

Friday, January 16, 2026

John 3:16-17

As you enter your time with God today, take a moment to quiet your mind from thoughts of life and this world. Breathe this prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus, come. Fill me with your Spirit. Open my heart that you might share your words of life with me today. I long to be more like you."

We read today from John 3:16-17. Read the passage now or at the end of this devotion. What can we learn today about God's love in Christ?

What makes something a good thing or a bad thing? Often, that determination depends on your perspective.

Months ago, Kristin and I were on a trip to the Northeast to see Troy play a soccer game. We landed in Chicago at Midway Airport anticipating a connection to Boston, Logan. But something was wrong. Our flight was delayed by almost 5 hours.

After a series of trips to different gates and talking to some Southwest representatives, we found out that the government shut down and the deficit of air traffic controllers was impacting our trip. We really had three choices about what to do next.

We could:

Take our scheduled but delayed flight and sleep in the airport in Boston waiting for the rental car companies to open so we could begin our drive to where Troy was playing.

Get a hotel in Chicago and take the earliest possible flight to Boston and get in a couple of hours before Troy's game. This was dependent on flights going on time in a situation where that was anything but the case.

Get a rental car in Chicago and drive 14 hours through the night to Massachusetts.

Believe it or not, we chose option C. We rented a car and started driving.

Now, was our trip being rescheduled a good thing or a bad thing?

Bad things about driving through the night: very tired at certain times, taking quick catnaps in truck stop parking lots in Pennsylvania to stay alert, and heartburn from the coffee necessary to stay awake.

Good things about driving through the night: the quick 45 minute detour to see our kids and grandkids in Michigan so that they could show us their Halloween costumes for the next night, time spent with my favorite person talking and sharing space, the colors of the Northeast in the fall (when the sun was up), seeing places we'd never been to before and probably won't see again, and having a crazy story that we cherish because stories like that bring us life.

I'm choosing to see the good things. I'm not sure I want to make that drive again, but I'm very glad that it happened.

The incarnation as a good thing, or a bad thing also depends on the perspective you hold.

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

There is always more to say about the power of verse 16, but I'd like to focus on what comes next. Is the Incarnation God's condemnation of humanity or his salvation?

Many would hold that the first is the purpose of Jesus coming to earth. "God is creating a standard by which he decides who is in and who is out. Christ comes and then we are called to "believe" in him. If we believe, then we're in. If we don't, we're out. But then we find out that it's God's choice anyway so what's the purpose? Christ is just the means that God uses to pound people down to hell!"

That's a pretty stark view, but it is not at all uncommon. For many, they view Christ's birth not as a sign of love, but as an action of judgment.

That's why verse 17 tells us what it does. The negative view begins with all of humanity being worthy, and the presence of Christ being the means of God's crushing them with the weight of sin. The positive view is quite different.

The positive view holds that all of us are stuck in the filth and guilt of sin. Every single person who has ever walked on the earth is powerless to release themselves from the weight of it. Christ's coming is a means for us to become free from that filth, to be cleansed by his blood, and to be lifted into God's presence not because of what we do. Our actions are all broken and sinful. We are only given this gift of reconciliation because of what Christ has done. He is our greatest gift, and without him, everyone would be lost.

What perspective do you hold? What about those around you? Are they being shown that Christ is a judge and jury, or do they see the world-changing love that comes through his grace?

May the Spirit equip us with gratitude for what we have received through Christ Jesus. May our gratitude be shown in our love and care for others that they may come to know the gift of grace.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his smile towards you and give you his peace.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I love you all. Blessings.

Feel free to share this devotion with others.

Some questions out of today's text and teaching.

Have you ever seen Christ primarily as judge seeking to condemn you? What changed (or what has to change) for you to see him as a gift of grace and love?

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