

14.8.22 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0:01] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning and those who are visiting I see one or two visitors with us it's good to have you and if you're able to stay behind there's tea and coffee here at the end of the service and you'd be most welcome to take that.

Come on, come on. The intimations have been on the screen before the service began so I'm going to be here in the course of the week as usual there's various things to note.

We have the ladies Bible study I think on Monday and Thursday night. Is that resumed? I'm looking around for it. I think it probably has.

Pardon? It's resumed so ladies can note that and on Tuesday we have the little fishes in the morning from 10 to 12 where the babies and the mums and dads can meet and then we have Road to Recovery in the evening.

So please note these ministries and pray for these ministries as they continue. The prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past seven to which you're all encouraged to come and the evening service is tonight at six.

[1:17] We continue in the life of Abraham and next Sunday the services will God willing be taken by myself in the morning and evening. Just to say as well a word of thanks.

We had a holiday club on Thursday and Friday and I think the children enjoyed the holiday club. We had a good number through I think it was over 50 children we had over the course of the couple of days.

46 I can't remember 50 kids went through the church over the two days and so we're thankful to God for those who came. Thank you to those who helped some whom were up front and we could see some who were behind the scenes and many who would have prayed for the work.

So thank you to all who were involved in the holiday club. And one further intimation is just to say most of you will have heard but good news.

The arrival of Nancy Kate Morrison. Ian and Mackenzie. We were praying for Mackenzie and the child for a lot of months now and on Saturday morning in the early hours Nancy Kate arrived.

[2:28] So we don't have a picture today but we will hopefully see her soon and I expect they'll be watching online. So we're thankful to God for the safe arrival of Nancy Kate and Mackenzie is doing fine.

Ian's just about coping. So we thank God for his goodness to them and to us as a congregation with all these babies.

So many girls. I think this is the 10th girl in a row in Harris. So we're probably going to have a high IQ in Harris in future years but the prospects for the football team look very grim.

So we're thankful to God for his goodness. We're going to begin now this time of worship and we sing to God's praise from Psalm 34.

Psalm 34 verses 1 to verse 9. God will I bless all times. His praise my mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God.

[3:28] The meek shall hear with joyfulness. We'll stand to sing to God's praise. God will I bless all times.

God will I bless. All times is raised. My mouth shall still express.

My soul shall boast in God the meek, shall hear with joyfulness.

Extol the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together.

I sought the Lord, He heard and did me from all fears deliver.

[4:42] They looked to Him and the eyes did wear, not shame it wear their faces.

This poor mankind got hurt and sick, hid from all His distresses.

The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasses.

All those about that do in fear and then deliver it.

O taste and see that God is good, who trust in Him is blessed.

[6 : 08] Fear God is saved, none that in fear shall be with want of rest.

Let's come to God in prayer now. Let's bow our heads and our hearts and pray together. Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for this, Your day.

And we thank You once more that You have brought us into this place, the house of God. And we recognize that this is the house of God, not because of the architecture of the building.

We recognize that this is the house of the building. We recognize that this is not the house of God because of any furniture or any design touches that there are within the structure.

But we thank You that this is the house of the building. But we thank You that this is the house of God because You promise that You will draw near to Your people when they seek to draw near to You.

[7 : 27] We thank You that we thank You that we thank You. We thank You that we have the promise that we so often turn to, that where two or three meet together in the name of Jesus, You will be in our midst in the power of the Holy Spirit and that to bless.

And we thank You that you give to those who trust You. And we pray that we would know the reality of what we've sang.

And we pray that we would know the reality in our hearts and our experience of what the children memorized this week in the verse. So taste and see that God is good.

Who trusts in Him is blessed. So we ask, Lord, that as we bow in Your presence, that we would, in the course of this hour, see more and more of the wonder of Your goodness and Your grace towards us.

Whenever we come into Your presence, we come into the presence of the God who is to be feared in that sense of Your holiness. Not that we are to fear and be driven away from You.

[8 : 46] But You are the God who is holy. So we cannot rush into Your presence. We cannot come into Your presence in our name, pleading our own merits. But we thank You that we can come prayerfully and that we can come reverently because we come in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Savior.

We are those who are sinners. In our hearts, we sin. Through our words and our thoughts and our actions and through our inaction, we sin.

But we thank You that Jesus came into this world to be the Savior of sinners. And we thank You that we have the promise that when we trust in Him, when we look to the One who was lifted up for us on the cross, when we believe in Him, confessing our sin, we thank You for the promise that our sins will be cleansed.

That as far as the East is from the West so far, will our sins be taken away from us because Jesus takes them into Himself on the cross. He who knew no sin became sin.

He took the curse of our sin into His body on the tree. So that as we believe in Him, we are cleansed and we are made righteous. So help us, we pray.

[10 : 18] As we think through these things, even in the wonder of the verse that we'll study today, help us to see Your goodness and Your grace, Your love for us, Your faithfulness.

Enable us to bow in worship, to rejoice in our hearts at who You are and who we are able to be because of Jesus. We are called children of God who come in prayer saying, Our Father, and we thank You that we can carry all our fears and our sins and our griefs.

And all the small things as well that trouble us to You in prayer. Knowing that You hear us and that You help us. We thank You, Lord, for answered prayer.

And today, as we think about Mackenzie and Ian and little Nancy, Kate, we ask, Lord, for Your blessing upon them. And we thank You, Lord, that You have heard our prayers for them.

That this wee one has been brought into the world safely. And the Mackenzie is safe also, having gone through the delivery.

[11 : 30] We pray that as they take time in hospital just now, that You would draw near to them.

And we pray that as that wee one grows up, she would grow up to know You and trust You and to walk with You.

And for all the wee ones who are here and some absent today as well, we continue to commit them to You, asking that they would remember that they would trust their Creator in the days of their youth.

Lord, that they would know You. And we pray for all the children who came through the church in the last few days in the holiday club. We thank You for the fun that we had. We thank You for the safety that there was, that there was no injuries or any difficulty of that nature. But we pray that the seed that was sown, that the gospel message that was heard, in the groups and in the talks, that it would be planted deep in the hearts of these young ones. And that they too would grow up to be close to Jesus. We remember the words of Jesus who said to the disciples, Let the children come to Me. Do not forbid them. [12:37] Do not hold them back. But bring them to Me. And so we pray for them. And bring them to You in prayer today. And help us to be mindful of them each day.

We pray not only for those who are young. We pray for those who are older. For those who may feel the weight of the years. We pray for those who may be struggling with infirmity and illness. And we commit them to You. Those whose desire would be to be present in Your house, but who are unable to be. We ask that You would bless them. And as some listen in and watch just now, that they too would know that You are God and that You are close to them. We pray for those who are recovering this week after having gone through procedures and surgeries. We ask for Your hand of healing to be upon them. We pray for others who await procedures and surgeries. And await with anxiety the test results that may be notified and be coming through.

[13:43] We ask, Lord, that they and we would cast all our cares and anxieties upon You, knowing that You care for us. So hear our prayers and be near to us.

We pray for those who grieve. Those who grieve in this community. For loved ones lost in the past weeks and months and years. We pray for those in Sky. As we reflect on the horror of what happened there and in Westeros this week. For all the families affected there, we bring them to You. And for others in the far side of the sea. As we see less on our screens now about Ukraine and places where there is warfare. We continue, Lord, to pray that where there is this suffering and where there is death, where there is grieving, that Your comfort may be known. We thank You that there are people that we have never met and never may meet.

But whom we can bring to You in prayer. Even in these moments. So hear our prayers. Take away our sin. Lead us and guide us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[14:54] For we ask these things in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please? I'll tell you what I'm going to do.

Do you want to just... I'm going to take this over here. Have a second. I won't crush you. You're always hiding behind that.

I can't see you. Come on, Rudy. Out from behind that corner. Did you have a good week at the holiday club? Yeah. Who can remember the memory verse? Can anyone see it? Let's hear it together.

To taste and see the love of the Lord. Yes, is it. Come on. Let's hear that again. I think we can just sing it.

Do you want to sing it? Josh. I know this is not practiced anything. But do you want to run over to the piano just now? There we go.

[16:06] Taste and see that the Lord is good. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Psalm 34, 34 per se. Excellent.

Well done. Oh, there you go. So let's remember that. And taste and see that God is good. Well, I'm going to show you a video this week. Two videos, in fact.

And hopefully they're working. So if you put your eyes up towards the screen. Let's see if we can recognize somebody on the screen. Oh, man.

Oh, man. Look at that.

[17:25] Beautiful. Well, I've got the second clip.

The last ball was near four minutes. Just look down on it. Watch if he's not quite so nervous now. There he is.

multifaceted ball. you can hear the crowds there singing but Callum's leading them in a wee dance so Callum did you enjoy did you enjoy that last week were you a bit nervous a wee bit not much was it good to be on the pitch where the action was rather than sitting way back in the stands you know miles away from all the players did you speak to the players some of them yeah and you got a

kick of the ball so was it more fun to be on the pitch with everybody than sitting way at the back of the stand do you think on the pitch absolutely and one more question Callum what was this trip you had on again Ross County now see when they gave you that strip when you had to go onto the pitch were you a bit embarrassed about having to wear the strip did you say to them oh not a Ross County strip can I just put on a jumper instead please did you say that or were you quite proud to wear the strip

Ross County shirts were too big for me the Ross County shirts they were too big for you but were you pleased to be wearing them absolutely weren't you that's your team isn't it so you're not embarrassed to wear the colours your team you're proud to go out there with the colours on and be with the players and kick the ball and you know what's the word you know do they conduct the choir in the stands so they're singing all the songs you're you were enjoying that not embarrassed at all now today once you go to Sunday school the older ones we're going to be looking at a very famous passage in the Bible very well known passage in the Bible John chapter 3 and in John chapter 3 there's a man and his name is Nicodemus now what do you know about Nicodemus do you know anything about Nicodemus do you remember Michael pardon do you get him well he went to see Jesus but did he go at day or did he go at night he went at night time because he didn't want anyone to know that he was interested in Jesus see he'd been watching Jesus and he'd been listening to Jesus and he was really interested in Jesus and he was being drawn to Jesus but he was a he was a boss Pharisee and Pharisees didn't like Jesus and so Nicodemus wanted to know more but he didn't want anyone to see him going to be with Jesus and so he went out at night and he he met Jesus at night and Jesus said to him

Nicodemus you might know a lot of the Bible and you might be an expert in all the things about God but Nicodemus you need to be born again do you know what that means what does it mean to be born again Aileen well does it mean getting baptized you'd be baptized after you were born again in the New Testament times when people after they were born again they were baptized but what does it mean to actually be born again do you think Lois means to put your trust in Jesus and so Jesus said to Nicodemus you know all this stuff but you don't know me so Nicodemus you need to come to know me and you know did Nicodemus ever come to know Jesus yeah really didn't he he did but you know even after he came to trust in Jesus the Bible describes him for a while as a secret believer he believed but he didn't want anyone to know and what I want to say to you today boys and girls is don't be like

[22 : 22] Nicodemus he was too embarrassed to be seen with Jesus be like Callum Price who wasn't embarrassed to be on the pitch he wasn't embarrassed to say I belong to Ross County I'm going out there I'm proud to belong to Ross County for the day don't be embarrassed to say I'm on Jesus team he's my saviour he's my friend he's my Lord and I'm trusting in him so let's pray about that now will we Lord God we thank you for your word and we thank you for all these characters that we see in the Bible that teach us the way that we are to be and we we thank you Lord Jesus that our being saved is not about how much we know but it's about who we know we thank you that our being saved is about putting our trust in Jesus who took our sins away when he went to the cross for us so that we could have everlasting life we thank you that Nicodemus he did believe eventually and even though he was shy even though he was embarrassed we thank you that eventually he came out and he said

I'm not ashamed to say that Jesus is my redeemer and we pray that you would help us to be those who are not ashamed of you Lord Jesus help us to trust you and help us whether we're in school in the playground whether we're at work if we're a bit older whether we're in our families with friends or whatever help us we pray not to be ashamed of Jesus but to say to all those around us that we belong to him so hear our prayers give us courage we pray and we ask this in Jesus name Amen We're going to sing again and we're going to sing a hymn that we sang for the first time last Sunday night so quite a few are not out on Sunday nights and you might not have heard it but the hymn is reasonably well known it was on the Facebook page as well what gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer so we'll stand to sing in just a moment to God's praise next time what gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer there is no more for heaven now to give he is my joy my righteousness and freedom my steadfast love my deep and manless peace to this I hold my hope is only Jesus for my life is lowly bound to his oh how strange and divine

I can save all it's mine yet not I but through Christ in me I am not forsaken for by my side the Savior he will stay I labor on in weakness and rejoicing for in my need for in my need his power is to sway

to this I hold my shepherd will defend me through the deepest body he will lead all the night has been won and I shall overcome yet not I but through Christ in me no things
I dread I know I am forgiven the future sure the price it has been made for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon and he was raised to overthrow the grave to this I hold my sin has been defeated Jesus now and ever is my free oh the chains are released I can save I am free yet not I but through Christ in me with every breath I long to follow Jesus for he has said that he will bring me home and day by day

I know he will renew me until I stand with joy before the throne to this I hold my hope is only Jesus all all the glory ever more to him when the race is complete still my lips shall repeat yet not I but through Christ in me will Okay, boys and girls, there's a Sunday school for the primary school children.

[28 : 49] And we can turn now in our Bibles to John chapter 3.

And we'll read from verse 1 to verse 16. John chapter 3, I'm reading at verse 1.

This is God's word. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.

In reply, Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. How can a man be born when he is old? Nicodemus asked.

Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born. Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

[30 : 05] Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.

So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. How can this be, Nicodemus asked. You are Israel's teacher, said Jesus, and you do not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know and we testify of what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe. How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 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.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing again now to God's praise from Psalm 34 once more, verses 10 and 11.

[31 : 26] Two stanzas. The lion's young may hungry be, and they may lack their food, but they that truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good. O children, hither do ye come, and unto me give ear, as shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should fear.

These two verses of Psalm 34, where we sing in Gaelic, and we remain seated to sing in Gaelic.

Amen. Wow, SONG PLAYS

SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS

SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS

If you could turn back please now to John chapter 3. SONG PLAYS And let's pray as we open God's word again.

[35 : 55] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, preserved through the ages in spite of so many attempts to eradicate it.

We thank you that your word is living and active and sharper than the two-edged sword. We thank you that your word gives us direction.

And that everything points to Jesus, who is the Savior.

We pray for the congregations.

Well, this week, as with every other week, we open up the Bible. I say at this point, please, will you pick up your Bibles again and open up your Bibles.

[38 : 01] We don't go from week to week, from one book to another. We come every week, we come every book, and we come every book.

If you open the Bible, if you open the Bible, you'll see it's made up of 66 smaller books. There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible.

There are over three quarters of a million words. There are 783,137 words in the King James Version.

The Bible was compiled over a period of about 2,000 years, 40 authors, three continents. And yet, this book was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

That's why there's such unity in the Bible. That's why it all connects, where we see threads that begin in Genesis and take us all the way through the prophets and through the Gospels and take us into Revelation.

[39 : 09] This is all connected. This is all inspired by the one Holy Spirit. This is the Word of God. But sometimes it's hard to know where to start to read the Bible.

And I know that there are people who are perhaps here and some who listen at a safe distance, who don't read the Bible, who've never read the Bible, and who wonder, as they pick up the book, where on earth do I start?

Do we start with Genesis at the beginning? Do we start with the Psalms and go through the Psalms? Do we go directly for the Gospels?

Do we go directly to Revelation, as I know some have? It's hard to know sometimes where to start reading the Bible. And there's lots of helps with that.

If you're one of these people, feel free to come and speak to me. But what I want to think about today is, if we only had 25 minutes to understand the heart of the message of the Bible, if there was only one verse that we were able to go to, to try to get to the core of the Gospel message, what verse would that be?

[40 : 28] And we could go various places, I know. But many people, if they only had 25 minutes to summarize the story of the Gospel, they would head to John 3.16.

And many of you know that verse by heart. Martin Luther said of this verse, John 3.16, It is the Bible in miniature.

Martin Lloyd-Jones, the great preacher of another generation, said that John 3.16 is a synopsis of theology. It's a summary of who God is.

So I want to just take a few minutes today to think about this one verse, this one verse that seems to encapsulate the whole of the Bible.

I want to do that under four headings, four words. The first word is motivation. What is the motivation behind this verse, in fact, behind the whole of the Bible?

[41 : 53] Sometimes we look at a piece of work, maybe a painting or a poem, and it has an impact on us. We're drawn into it. And as we look at this thing of beauty, whatever it is, we wonder what moved, what motivated the writer or the painter or the architect to create this piece.

And as we come to the Bible, this work of literature, which has outsold every other work of literature throughout the ages, and continues to do so.

As we look at this piece of literature where God reveals himself to us and tells us about what he has done for us, we can ask the question, with the Bible open in front of us, what is God's motivation?

Behind who he is, and behind what he does, and behind this verse, and behind this whole book.

And the answer to that question is found in the opening words of the verse, and it's love.

For God so loved. The tense that's used there, if we want to get into the grammar, is the aorist tense.

[43 : 13] It's a continuous love, that means. For God so loved. And what it means is that God loved before time began, and God loves presently, and God will always love presently, through all of time, to the end of time, and into eternity.

For God so loved. His motivation, in this verse, in this book, in his being, and everything, is love.

The Bible is a book about God's great love for us, and that's what makes it so transformative.

On Tuesday nights, you saw the notice that we have Road to Recovery. We tried to get alongside those people who struggle with addictions, of various kinds. And the man who started off Road to Recovery was a man called Stan Gowdy.

He passed away quite recently. And he told the story of how he was an alcoholic. And he, at one point in his life, had reached a new low.

And he was struggling, and he was desperate, and his wife was broken. And she was heading for hospital because of his alcohol abuse.

[44 : 38] And in that moment, when he knew himself to be so ugly on the inside and on the outside, and as he saw the effect his life was having on those who were around him, a Christian came alongside him.

At that low point, put his hand on his shoulder, and said, Stan, God loves you. That's all he said. And these words, as the Holy Spirit brought them to his heart and power, changed his life. He was overwhelmed by the fact that God would love him when there was nothing attractive in him. That would merit such love. And yet, this is God's love. The word in the Greek is that word *agape*, which is exclusively used for God's love.

I mean, we understand love that responds to something that's attractive, and we understand love that's conditional on people being kind and caring and loving towards us. It's easy to love someone who shows you kindness and shows you warmth and shows goodness to you.

[45 : 57] But God's love is not like that. God's love is not conditional on these things. It's unconditional. God did not love us because we are lovely.

God loved us because he, in his being, in his essence, he is love. Think about Abraham who became Abraham.

We began to study him last Sunday evening. There's a man, Abraham. He's living in a world that was so dark.

Abraham himself was a practicing pagan in a family of practicing pagans. He is committed to worshipping other gods. There's nothing in his favour, and yet God looks down on this man and he decides to reach out to him.

God determined to enter into a covenant relationship with Abraham. Why?

[47 : 03] Because he loved him. Why? Because God is love. Or think about Saul, the persecutor, who became Paul the apostle.

We see him in Acts so full of zeal and hatred against Jesus. He devotes his life to hunting down and imprisoning and even killing Christians, and yet one day on that Damascus road, God reaches out to him and knocks him off his feet and seeks him and saves him.

Why? Because of God's love, which is beyond our understanding.

And today, I think the first application here is that God wants you. He wants me. He wants us to know that he loves us.

No matter who we are, no matter what we may have done in the past that haunts us, no matter what mess we may be in in the present, no matter what we fear in terms of the future, God loves us.

[48 : 41] And he has ordered our lives so that we will be in this place, on this day, at this time, so that he would be enabled to tell us, or maybe tell us again and again and again, that he loves us.

And he wants us to come to him. Or maybe he wants us to come back to him, if we're far away. So the motivation behind this book, the motivation behind this verse, is the love of God, for God so loved.

The second word here is propitiation, which is not a word that we often use, but it's a word that gives definition to God's love.

love is a term that has become kind of meaningless. You know, we can sit down with a microwave lasagna when we're feeling really hungry and say, oh, I love that.

But that degree of love is nothing compared to the love that we have surely for our wives. There are levels of love, so we need to give definition to this love that God speaks of.

[50 : 01] We need to understand the depths of God's love and the lengths that he would go to for his people whom he loves. So what does the word propitiation mean? Well, we'll get there in a second, but let's first of all just step through the verse and ask the question, who did God love?

And we have the answer there as we step through the verse, for God so loved the world. So zoom in for a moment on that term the world, because that's a term that has to be unpacked just a little. Sometimes when we talk about the world, we talk about the way of the world. For example, you go off to the mainland, your car's broken down, you have to buy a new car.

So you search through the ads, you go to some garage, and you speak to some salesman and he assures you this is a car with low miles, it's never had an accident, it's been well cared for, it's had one lady owner, etc, etc, and you buy the car in good faith, then you get home, and before you're on the ferry it's clunking and it's clunking and it's not running right, and when you investigate a little you can see this car has been through the wars, this car is not what it was sold to you as, and when you complain to your friend they say well you know it's just the way of the world, what do you expect

from a second hand car salesman, they're not all bad, they've got one or two in the building, or maybe in the office, to give another example, you've done a whole lot of work, you've given yourself to a huge exercise, you've put so much energy and effort into some task, and at the last second, somebody who's done next to nothing swoops in, takes all the credit, and you're left kind of looking like you did nothing, and you feel annoyed, but when you share it with someone they'll say well that's just the way of the world, and that's the way that

John uses this term world when he's speaking about it in this verse, one of the commentators defines this word world as a world system that is opposed to God, another commentator says it represents mankind alienated from God, so when John, when Jesus records this conversation, when John records this conversation, when Jesus says for God so loved the world, he's speaking about rebels against God, for God so loved rebels who were against him, for God so loved sinners, and we have to ask the question, how can that be possible?

[53 : 08] Take in another verse, Habakkuk 1.13, which focuses on the holiness of God, it says, thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity, cannot look upon sin, love those who are in this rebellious world, and who are full of sin?

It's a mystery, and that mystery is unlocked through this word propitiation. Jesus is the propitiation for our sins.

John says it again in 1 John 2.2, he says, he, Jesus, is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but for the sins of the whole world.

So what does the word mean? Well, it's a legal term, and it means that Jesus took the punishment, the legal punishment. It means that Jesus, he paid the wages of our sin.

sin. Our sin is an offense against God. God in his holiness is rightly angry at our sin. And because God is just, he can't just make our sin disappear, he can't just pretend it's not there, it has to be dealt with.

[54 : 32] And so Jesus came into this world, he became the propitiation for our sin, he stood in our place, he took the wrath of God that my sin deserved, so that that wrath that was turned on him, can be turned away from me.

And why did he do this? Because he loves us. We're back to the motivation. 1 John 4, 8 to 10, God is love.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love.

We love to hear the babies. We do. So don't stress about that. Jesus became the propitiation. He took the punishment. He stood in my place because of love. 1 John 4, God is love.

[55 : 52] In this the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And where did it happen? Because when something of such immensity is told to us, we want to know where did this happen, where a calculation works.

We want to see how it works. We want to see the workings. So where are the workings for God's great love that caused his son to become the propitiation for us?

Where did this happen? And the answer is it happened on the cross. So every week we're back to the same book and we're back to the same place.

We're back to the cross. Notice that John chapter 3 verse 14 where it says the son of man must be lifted up. That comes before John 15 and 16 where sinners can know God's love.

[57 : 16] Or the Old Testament version. Psalm 22 where we see the agonies of the cross comes before Psalm 23 where we see the blessing of salvation.

And so we keep on singing about the cross. We sang last Sunday morning I think it was till on the cross as Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied propitiation for every sin on him Jesus was laid here in the death of Christ I live.

Or here's another one here is love vast as the ocean. on the mount of crucifixion fountains open deep and wide through the floodgates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide.

Grace and love like mighty rivers poured incessant from above and heaven's peace and perfect justice propitiation kissed a guilty world in love.

Don Carson says the acquisition of eternal life has been grounded in the lifting up of the sun and that lifting up has been grounded in the love of God.

[58 : 58] So there's so much depth of love of God in so few words.

He gave his only son for God so loved the world that he gave over, he did not spare, literally, his only son to be the propitiation, to be our savior, because he loved us.

God wants you and I to see this. Do you see it? Because if you see it, God is speaking.

If you're hearing this, God is speaking. Spurgeon says, I bid you to look, I bid you to look to Christ's bleeding, to Christ's sweating drops of blood, Christ scourged, Christ nailed to the tree.

And if you believe in Christ's blood, he is the propitiation for your sins. So the motivation, the propitiation, the third thing here is the invitation.

[60 : 34] for God so loved the world, motivation, that he gave his one and only son propitiation, so that whoever believes in him, invitation.

Sometimes we get these great offers through in the post, or more likely these days in email, or you might see it advertised on TV, some amazing offer, something that you really want.

So you follow the link, you go online, you want the product, so you go to place your order. And for us, very often, everything goes fine until you put in your postcode.

And it says to us, no, no, the offer is not available, delivery is not available in your postcode area, so the invitation you could say is withdrawn. Or you might hear about some great event, a dinner party, a wedding reception, invitation, and you think this is going to be an amazing event, but the invitation never comes.

Well, John 3, 16, we could say it's not just information where we're told facts, it's not just intimations where we're given something for the sake of clarity, this is an invitation at God the Son, as he has this conversation with Nicodemus that is recorded and passed through the generations that it will be with us today, God the Son is reaching out to us in love and the power of the Holy Spirit.

[62 : 08] And this verse is an offer, and it's an offer that's better than any other offer you and I will ever receive. This is the free offer of the gospel.

This is a good news offer. This is what the scholars have called the great exchange, where Jesus offers to take our wrongs, our sins, away from us, into his body on the tree, and in exchange, he gives to us the promise that his righteousness will be transferred, it will be imputed into us.

That's the message of the gospel. Jesus lived for us, he died for us, he rose, and if we believe in him, our sin is taken away, and dealt with through him, and his righteousness, his perfection is given to us, and we receive it by faith, and so this verse is an invitation.

invitation, this verse is an invitation that comes to you. God is inviting you to be saved from sin, all your sin.

This is an invitation to be saved from death. death. This is an invitation where God is not just saving us from these horrors that keep us up at night, but he is saving us into the relationship that our souls long for, the relationship with him, man, which begins here in time, and is perfected in eternity.

[64 : 10] This is an invitation. invitation. I don't know, there's maybe someone here who's saying, but is it for me? But the answer couldn't be clearer.

The envelope is addressed to whosoever. The invitation is for the attention of the world, which means that this invitation goes out to everyone in every place at every time.

And still maybe somebody is here saying, well, it can't be for me. I'm too sinful. I'm too dark. You don't know what's going on in my mind.

You don't know what's going on in my heart. You don't know what's hidden in my past. But this is for the world. Remember the dark, rebellious, sinful, God-resisting world.

This is addressed to the world. This is for sinful, rebellious, God-rejecting sinners. Romans 5.8, if you want a backup verse, God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[65 : 21] If you're dismissing this because you think you're too bad, stop it. You're not too bad. More likely in a place like this, there are some who are dismissing this because they think they're too good.

there might be someone here just now and they're thinking, well, you know, I'm not sure I really need this. And I'm not that bad a person.

I'm better than most. You know, I try to live a good life. I read my Bible. I go to church when I can. You know, maybe this is for bad people, but I'm not sure Jesus is really speaking to me and pressing this on me. Well, think about who he spoke this first to.

It was Nicodemus. And Nicodemus was considered to be a good man. He was considered to be one of the best men around.

[66 : 26] He is described as Israel's teacher. He's one of the most religious, the most theological scholars in that place. And yet, Jesus makes clear to him that in spite of his PhD in divinity, in spite of all his portfolio of good works, in spite of all the medals that he may have for the community things that he's been involved with, he needs to be born again.

He needs to respond to this invitation to come to Jesus. So there's no one that this is too bad for, and there's no one who is too good not to need this.

So this invitation is for everyone. It's for you. It's for me. Tim Keller says no one is too bad for Jesus. A lot of people think they're too good for Jesus. but let me say respectfully what you think of you doesn't change the fact that you and I need Jesus.

So the question is will you come to him? How do we come? We come by faith. All we have to do is believe in him.

[68 : 03] Believe into literally Jesus. That takes us to the final word and it is just one minute. Salvation.

What's the promise that's given to those who respond in faith to this invitation? Well listen to what Jesus says. He says that they we shall not perish but have eternal life.

This is a message of salvation. This is a message of being saved from perishing. So is there anyone here who doesn't need this?

Well no everyone needs this. Is there anyone out there who doesn't need this? Everyone needs this.

There are lots of offers given to us for things that we don't need but we need this. because every one of us is going to die at some point.

[69 : 24] And if we die without Jesus as our saviour as our redeemer we will perish. We will be lost eternally.

does God want that? No he doesn't. 2 Peter 3 9 says that God is not willing that any should perish. Why not? Because he loves us. and he tells us that in John 3 16 the message of the Bible concentrated down into one small but powerful verse.

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.

This is the message of salvation. Jesus is the only saviour. Will you believe in him?

[70 : 56] Let's pray. heavenly father we thank you for this message of salvation distilled into one powerful verse.

We thank you father for sending your son Jesus into this world for giving him over to death so that we might have eternal life.

We thank you Lord Jesus for coming into this world knowing that you would be despised and rejected knowing that you would go to a cross to take our sin into your body on that tree so that if we believe that we could be saved.

holy spirit we thank you that you're the one who unblocks our ears and opens our eyes and wakes us from physical and spiritual sleep so that we will see and understand that this is a message that God is speaking to us.

So give us faith we pray that we might believe and be saved whilst there is time. We pray this in Jesus name Amen. We'll sing to conclude the hymn Hear His Love Vast As The Ocean I think it's the four is it the four verse version so it's four verses of this hymn let's stand to sing in just a moment.

[72 : 31] Hear His Love Vast As The Ocean Loving Kindness As The Flood When the Prince Of Life Our Ransom Shed For Us His Precious Blood Who His Love Will Not Remember Who Can Cease To Sing His Praise He He Can Never Be For God Through Our Ten Eternal Days Love For From mercy, bold of us and gracious time. Grace and love like mighty rivers poured in system from above and has peace and perfect justice kissed the guilty world in love.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us now and forevermore. Amen.