

## John 3:16

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

### God Makes His Will Our Will

#### I.

Remember, there is a lot to unpack in the gospel in a nutshell. We skim over the passage so quickly because we know it so well, but there is more than meets the eye, especially if we just take a little time to contemplate all this short passage has to say.

To recap: “For.” The first word of the passage looks back on what came in the first 15 verses in John chapter 3. In fact, you could look back further and find that the little word “for” really looks back on everything God told his people in the past.

The second word of the passage is “God.” God is the One who requires perfection of people, but God is also the God of full and faithful love.

“So loved.” The God of full and faithful love is the God who made possible our redemption because he had great love.

And who was that love for? It was for “the world.” God’s plan was put in place to cover the sins of every human being, not just a select few.

“That he gave.” God started by promising his Son to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He spoke that promise to Satan, informing the devil that he and his supposed power would be crushed by the Savior. The promises were repeated and expanded on throughout the Old Testament. The Advent season sees us carefully revisiting those promises as we wait again to celebrate the Savior’s birth.

“His only-begotten Son.” God’s one and only Son, his only-begotten Son, begotten of the Father from all eternity, is the One that came into the world at Christmas time to be our Savior.

There. That brings us to today’s group of words in the gospel in a nutshell.

#### II.

“Whoever believes in him shall not perish” (John 3:16, EHV).

In the theme slide you saw that today’s sermon title is “God makes his will our own.”

What is our will at this time of year? Do we want the perfect gift for every person on our list—without maxing out our credit card in the process, that is. What is our prayer? Do we plead with God that we will be able to get everything in place in time? Do we pray that all the loved ones and family and friends who gather for all these Christmas and New Year’s get together will all cooperate and get along for just one night? Too often the last thing we think about is whether we believe in him or if our friends believe in him or if any of our loved ones are perishing.

Sadly, *our* will often leaves much to be desired at this time of year.

#### III.

What about *God’s* will? What do we do when God’s will is ignored and flaunted? Do we separate ourselves so that we also do not perish and get drawn into it all? How do we “believe in him” and still live in the world—especially at Christmas?

Paul says to the Romans: “Put away the deeds of darkness and put on the weapons of light” (Romans 13:12, EHV). That’s not always the easiest thing to do—there are no simple

answers for your life or for mine to put aside all the deeds of darkness and to take up the weapons of life. Still, God's Word for each of us is clear. James explains what it is: "To keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27, EHV).

The battle to keep yourself unstained by the world will take place again and again in your life. Perhaps at one time you went along with the flow, but the next time you vow it will be different.

Of course, every one of us will fail—over and over again. But we will not be the same. Show yourself to be a forgiven sinner, whose will has been subjugated to God's will. God makes his will our will. Others will notice. We pray that they will "believe in him and not perish."

#### IV.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish" (John 3:16, EHV).

God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son. That's what tonight is all about. The little, seemingly helpless, baby in the manger is God's gift to you—to the world. That little baby is the greatest gift of all—not wrapped in paper with a pretty bow and shiny ribbon, but in swaddling clothes. That little baby, not placed under a tree, but in a manger, *that* little baby is the greatest gift you will ever be given.

No matter what you unwrap tonight or tomorrow morning, it will not compare. That little baby did for you what no one else could do—he restored your relationship with God. He willingly went from lying in that manger to hanging on a cross where he paid the penalty your sins and mine deserve. That baby whose birth we celebrate took our place and paid our price so that God is now able to say: "I forgive you. I no longer hold your sins against you."

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish" (John 3:16, EHV). God so loved the world. God so loved *you*! Believe in him, because there is no need that *any* should perish. That little baby paid for all. A blessed Christmas to you in 2019. Amen.