

Father God

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Date: 29 September 2013

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[0 : 00] I'm going to put right a terrible wrong in my ministry of 23 years, which is I've never preached from John 3 16 Which is a shame and a disgrace?

I'm free to admit but possibly because it's such a precious verse I've been scared to tangle with it, but John 3 16 is a core verse In our understanding for God's to love the world that he gave us one and only son There's only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life And I'm using that certain that text this evening is the beginning of a new series of sermons. I'm sorry To people from Christchurch our new wrestling Because I'm starting something that you'll not get to to hear this so but I might not be a bad thing You'll better preach it where you're going anyway, but this is linked in with Identity our youth fellowship our young people's meeting after this So that we're doing a theme Called a better vision which is really just looking again at the basics of the gospel To encourage us to remind us that the gospel is the basis for everything We are in our lives and for the young people to think through that

There's one or two questions. They've been given they split into groups and we'll do that up at the house afterwards So all the young people I can I just say that now you're very welcome to come along And that's our house at Wander Park Road after tea and coffee here this evening so Again, it's a bit like then what we're saying this morning about city groups, which looks at questions from the morning service it's trying to create that link between hearing the words and applying the word with the questions that we use and Discussing the word and thinking through it in our lives and that is very important. I think for us to do and It's really to tonight to focus on the next few weeks when we look God the father tonight God the son next week God the Holy Spirit the week after and their role in salvation and And so doing hope to encourage us to think more clearly a little bit about the gospel again And see how great the gospel is how good it is for us I'm beginning to say this quite a lot of times, but I think it's a good phrase. It's not that we make the gospel too good

It's that we don't make it good enough The problem with drifting away is because we don't make the gospel good enough and that is what our hope and prayer is through the Holy Spirit is that we will make the gospel good enough to follow to come to Faith in Jesus Christ to follow him and to serve him as young people and as not so young people and as old people in our lives and the context of Jesus saying what he says here is in the context of speaking to Nicodemus and Challenging Nicodemus with what the gospel is and he uses a great picture doesn't he says you must be born again That's a again a well-known phrase to us or born anew you must make a fresh start is basically what he's saying And that's a great picture that Jesus gives us. It's reminding us how huge the gospel is and how huge it is To be a Christian. He says it's like starting all over again From being a baby. He uses that picture now I'm going to be half a century old on the 9th of January. Okay Now, can you imagine me having to go all the way back and start all over again as a baby having to learn to burp properly and eat properly and then drink properly and then walk and talk and live in a family and Take responsibility and go to school and learn math. I didn't learn that first time round but and learn to speak and learn all these things and learn and adolescence learn about love and learn about broken hearts and Then learn about all the different relationships and all the different things that happen and What that's a lifelong task isn't it's a big task for us Don't let them escape you gotta stay at the end. Okay, and Yeah, really that's what God Jesus is saying about being a Christian is we're we're needing to Learn all over again how to live with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior actually it's harder

[4 : 23] Because we're also Unlearning stuff in our lives. You know what it's like if you learn to do something wrong It's really hard to learn to do it right if you learn to drive the wrong way It's hard to do it right The way that would please an examiner if you're passing the test now Christianity is not like that But you know what I mean in terms of it being difficult to unlearn What we've already

learned if it's wrong and as Christians in many ways, that's what we're also doing as well We're learning to follow Jesus and serve Jesus and love Jesus Christ But we're also having to unlearn a lot of the selfishness and the pride and the ignorance and the arrogance and Self-centeredness and the self-righteousness as it goes along with our beings So the foundation of a radical Joyful service to God is understanding the gospel Understanding the greatness of how great the gospel is how great it is

The problem is we don't make it good enough. So we've got this classic verse for God So loved the world that he gave his one and only son So God so love I'm just gonna break it down very simply in the way that's broken And you've got so loved the world's a classic statement about God I wonder if we're giving a first statement about God to anyone maybe people who know we're Christians and Who ask us about God? What do we say?

Or what do we think? Or what do we think they think? Probably that he's a tyrant Hopefully we wouldn't say that Probably we say that he's a creator We might even say that he's the judge But I wonder if we would always take this view of God that God is a God who loves and God so loved the world It's a wonderful statement. That's at the very core of our understanding of God It's a big love God so loved the world. It was a really big love and it's the world that's been spoken about here Not just believers. Okay God so loved this world in which we live Your colleagues your friends your neighbors People in this part of the world put people in different parts of the world He is concerned and pity and compassion on all of humanity his reign and his son shines on all of humanity He gives life and he gives blessing to people that stick their fingers Directly up at him a world that ignores him a world is no time for him a world that rejects him

Jesus Christ Reminds us here that God has a great love for this world And our biggest problem in applying sometimes that in our Christian lives is our biggest battle is selfishness is Insularity is Not loving not even loving our fellow Christians But or not even loving the world but not even loving our fellow Christians is judging others is not being caring is not being compassionate But if we're to imitate God and if young people are to imitate God and if all people to imitate God's love They are to love the world in which they live. We are to love the world in which we live Jesus says that the the second table of the law of the commandment says about loving our neighbor Who's our neighbor? Jesus explained it who's our neighbor. It's not Samaritan. We don't know any Samaritans But it's that person that is generally rejected by us It is the person next door is the people we come into contact with clearly But it's also the people that Jen generally we reject Generally, we have no time for generally that are Those that we have no time for in this world. We love people we We reflect God when we love people indiscriminately Okay, indiscriminately Not naively not stupidly not glibly but indiscriminately when we love people Now we can't change the world But we can change it one person at a time and we are only asked to love in the same way that God loves God loved so loved the world and It's a sacrificial love isn't it? It's a love which he goes on to say is a love which [8 : 52] Where he gave his one and only son is only be gotten son and Therefore that is an explanatory Statement about his love he loves how does he love he loves by giving his one and only son?

That is a description of how much he loves so that love and sacrifice and at the very heart of God's character love and Sacrifices a love which gives he gives his son now. I'm gonna give you a spiritual formula. It's kind of like not a mathematical one, but a spiritual one depth The depth of someone's love is measured by the value of the gift that they give In relation to the resources they have okay big long sense. Sorry, but take it Break it down the depth of someone's love is measured by the value of the gift they give in In relation to those resources they possess so for example if a Billionaire was to give me a Ferrari It might not say much about his love for me Okay, because he's got resources to buy a hundred for a reason a thousand for a reason it might say something about his generosity

But maybe not say anything particular about his love if you see what I mean What if if the widow who only has five pounds gives me everything of that? Then that says a lot about her love doesn't it?

That's what the Bible speaks about about the widows might for example the middle widow given all she have she gave out of her Poverty what is all the rich people that went to church they threw in lots of money?

They were giving out of their wealth. It's different So that the depth of love can be measured by the value of the gift in relation to the resources we possess To what did God give angels?

[10:52] I would have been a lot the universe I would have been amazing But no he gives himself in the mystery of the Trinity he gives his son He gives Jesus Christ Jesus Christ a distinct person But also of the essence of God and all the mystery that has with it so he gives of himself for us An astonishingly committed gift so he doesn't speak in word only but gives the infinite cost of the divine Creator Tasting death on our behalf and verse 14 it says it just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert So the Son of man must be lifted up everyone who believes in him may have eternal life speaking of the cross The Jesus Christ is lifted up on the cross. He dies on the cross and so this the author of life tastes in the most horrendous way tastes

Del as death as we said this morning kind of walks into hell On our behalf crushing death and sin in the way So he gives himself in that that great way It's a sacrificial love. So as Christians The question is about our life and about our commitment to him Do we do we doubt his love to us when things are bad when things are difficult?

Do we doubt his love and interest in us? Do we doubt his commitment to us? Unless we grasp the depth and the cost of his love it will be difficult for us to Serve him and follow him wholeheartedly Now young folk you're at this stage in life when you're passionate and love moves you I'm sure love really moves you in your life and you do crazy things for love Because that's what you do when you're young and And unless you see Jesus Christ in that With that great value then you will not give your heart and life to him See your identity and see your purpose and see your value in Jesus Christ That he has redeemed us From the heart out forgiven and accepted at the very heart of God That you're at the very heart of God in your life

I Think so many of us Are affected in our lives by the kind of relationships we had with our parents Sometimes that's affected of us really positively sometimes it's affected us negatively But so often the dysfunction of a person's life is related to the kind of upbringing that they had in the relationship that they had with their parents and here is God saying that God the Father loves you so much that he gives his son and it's it's Giving you this great foundation Knowing that you're loved that we are what our kids what we need to know most as kids is that we are loved and that we belong and That we are always loved by our parents and that's no different from God in Jesus Christ It is where we will reflect a life of service and Gratitude and as you give in service to the Lord Jesus Christ you will and we receive a thousand times more in return

So sacrificial love and then briefly we also see it's life-giving Love whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life whoever believes him So I just want to say just a brief thing about that great invitation Now God's love the world that whoever believes okay I'm sure a lot of you have taken out insurance policies at different times And insurance policies are a pain in the neck because you take out these impudence policy You pay premiums for the every every month or whatever and then when you need it and You go to claim your whatever it is you need to get back you find out there's a get out clause You find out that there's some kind of conditional clause that means you can't get it No, there's no way you can get that because you're a free church minister So that there's things in these insurance policies that usually give a get out clause That can be really frustrating and really difficult But the the offer of the gospel doesn't have a get out clause and it isn't for a specific group of people

[15:42] Nobody doesn't need to be rescued by the Lord Jesus Christ nobody is out with his love and Nobody has the ability to save themselves So Jesus says that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes Wherever they are whatever type of person they are and That is the offer of the gospel that again will stimulate us to live the gospel in our day-to-day living for so often we're selective about the gospel and We decide who might believe We decide who might be saved We think who would make good Christians and we make the judgment about who we will share faith with sometimes in our lives because we don't necessarily accept that whoever of the gospel that it goes out to this world now I have a great belief that God has got a great work to do in this city and

That there are many people in this city who are the Lord's who need to come to faith in Jesus Christ And I believe your work In Christchurch, and I believe our work here and we've all the gospel center churches that are Focused on sharing that whoever at Bruntsfield The Tom if he goes out to the other side of the bypass in Midlothian Wherever we go that there will be many people who will come to faith in Jesus Christ and I think our attitude and I think we need an attitude where we are all including our young people passionate about sharing the gospel in a sensitive gentle In a winsome way with whoever with whoever we come into contact with when the opportunity arises That we

have good news for this world We have good news about Jesus Christ and it is worth sharing and we don't make the judgments about who will or will not receive that message Or will come or will not come to faith in him. It's a great offer And it's an offer of not perishing But having eternal life in other words This gospel ministry as gospel work this gospel life is not about minor adjustments to what we do Fine tuning or tweaking little bits of our lives. It is dealing with eternal weighty matters of our soul Now I know sometimes that's difficult for young people to grasp Because you've got so long a life ahead of you in your own minds and hearts anyway and eternity indeed eternity is difficult for us all to think about in many ways, but That's what Jesus is dealing with with weighty matters with matters of our relationship with God and our need not to be perishing but to

Be gifted eternal life The condition that we find ourselves in without Christ is that we are perishing Now for me, that's very much a word that describes what it's like when Things that would have life ordinarily are shut off in a dark place You know, say a plant or Or something like that is put in a dark place or a place where there's no warmth and light for it to live Eventually if the sun or if the heat is taken from it, it will perish That's how I certainly understand that word and what it means Life goes from it it dies and spiritually speaking We're in a place where spiritually without Christ were dead Where physically without Christ we're dying Even though we may not feel that way, but that Christ is as he goes on to say in this chapter He's the light of the world and that light brings life and warmth and changes our hard heart and

Softens it to love him and serve him as our God as our commander-in-chief as our savior as our father as our friend and That is the eternal life he offers he offers relationship with him filling with the Holy Spirit and therefore that link which is Because he's eternal We're gonna be given eternal life and fellowship and friendship with him. It kind of changes our perspective About what is significant and what is important, but we're also reminded of the irrationality of sin because Jesus says in this passage he says, you know This is the verdict light is coming to the world that is Jesus, but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into light for fear as deeds will be exposed We were talking about that this morning, but the word of God Exposing us and that's the irrationality of sin sometimes for us is that we reject the light of Jesus Christ because it exposes and

[21 : 05] Is painful in exposing our sin and our selfishness and We don't like that You know sometimes when we come out into the light if we've been darkness we recoil from it because it's so bright Sometimes we recoil from the brightness and light of Jesus because he exposes what we are but that pain is only half the story, isn't it?

Because that's the bad it's not even half whatever the good bit is eternal life and the good bit is his great love for us So the encouragement for us is to recognize the father's love. I think sometimes Somehow theologically people have kind of thought that God the father Throws God the Son out of heaven and says you go and save them. I'm staying here. He's the kind of He's he's the bad judges it were and Jesus is the good the good guy who comes in between them creates the bridge But is God the father who so loves the world that he gives his son who comes voluntarily and on his death?

the father is torn apart also because He is intimately involved is him that boxing image where he is the what he takes the punch himself On their behalf He takes the blow of our sin and of our guilt and he takes it on himself in the cross so for each of us it's a good thing to do to take that verse which is so famous and put our own name in it For God so loved Derek, but he gave his one and only son that if Derek believes in him He will have eternal life to put your own name in that Because that's the scripture message if we will accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and Jim Elliott that famous mission They that famous quote says he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose And I hope that's true for all of us and that the motivation for our lives can be this great fatherly love and this great gift of eternal life

Which begins to make the gospel better Let's pour our heads in and pray to you father God We ask and pray that we would not leave you as some kind of distant watchmaker who winds up the world and lets it Unwind in its own destructive way without caring But then we would recognize that you're a God intimately involved in our lives through the Your knowledge through your insight into our thoughts and our attitudes through your giving of your son and Through that great sacrifice on our behalf and we thank you that that has been born out of love and the cost Of the gift is such an illustration of the depth of your love and may we not doubt that love even Particularly when things

are going badly for us when we're struggling when you seem to be distant and far away and and disinterested when trouble strikes when there's division and heartache and pain and illness and sometimes even death Lord God help us to trust in your unfailing love and may it be a life changer for us and may it move us to serve you and to give you all of what we are and all of what we can be and and in so doing may we be blessed and May we know the glory of God. I thank you for this great time together. We thank you for the friendship and fellowship of our brothers and sisters and We pray and ask that you would bless our informal time together as well and the Tea and coffee and stuff that we share and we rejoice that we can do that this evening So continue with us as we sing together. Maybe sing not to one another although that is also encouraging but maybe sing praise to our father who is worthy of all
[25 : 21] Our worship and praise this evening in Jesus name. Amen.