

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD



**GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT YOU GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON
SO THAT ALL THAT BELIEVE IN HIM WOULD HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.**

Scripture:

Psalm 103:1-13

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. ²Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits — ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ⁶The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. ⁷He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. ⁸The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger for ever. ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us. ¹³As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.

Romans 5:12-21

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— ¹³sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.



GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

My barrel of sermons was accidentally destroyed before we retired to Santa Rosa. So when Dr. Cushman gives me the opportunity to preach, I must prepare a new sermon. Because this is my last one, I want it to be the most important theme.

I formerly spoke to you about the need for Christian passion, the privilege of sharing the Gospel, the difficulties of loving, and the nature of Jesus Christ.

GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU AND ME

Today, I turn to the major theme of our faith: not how we love each other or God, but God's love for His world, you and me. That love is unbelievably beneficial and sacrificial. It is the most important Word that I or anyone can contemplate.

The other night I had dinner with my son and his wife in Occidental. After dinner, we stood on his porch and watched with awe the glistening stars.

Just think: God so loved the world that He singled out this pristinely beautiful, verdant, vibrant and bountiful earth in the whole barren galaxy as a gift to you and me.

As no other planet that we know of, it has glaciers, oceans, lakes and rivers, mountains and valleys, and oxygen to breathe.

The following morning, I opened the shades and saw two families of goldfinches at my bird feeder. Then a blue jay showed up with his feathers of blue, and then a robin with his red breast. What a beautiful sight. But all around me are the fragrant roses or fir trees, the morning song or coo from the doves, each so like and yet so different than the others. What a life; what beauty. What an earth God gave to me and to you. I thank God for His manifold gifts to enhance our lives.

GOD GIVES US DEPENDABLE LAWS

How marvelous that the tides keep bringing the water in to the beach like my heart keeps pulsing through my body. How wonderful that when I throw a ball up into the air it will come down. In fact I've learned that a lot of things that go up come down – like Wall Street. My grandfather used to promise a dollar to any grandchild that could FALL UP the stairs. God so loved the world that He gave us dependable laws. Every year I can depend on another Christmas, another Easter, another birthday ... perhaps. Every day, God hides the sun for me to sleep and awakens me for a new day when it arises again. I guess there are all kinds of explanations for that. I think it's God.

Fruits and vegetables ripen, become edible, then wither and produce seed. The seed hits the ground and then soon a plant like that which produced the seed bursts into life.

I look in the mirror and see my hair start to whiten then start to disappear. My teeth are disappearing, too, and so does my strength. My life is going to disappear – into the earth. But I look at my four great-grandsons and know that God is forging the way to a whole new generation of the Anderson clan to come. Thank God for His unmatched gift of life and all that we have inherited in this earth. We could spend every minute of every day praising God for the multitude of blessings He bestows on you and me.

AND GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE US YOU AND YOU AND YOU.

You educators, teachers, professors, mothers and fathers: Can you count the people who are molding our world that you have taught? Imagine how they are spread around the earth, living out, teaching others the valuable truths that you taught them. Imagine the good you are still spreading. Thank God He gave us you.

You doctors, surgeons, nurses, veterinarians: Can you measure the healing you

gave the sick, the lives you saved, the advice you shared? Thank God He gave us you.

You ministers and missionaries: Think of the people that you have brought to the foot of the cross. Think of the despairing people that you gave hope and light. Ah, thank God for you.

You artists, painters, musicians, poets: How many have you turned from sadness to joy? How many people have you given hope to? And with music like we just heard, you don't need sermons. What a wonderful thing it is that you have lifted people from despair to hope with your paintings or verse or voice or organ. Thank God for you!

You lawyers, newsmen, business men, leaders of industry: Your Christian faith shaped your careers and that of others, making your service to our world a Christian witness to our secular society. Thank God for you.

You construction workers, masons, mechanics, carpenters, welders: Look what you have done. Look what you have built. Look how you have repaired. Look at what you have given to life. Thank God He gave us you.

LOVE IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

But the most wonderful thing that marks each one of you is your love that is so evident here, that draws us into a community of faith. It is a love that is extended to the sick in your prayers and to those who face death of a loved one. Just ask Jonathan Steele or Dan O'Brien or Diane Brown or Ba Hoff or Anita Pinney or me how much your embrace has meant. Oh, thank God for you.

In this last Newsweek magazine, there is an article by an author who says that he sees hate consuming America. In fact, the more I read the article I see that he thinks that hate is destroying America. But you have sent love into the world and love, like light to the darkness, will overcome hate every time. In that love that you send out is the hope of the world, and even though it may look like hate

takes over, your love will never, never be vanquished. Thank God for you.

HAITI

After Haiti's earthquake, my great-grandson asked me why God did this to Haiti. I replied that God did not do that; it was an adjustment of the earth and when that happened it was a terrible thing for the people of Haiti. But this I want you to notice about Haiti: Look how the love of people from all over the world descended on Haiti. That was God there, not destroying, but loving, caring, helping. Thank God for you.

AND GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE US HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON: JESUS CHRIST.

What would we do without Jesus? It is Jesus that forgave your sins and mine. It is Jesus that molded your life and mine. It is Jesus that made you mold other lives and sent them out into the world and gave hope to the world.

When Jesus came into this world, the mystery about God, the mist that covered God was gone. To the Hebrew, God was a God of judgment. The Hebrews knew what they had done, they knew that they needed to be punished, and God was there punishing them. And then came His Son, revealing that God's punishment is over. God is now showing His love, a love that reached out to all mankind, a love like no other love. Just think of it – with the nails in His hands and nails in His feet, Jesus loved so much that He forgot His own pain and reached out to a criminal on another cross. It didn't matter whether that criminal was good or bad, Christ gave him love.

It doesn't matter what a person's sexual orientation is, or where he comes from, what color his skin is, Jesus shows us that God loves us all.

And in Jesus' last words to His apostles, He said He would never leave us.

ALL I COULD DO WAS PRAY

In 2003, I had an aneurism of my aorta. I had told my doctors, "I never want any kind of morphine." But the operation was so long that they gave me morphine anyway. I don't know if it was the morphine or I really experienced the death experience. It was horrible; I'll never forget that awful smell when I was walking in mire, and the clamor was threatening my eardrums, and I didn't dare to open up my eyes the scene was so bad.

I didn't know what to do except pray. So I said, "Oh God, I'll bear it if You'll stay with me." All of a sudden, I was transported to a different world. I was walking down the street with a lot of other people, hastening to a golden gate – yes, a golden gate, and on the other side was a bright, bright light. As I got to the gate, I woke up. I don't think God wanted me to see what was on the other side. I wouldn't have been able to describe it to you, but someday, someday I'm going to walk through that gate. I know that on the other side is God and my Lord, and that's enough for me – and for you and you and you.

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NEVER PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE. GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO CONDEMN THE WORLD BUT HE SENT HIS SON TO SAVE IT.

Let us pray. Oh God, how can we do anything else but thank You? We are so grateful for this life that You have given us, for the opportunities of this life. We thank You for each other and for how You have touched so many lives and given hope to the world. Thank you mostly for Your Son, Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, His resurrection and the hope that He has put in the heart of each of us. Now we pray as He taught us to pray: (The Lord's Prayer.) Amen.



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