because of John 3:16, he said.

We heard that man tell you those words yesterday, was the response. ("What does it mean?")

"Well you know," he answered, "I'm not quite sure what it means. But it makes a dirty person clean, and a hungry person full, and a tired person strong."

Martin Luther: "The Gospel in miniature".

Great Love - Gift - inclusion - requirement - destiny.

I. A GREAT LOVE

"God so loved."

As important as our love is - it is not the Good News.

I John 4:10 - "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

Nicodemus - qualified in religious beliefs and observances yet he missed the Gospel.

So he came by night, soul-seeking, heart hungry.

A difference in his life and that of Jesus. Jesus spoke to him about God's love for him and the world.

Same truth today - "God loves you." That is good news.

Example - marriage - if your wife greets you with ("marriage is love") that does not help the mercury in your heart. But when she says "I love you," the mercury in your heart thermometer does a rapid rise.

God loves you - great marvelous tidings.

II. A GREAT GIFT

God so loved (that he gave")

Salvation does not depend upon the effort we exert but the gift we receive.

Redemption itself must come to us not on the basis that we achieve but which we accept.

A man offered his friend a present. The friend was reluctant to take it.

The man said, "Keep in mind, that it is just as Christian to accept a gift as it is to give one."

The basic of Christianity begins at this point.

Fosdick, once said, "mountain top moments has come to him in proportion to hospitality shown."

God so loved that he gave.

Many things I can do with this gift -- I can nurture it, share it - but first I must take it.

III. A GREAT INCLUSION

"That whosoever."

Matt. 13:47 - Jesus said "the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind."

This means everybody - this is what Jesus was saying "God so loved the world!"
Not Jews, etc.

Story of a woman in Scotland. She came to the altar when the Lord's Supper was being served. It had been so long since she had been in her church and she had known years of heartbreak. Nevertheless, she knelt with others when the invitation was given.

As she reached out for the bread and the cup, perhaps her soiled hands and stained life whispered to her to draw back.

Her minister sensed her feelings and her need -- take it, dear sister, he whispered tenderly. ("Take it, it's for sinners.")

John 6:37 - "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Blessed hope - anybody can come and the gracious Savior will receive them.

IV. A GREAT REQUIREMENT

("Believeth".)

What did Jesus mean when he spoke of belief?

We think of mental perception.

Jesus was speaking of the concentration of the heart. God influences the heart.

Nicodemus - God made an impact on his mind. Christ wanted him to share his faith in the daytime.

Jesus told the demon possessed sons - father, "anything is possible if you have faith. Give your heart in confidence and it will be healed."

Wallace Chappell was in an evening service. As the last hymn was being sung, he walked to the seat of a friend and said, "Guy, you and I have spoken about this matter of being Christian many times. Don't you think you're ready to act on it?" His answer surprised me, Chappell said. "I hear so many people say so many different things -- what did Jesus really mean when he said, "You must be born again?"

Not his answer, "Guy, when I come home at night, I hold out my arms to receive my little girl. She doesn't fight or resist me. She simply rests her weight in her father's arms. That I think is the new birth. Will you rest your weight in the Master's arms. And he did!

V. A GREAT DESTINY

"Should not perish but have everlasting life."

Jesus said to broken-hearted Martha, after the death of her brother - "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

He said to the dying thief "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

This means when life ends here it begins somewhere else - with Christ.

Great love, gift inclusion requirement - Betty

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Shall never die.

John 17:3 - "This is life eternal, that they might know thee - the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Eternity is (two) things:

1 A life that never ends.

2 A love that never fails.

Dr. George W. Truett's grandfather was a glorious old country preacher in the mountains of North Carolina. When the Doctor said to him, "Your hour has come, Brother Kimsey, you are down to the hour of death."

He said, "Call the neighbors in as quickly as you can."

He wanted to preach to them once more; and the grand old man, with his latest breath, preached Jesus and his love to his neighbors.

How glorious to go like that.

The Charles Kingsleys had a radiant marriage. Here is the epitath he composed:

"we loved, we love, we shall love."

What a Gospel!