



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School
1611 E Main St., Watertown, WI 53094
(920)261-2570
A Stephen Ministry Congregation
www.goodshepherdwi.org

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 23, 2019

“God’s Love for the World”

(John 3:16-17)

Rev. David K. Groth

June 23, 2019 (International Guests from Madison)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17).

Collect: O God, You have prepared for those who love You such good things as surpass our understanding. Cast out all sins and evil desires from us, and pour into our hearts Your Holy Spirit to guide us into all blessedness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

From my upstairs bedroom window, I've been watching a mourning dove sit on her nest. The nest is just a few feet away from the window. Several times a day I look at her, and she looks at me. Every morning while I brush my teeth I walk over to the window. I have a two-minute timer on my electric brush, so, every day this bird and I gaze into each other's eyes for about two minutes. When it's raining (and it's been raining a lot) she looks absolutely miserable and bedraggled. Her light gray feathers turn to a matted charcoal gray and she hardly lifts her head to look at me. She's been on that nest for about four weeks now, with no sign of chicks. Not once have I seen her off the nest to stretch her wings or find some food. I'm concerned about her. I'm worried those eggs might be duds. I half expect some morning I'll be mourning the death of my mourning dove. What drives her to do it? What drives her to ignore her own needs for those eggs? When will she give up?

What drove your parents to do what they did? When you were born, you came with no money. No skills. No words of wisdom, no sense of humor. You came into the world empty handed, utterly helpless, with lots of needs and absolutely dependent on you to meet those needs. Moreover, some of you came colicky, crying day and night and there was little your parents could do to quiet you. From your parents' perspective, what was there to love? But they did. The love of a parent is an irrational but mighty force, a love that rarely gives up. From the moment you were born, or the moment you were adopted, that irrational love of your parents was already there and they ignored their own needs to care for you.

Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross for you. What drove God to do that?

Jesus once asked if we though sinful have such a love

for our children, how much more does God, (holy, and without sin), how much more does he love us? We are his children and he sees we are dependent on him for everything. Just like a parent cares for an infant, so he cares for us. He does not forget us.

Sometimes, however, the child of God forgets God. Sometimes the child rebels against the parent.

Did any of you ever rebel against your parents . . . maybe as a teenager? Of course you did; we all did. According to the Bible, we've all rebelled also against God, our heavenly Father. We ignore and transgress his rules. We may pretend he doesn't even exist. We reject his love. We wander far from him, thinking we don't need him anyway. Isaiah writes, "All we like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." Paul writes that when we sin we become enemies of God (Romans 5:10).

Have you ever been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you ever been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm to others? If so, the Bible teaches you have rebelled against God and taken on the role an enemy of God. Romans 8:7 says "The sinful mind is hostile to God." Sin sets up an adversarial relationship with God, and makes of God our foe rather than friend.

So . . . we have a problem. We are sinners, unholy, impure, unclean, and Revelation 21 says "nothing that is unholy will ever enter in heaven, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false." I don't know about you, but that means I'm out. I don't qualify. . . unless, unless God somehow takes that sin away. Not one of us will get to heaven unless God somehow cleanses us of our sin.

You know, if a pig could talk (and I'm glad he can't), but if a pig could talk he might say the something like, "I'm not so bad." Looking at the others in the pig pen, "In fact, I'm pretty clean compared to those swine over there." But in the end we're all wallowing in the same filth. Not one of us is clean, spotless. We may think of ourselves as less sinful than others, but that's not helpful at all. In fact, it's deceitful because compared to God, by God's standards, we are all

filthy with sin. C.S. Lewis said we sin in between bites of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, which means sin comes so natural to us that most of the time we are not even aware of it. It's what we do. It's like breathing. We do it without thinking about it.

When you were most naughty, most rebellious as a child, do you think your parents still loved you? Mine did. At times they may not have liked me much, but they still loved me. They may have been angry at me, but they still loved me. And they punished me, disciplined me, not because they enjoyed it, but because they loved me.

So it is with God's love for us all. We make choices that are offensive to God, and God may get angry at us and discipline us, but as our Father, God still loves us. How do we know that? Jesus said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Though we have rebelled against our heavenly Father, yet he still loves us and sent his Son Jesus to die for us on a cross for the forgiveness of our sins. 2 Corinthians 5 says that on the cross, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (v. 19), making peace with the world through Christ.

Jesus never sinned, but God the Father put onto Jesus all our sin. Jesus was covered head to toe with the filth of our sin, and punished for it. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." There never was a man more filthy with sin than Jesus on the cross for us. But God did that for us because he loved us. He let his wrath out on Jesus, whom he loves, so that he didn't have to let his wrath out on us, whom he loves.

God the Father gave us his Son to die on a cross. Would you do that? Would you offer the life of your child for someone else? I couldn't. There are those for whom I would give my life, but ask me to give my son's life . . . I couldn't do it. But God did just that for you and me. The Father gave willingly, and Jesus went willingly to the cross for you and me, such is the depth and breadth of God's love

for you. No exclusions. No exceptions. No omissions.
“God so loved the *world* that he gave his Son.”

There are many who have a hard time with that verse. How could God ever love the world? How could God love even those who do evil? Often, people will start qualifying this verse, adding conditions to it. “God will love those who are decent” they think. “God will love us so long as we are kind and good and honest.” Sometimes people argue with this verse and ultimately reject it. “It can’t be true” they think. “God can’t love all of it. Maybe God loves part of it, but surely not all of it. Likes it a lot maybe . . . offers to love it if it would simply start behaving itself.” And the really sad thing is when we think like that we are denying the grace and love of God in Jesus Christ.

Don’t spend too much time trying to figure out how God could love you and me though broken by sin. Just accept the simplicity of this verse. “God so loved the world that he sent his Son.” This means that you and me, though full of sin, are still loved by God. You are part of the world. You are therefore an object of God’s amazing love. There is no living person on this planet whom God does not love in Jesus Christ. In that way, God’s love is inclusive, so that “whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

Athletic teams can be exclusive if you’re not big enough, fast enough and strong enough. Universities can be exclusive places if you are not smart enough or productive enough. Clubs can be exclusive; neighborhoods too. These all may exclude you, but Jesus does not. You are one that he loves. No matter who you are, what you’ve done, or where you are from, he loves you.

Now, God does give us the freedom to exclude ourselves from his love. He gives us the freedom to reject his love. God gives us the freedom to reject him and his grace. In that way we would sadly, tragically exclude ourselves from his love. But God will never exclude us. He offers his love and forgiveness to each of us, no matter who we are, what we’ve done, or where we come from. Faith

receives it. Faith says “yes” to God’s offer of love and forgiveness. Faith says “thank you, Lord, for your love and forgiveness.”

The love of God is truly amazing, and it is for you. It is an extravagant love, an irrational love. And in Jesus, God’s love is a sacrificial love. It’s the love of a parent that will do anything, pay any price for the well-being of the child. Thanks be to God. Amen.

