

**April 9, 2017
Saving Love
John 3:1-16**

¹Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

²**He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”**

³Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

⁴**“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”**

⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

⁶**Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.**

⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’

⁸**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.”**

⁹“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰**“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?**

¹¹Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.

¹²**I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?**

¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.

¹⁴**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,**

¹⁵that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

¹⁶**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.**

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends. Thank you for supporting me in my time away and continuing to carry on the business of the church. As much as I needed to get away I am always happy to return, for this is the place God has called me to serve and you are my family; my sisters and brothers in Christ, my nieces and nephews, my babies and my 20, 30, and 40 somethings.

Today is an important day in the life of the Christian Church. It is the beginning of Holy Week. We call today Passion Sunday or Palm Sunday as it celebrates the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowds gathered to greet Him. John records it this way:

12:13 *They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,
"Hosanna!"
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"
"Blessed is the King of Israel!"*

We know the story and we tell the story but I wonder have we considered the story in light of what it means for us, us collectively and us individually. I want to invite you this morning to back away from Palm Sunday and the glorious entry to look at how we got to this place. John records it this way:

**16 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.**

I wish to spend our time together this morning focused on this one verse as I believe it will help us to ready our **hearts, heads and hands** for the coming week. Often, I attempt to capture your attention with words beginning with a common letter and so the letter for today is "D".

Let us work with this theme:

DANGER, DESIGN, DUTY and DESTINY!

SHALL WE PRAY!

Father God we began on Ash Wednesday to prepare our hearts for the week that is before us. We wanted to step away from the things we normally do and do something that would help us to focus on what you have done for us. Some of us kept our commitments and some did not. Some of us did not make a special commitment but were reminded of your sacrifice on our behalf in other ways. Today we come asking that you fill our hearts anew with the knowledge of the depth of love you have for us. Help us to be changed by that love into the people you have called us to be. Abba, remind me again that I cannot preach like Peter nor can I pray like Paul but you have called me to remind your people that you gave your Son to die for us all. Use me, Abba, in your service. Amen and Amen.

DANGER, DESIGN, DUTY and DESTINY!

If I were challenged to teach one verse that would provide an overview of what it means to be a Christian my choice would be John 3:16, all the information a new believer needs is right here.

16 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.

Would you join me in my dialogue with a Seeker of Truth?

“For God”:

If it is your desire to be a Christian you must believe that there is God. You may wish to entertain the big bang theory (physics not the TV show) or you may consider Darwin's Theory of Evolution but in the end, you will still have to wrestle with who made the bang and where did the first thing that evolved come from. The imagery in *The Creation*, a poem by James Weldon Johnson, helps me to imagine what the beginning might have been like:

AND God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said,
"I'm lonely --
I'll make me a world."

And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.¹

But if a fictional retelling does not appeal to you then open your bible:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen1:1)

For a Christian, life in all of its many and varied forms begins with God.

The next section of the verse:

so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,

Where did God get a Son? Is that your question?

Turn to the NT in your bible and the gospel of John chapter 1 vv 1-4 and 14.

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning.
3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has
been made. 4In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.
14The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his
glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of
grace and truth.*

¹ Read more at http://www.poetry-archive.com/j/the_creation.html#W2P2HBGXAcWZ2E5r.99

Why did God give us His Son?

Well I could tell you about all the sins of the First Family, no not the 45th's family, Adam and Eve and their first two sons, Cain and Abel: Eve was tempted by Satan and she tempted Adam; and Cain killed his brother Abel in a jealous rage. But there is any easier way to explain why God gave His Son. I can tell you what God has done for me.

When I was yet in sin God gave His Son
 When I confessed my sins, God gave His Son
 When I strayed, and thought I could make it on my own God gave His Son

When those I loved and though love me turned their backs on me
 God Gave His Son

When I did, the best I knew how to do and others were not pleased
 God Gave His Son

When I felt like laying down my king, throwing in the towel, getting my little red ball and my little red wagon
 God Gave His Son

But not only did God give His Son for me God gave His Son for You.

God knew we were and are in danger

In danger of spending eternity separated from Him
 In danger of letting our own foolish desires mess up our lives
 In danger of missing what God had prepared for us from the foundation of the world


*For you created my inmost being;
 you knit me together in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13)*

*¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,
 "plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
 plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)*

¹⁶ 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.

God not only knew we were in **danger** but God **designed** a plan for whoever wishes to come. All that is required is that you believe. Believing or having faith is our **duty** if we wish to be certain of a **destiny** with God.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going." (John 14:1-4)

⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really know me, you will know  my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:6-7)