

# The Greatest Love

Jon Benzinger

John 3:16

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Have you ever had the sensation of being excited and terrified at the same time? That was me before jumping out of a plane. Even wrote my will before I did that just to make sure. And that's me right now. John 3:16, maybe the most familiar verse in the Bible. Though, I heard Matthew 7:1 past John 3:16 recently, which says, "Judge not lest you be judged." I heard that past, I hope that's not true. It's been said of John 3:16 that a more wonderful verse is not to be found in the Bible. All of the Bible is the word of God, but some parts of the Bible are more precious than others. And this text right here may very well be the most precious of all. So because of this, I'm excited to preach this text and have been for some time but knowing John 3:16 is coming has given me a fair bit of fear. Why? Because, this may very well be the Mount Everest, the Grand Canyon text of the scriptures. The highest, most beloved, most well-known verse in the Bible.

I mean, only an angel could do it justice. And even then, it's pure angelic mind could only scratch the surface of the depth of the truth in this text. So truly, what hope do I have right now? Think about that. And yet, great familiarity with the text can cost us to miss what's actually here, right? So because this is a verse most people know so well, at least most people that go to church, it's a verse that we've got to examine very carefully. It's easy for John 3:16 to become white noise, but you will soon see, I hope, that if the ocean were ink and every person a writer, we would drain the ocean before any one of us would grasp the profundity of the truths in John 3:16. And yet, these truths are so easy to understand that even a toddler can get it.

So today, the greatest text about the greatest truth begins its great lesson with this: the greatest love. What is the greatest love? I mean, it's easy to say the greatest love would have to come from the greatest being. And since there's no greater being than God, his love has to be the greatest. Now, of course, that's true, but is that what we really believe about God's love? Is the greatest of God's love really all that great to us? I remember teaching at a Christian high school in Gilbert. It was freshman Bible class and a young man looked at me with a tone of exasperation in his voice. I'm teaching them through 1 John and he speaks on behalf of the class and says, "We already know God loves us," ugh.

It's almost like God's that ugly nerdy kid that loves us and we're like, "Thanks. Don't really care." I think it's safe to say that on an exam we would put true for God's love as the greatest love there is, but I wonder if we really care. Just the truth about the greatness of God's love impact our lives. Does it impact our thoughts and our desires? Does it, does it impact the way we see all of life and even ourselves? Now, I know there're extremes with God's love. I know one extreme is to only talk about God's love as if that's his only attribute, which may be the experience that many of you have had in church. I mean, the prodigal son every other month. I get it.

Now, the other extreme, and it is an extreme, is to respond to modern Christianity's obsession with God's love by not talking about it at all. This extreme sees God's love or treats God's love as, as kindergarten, while, while God's sovereignty, his holiness, that's college. "Yeah, yeah, I, I know God loves me. Let's move on to the good stuff." No, no, you see, both of those as extremes and I stay in the biblical middle, which is this. Yes, God's love is one of his attributes, but for sinners like you and me, it's one of the best.

My hope for us today comes right out of a prayer in 2 Thessalonians 3:5 which says, "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God." That's my hope for us, that today all of our hearts will be directed, guided, led into a greater and greater appreciation for the greatest possible love that there is, which is the love God has for the world. So let's plunge in and look at the greatest love by looking first at point #1) **The Lover. The Lover.** The Lover in our text is God, right? "For God so loved the world." Notice, it doesn't say the world loved God, or the text doesn't say that God found the world lovely. It says, "God so loved the world." The greatest Lover there is has God expressing that love, the greatest possible being. And we know this because one of the other most quoted verses in the Bible is 1 John 4:8, which says that God is what? Love. It is his nature to love.

Yes, I know the Bible says God is light. That means God is holy. And I know the Bible says God is a consuming fire. God hates and punishes sin. Yes, but the Bible also says that this same God is love. That's why 1 John 4:7 can say love is from God. All love comes from God, comes out of God, because God is love. In fact, Exodus 34:6, when God reveals himself to his people, he reveals himself as "abounding in steadfast love." That word 'abounding' means great in love, plentiful, abundant in love. That's God. Profuse, bountiful, wealthy with love.

Now, in saying this, the God of the Bible, yes, is also the eternal and infinite one. The one who is present in all places, whether it's the farthest reaches of the universe or the deepest depths of of a single electron. He is there. This God sees all things, knows all things, is above all things. He is high and exalted, majestic, glorious. He is supremely imposing to us in His righteousness, His goodness, His knowledge, His holiness, His justice. Yes, he is the Most High. Yes, he is the Lord God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. Yes, he is the King who reigns over everything, everyone, everywhere. Yes, he is the only one who can do all things. Not even one desire he has can be stopped. He has no needs. He has no deficiencies. He has not even the slightest hint of a single imperfection. That is God, and that same God is love.

Now, John is specific about who this God is. Notice the text. "God so loved the world that he gave His only Son." So, if this God has a Son, that makes this God who? God the Father, right? The first person of the Trinity, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So when we're talking about the greatest love, we start with the Father, which is, which is weird and odd for many because we don't really see God the Father as a loving God. Many people see God the Father as a mean, fanatical rage monster. But, thank goodness we have Jesus, ooh. He's the stern, heartless, unforgiving bully, practically a demon. Jesus is the kind and merciful, gentle angel, right? Thankfully, Jesus came along, changed God's mind, convicted him of being so angry and cruel all the time. So God the Father repented all of that and he's cool now. Thank you. Thank you, Jesus. Right? No. This could not be further from the truth.

That's actually a lie from the pit of hell. Why? Because, it's meant to pull you away from God the Father, thinking he's unkind, uncaring, unengaged, and unloving towards people like us, when that could not be further from the truth. Notice the text. "God so love the world that he gave His only Son." It's a question, according to John 3:16, why is Jesus even here? What was it that that gave him to the world in the first place? Answer: the Lover, God the Father, who is love and who gave His only Son to the world that he loves. In other words, think about it. The reason there is salvation in the first place, the reason there's a plan of salvation predicted in the Old Testament and accomplished in the New Testament, the reason anyone is ever saved at all is, why? God the Father so loved the world. That's why.

Now that we've considered God, the Lover, let's look next, at point #2) **The Love. The Love.** In other words, what kind of love does the Father have for the world? What kind of love gives His Son to the world? What kind of love is flowing from the fatherly heart of God? Well, let's think about the definition of this word 'love.' This word is not the word used for physical attraction or physical desire. This word is not the word used for friendship or affection among human relationships. This word for love, the word 'agape' means a selfless, costly, sacrificial kind of affection. It's love that chooses what's best for the one he or she loves. It may be best compared to the love that a parent has for a child. We see this word often used in the New Testament in relation to the cross. And that that gives us understanding of the Christian meaning of this word.

This tells us that agape love is a love that gives itself away. A love that gives its best for the best of others. A love that gives its best even at great cost for the one doing the loving, even when the one being loved doesn't deserve it or even deserves the opposite. That's agape. This selfless, costly love is doing what's best for those around you, even when it's not best for you. Even when the people being loved don't get it and don't even want it. That's the kind of love God has for the world in John 3:16. Now, in the Greek of verse 16, the word 'love' is being emphasized. Meaning that when you read John 3:16, you should read it as, "For God so loved the world." That's what John wants us to focus on, because he wants our attention drawn to that word 'love.' And we're going to dig in here a little bit. What I'm going to do is I'm going to give, give you nine characteristics, nine descriptions of the love that God has for humanity.

Now, obviously, more could be said than what I'm going to say with these nine. There are whole books written on God's love. I'm just going to give you a taste of God's love here, but just know that there is a meal of God's love in all nine of these points, ok? So first, God's love, as we've seen already, God's love is essential. God's love is essential. Love is, in other words, is His nature. 1 John 4:8, "God is love." God loves because he is love. So God's love is essential.

Second, God's love is eternal. God's love is eternal. Psalm 103:17 says, "The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him." Did you hear that? Let me read that again. "The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him." Think about that. God's love for people never had a beginning and it never has an end.

Third, God's love is sovereign. God's love starts with God loving us. God doesn't love us because we love him. Aren't you glad about that? Right? No, 1 John 4:10 says, "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us." 1 John 4:19 says, "God 'first' loved us." His love does not depend on ours. Hallelujah. Right? Our love for him only exists because he loved us first.

Fourth, God's love is generous. It's generous. Not only did we see this in Exodus 34 but listen to it again in and Jonah 4:2. Here's Jonah talking to God and he says, "You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding, overflowing in steadfast love." God is not at all cheap with His love. He's not holding on to it. "I'm just going to give you a little bit. And I'm holding all because I just want to hold it for me, and you can just have little, little pieces of it and that's all." No, no, no. He is generous, lavish, excessive, extravagant, extreme, magnanimous in his love. I cannot wait to experience that in heaven, to see like, "This is what I prepared by the one who loves so incredibly much."

Fifth, God's love is merciful. It's merciful. We see this in our text, God loving the world, but we also see it Romans 5:8 which says God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. In His mercy, he didn't die for us after we cleaned ourselves up, after we fixed the stuff that he doesn't like in our lives, after we got going in the right direction, he looked at us,

he's like, "Oh, that's a good job. I'm gonna, I'm gonna, going to love you now." No, that's not the God of the Bible. His love is merciful.

Sixth, His love is sacrificial. His mercy is all the way into a sacrifice. That's how merciful His love is. It sacrifices His own for us. Again, 1 John 4:9, "In this, the love of God was made manifest among us," meaning clear and obvious. How is God's love made obvious? "That God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through him." Justice says without him, we die. Mercy says I will pay for your sin so that you can live, which leads, seventh, to God's love is saving. God's love is saving. Titus 3:4-5, you heard it already today. Did multiple sermons on this back in 2020. Here it is again. "When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us." He sees our need. He's moved with compassion. He's moved with love and expresses that love. How? By saving people.

Eighth, God's love is special. It's special, meaning God has a special love for His own. Have you ever walked into a group of people and said, "Hello, people loved by God?" You ever done that? Probably not. I know I know I haven't. But, Romans 1:7 and 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul identifies people in those churches as those who are 'loved' by God. That's who you are now. That's who the people around you are. These are the people loved by God. That is your identity as a Christian. Now, God loves humanity that we loves the world, that's verse 16, but not in this special way. Just like you love you love your kids more than you love all kids. You might work in the nursery here and you be like, "I love all these kids," but if you got a kid or grandkid in there, you know you love that one especially, even though you love them all. The same is true for God.

Ninth and finally, God's love is permanent. It's permanent. It can't be said any better than Romans 8:38-39. "Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers," these massively powerful beings compared to us. "Nor things present at the time or things to come..." There's nothing in the future. It's like, "Oh, I didn't know about this." "Oh, this can do it." Nope. "Nor powers, nor heights, nor death, nor anything else in all creation..." There's not a single thing in all creation "which is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's love is stronger. Nothing in all creation has the power, has the ability to separate people from God's love. It is permanent, unchangeable, unbreakable. So based on our text, why is it that people who believe won't perish but have eternal life? Answer: because God gave His Son. Well, why is it that God gave His Son so that people would be saved? Answer in our text is, why? Because, God so loved the world.

Well, question, why does God love the world? There's there's no answer to that. Nobody knows. That's as far back as we can go. The love of God. The Bible doesn't give us anything past that, beyond that, underneath that. Beyond that, there's just a mystery that the Bible does not give us access to as to why God loves. I mean, I guess we could say he loves because he wanted to, but that would just beg the question, what? Why did he want to love the world? I guess we could say God loves because it seemed good to him to do so, which, again, would beg the question: why did it seem good to God to love the world? However, what this tells us is eternal life is for those who believe and the giving of His only Son for that purpose all started where? It all started in the love of God.

God's love therefore is it's the bottom, it's the foundation, it's the starting point for salvation, which means, listen, the goal of hell is to make you think God's love is something less than what we have seen so far. This was Satan's attack against Adam and Eve, right? Getting them to doubt God's love for them. "Hey, you know that fruit that he told you not to eat. Yeah, you know why

he doesn't want you to eat that? Because, he's holding something from... He's He's keeping something good for you. Something that would wonderful for you. He doesn't want you to have that. I want you to have that because I love you. He does not love you that's why he's keeping that from you. So, just eat that thing and you'll be good and you'll see that God has been lying to you. He doesn't love you at all but I do."

That worked really well back then. It still works really well now. Doesn't it? See, we can let all kinds of things create a fog in our minds that causes us to doubt and hide God's love for us but let this short meditation so far help blow that fog away. And listen, don't let your desire to grow as a Christian take you past God's love to the good stuff. Let your desire to grow as a Christian take you deeper into God's love. Let Paul's prayer for the Christians in Ephesus be your prayer for yourself. Ephesians 3:17-19, "That you, being rooted and grounded in love." That's my hope, is that that our time together today is going to root you and ground you even more in God's love for you. And then, from there, "rooted and ground in love, may you have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depths of God's love, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." That is the love being expressed in John 3:16.

Now that we've looked at God, the Lover, and we've looked at the kind of love that God has for the world, let's look finally at point #3) **The Loved. The Loved.** The loved in our text is, what? God's so loved the world. In other words, the object, the focus, the concentration of God's love in John 3:16 is the world. So, the question is what, what is the world? Well, it's not inanimate objects like rocks and rivers and planets. It's it's not animals or trees, fish and birds. No, the world has to do with human beings.

And first John uses this word in this way. He uses it to say not just Jewish people. This text would blow Nicodemus' Jewish-centered racist mind. When it says, "For God to love the world," he'd be like, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. God loves the Jews. We are His chosen people. That that is who he loves. He created non-Jews so that hell would add something to burn. That's why that why they exist. No, he loves us exclusively and only." And Jesus comes along and says, "No, no, no, no. God loves Jews and non-Jews. Men, women, children, all ethnicities, all languages, all nationalities." He loves all people. God so love the world means God loves humanity.

It doesn't say God loves some of the world. He says he loves the world. And this may be the most astonishing thing about Christianity for the first Christians. We just kind of move past this. We're over this now. But for the first Christians coming out of Judaism, this would've blown their mind. "Wait, the Messiah is for everyone? Jews and non-Jews?" But, there's more to this word 'world.' I've looked at every place 'world' is used in John. And when you do that, you learn something. Love for the world could only come from God, not because the world is so big. The world is the size of a fraction of an electron in God's infinite hand. Love for the world had to come from a God abounding in love not because the world is so big, but because the world is so terribly bad. Search 'world' in the book of John and you will see most uses are negative.

Here's just a summary of what John says in His book about the world. Starts out, we'll say this. The world is said to have no relationship with the Father or with Jesus. In fact, John 15:18 says that the world hates Jesus and His followers. And that is because Satan, according to 12:31, is the "ruler of this world." First John 5:19 summarizes it this way when it says, "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one." It has its place, it's lying there at home with Satan himself. The word in John, it's say that the world rejoiced at Jesus' death in 16:20, even though Jesus is the

savior of that world, the world that God loves, the world that God will give eternal life to any who believe. He is the light of the world. He's the source of truth for the world, but that didn't stop them from rejoicing at His death.

The 'world,' in fact, in John does not have a single believer in it. Why? Because, believers are said in 15:19 and 17:16 to be saved out of the world, to be chosen out of the world. Why? Because, in John 12:31, the world is the object of God's judgment. You don't want to be in the world. In fact, 16:33 says that Jesus followers are guaranteed to suffer in this world. When you put it all together, the world is the collective expression of human rebellion. It's not individual people rebelling. It's put all those individual people together in a culture or in a society and let them express that rebellion. That's the world. So, "For God so loved the world" means for God the Father so loved the world at war with him. The world that hated him, the world that wanted nothing to do with him, the world that rejoiced at the death of His Son. God so loved that world.

The world is humanity has fallen in from God's favor, defiant against His authority with its face set in suicidal opposition to God. The world is so bad. In fact, 1 John 2:15-17 commands Christians, what? Do you remember? "Do not love the world or the things in the world. That if anyone loves the world," what? "Love for God is not in them." So here on the one hand, Christians are commanded, "Do not love the world," and here's the Father having love for the world. What do we do with that? How can that be? Good question. God's love for the world is not a love of participation, where God would enjoy and take part in sin, which is what Christians are being warned about in 1 John 2:15. His love for the world in John 3:16 is an agape love of redemption, where he seeks their best even though they hate him. Let that sink in. Behold the greatness of God's love. There's there's I don't have the vocabulary to express how great that is.

Nothing in all the universe is as great as this love for sinners. Think about it. A being as exalted, as holy, as good, as glorious as God, who loves a humanity that's not only far beneath him, but so vehemently opposed to him. That is the greatest love there could possibly ever be. His love is so great, in fact, that he gave His rebellious, wicked world, he gave this world the greatest possible gift he could give, which we'll look at next week. But, think about this. Jesus says, John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this than he lays down his life for his friends." Right? But, there is a greater love than that. It's not found in humanity though. It's found in deity.

There is a love that lays down its life, not for friends and family, but lays down its life for his most passionate enemies. Us. His love was not stopped one bit by how sinful and evil and rebellious we are. How great, how powerful must His love be to love us, not just in spite of our sin against him, but to love us out of our sin against him? His love is so great it goes beyond His hatred for sin. His love is so great it goes beyond His hatred for sinners. This is great love that God would love a world so bent on defying him that instead of punishing that world and punishing it rightly, instead he gives His only Son to all who believe in that world so that they will not perish for their constant rebellion against him.

Now, I know that our humanistic, psychologically saturated culture convinces many that God so loved the world means God loved the world because we're so lovely. I mean, the song says, "You didn't want heaven without us." So, you brought heaven down to save us, right? I mean, if you were the only one who was alive on the planet, Jesus would've died for you, right? No. If we were the only ones alive, we would've killed him too. We imagine that God loves us because there's something good in us, something about us that's lovely to him, that was valuable to him. But, the Bible, the Bible's teaching on the world that we've just seen shows it's just the opposite of that, right?

I mean, the world isn't even attractive to good people. Is it? What you see on the news, what you see on your news feed, do you look at that and go, "I love this. I want to be a part of that?" No, you're like, "Jesus, please come back. Are you going to come back now? Please, get me out of here. This is awful." Now, imagine what the world is to the God who is the definition of love. See, he didn't love the world because it was lovely. He loved the world and gave His only Son of the world because the world was unlovely and because it needed saving. Because without His love, everything in the world would perish. Think about it. If God loves you because there's something worthy in you, then it's not really agape love. Why? Because, he's getting a benefit. He's getting something wonderful from you, namely you. No, no, no. Agape love is the opposite of that. There's nothing worthy in you, and then he loves you. And because he loves you, he gives you an infinite worth after he loves you.

See, this text is the opposite of what we're told to believe. There is no one saved out of the world, there is not one person rescued from perishing, no one at all has eternal life without God's great love first. John 3:16 is about the greatness of God's love, not the greatness of our worth. Again, if John 3:16 was about the greatness of our worth, it wouldn't be agape love motivating him. It's only when our greatness is abandoned, put aside, no more of that, it's when we put that aside that we really begin to understand what it means for God to love this wicked world. In other words, God's love alone, God's love only is what moved God to send His Son to save the world, which means that Christianity is founded on, it's based on, Christianity would not even exist or it not for God's love.

And the greatness of His love is not just seen in the fact that he saves people so wicked, but it's also seen in the fact that he saves so many wicked people out of the world. Listen to Revelations 7:9. It's describing the the view of saved people. And it says that it is a "great multitude that no one could number, from every tribe, every nation, and all tribes and peoples and languages." So, if God the Father saves that many, a number so big that no one can count, how much must he loved the world to give His only Son to save them? Or to put it differently, how much must God love you so much that he gave His Son for you, His only Son for you? It's not like he had a hundred kids and was like, "Oh, I'll just pick that one. That's fine." His one and only precious, special, unique Son.

Well, how much love is that? How much does he love people? John 17:23, "God the Father loves you as much as he loves Jesus." Did you get that? Let me say that again. "God the Father loves you as much as he loves Jesus." You don't believe me? Check out that verse later today. Let that, let this sink in. If all of that just scratches the surface of God's great love, if all of this is the truth about God's love for you, then how should we respond to all of that? How can we respond to that? How should we live if this is the reality about God's love for us? Well, first, obviously, right, we love and praise and thank God for it. Right? I mean, hopefully, that's what's happening in your heart right now. Your your heart is overflowing with gratitude and worship to God for loving you First.

Second, our second response is seen in 1 John 4:11, which says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." The logic of the text is since God loves you, I should love you. Since God loves you, since God has poured out His infinite love on you, then then I should love you, then then we should love each other. Church should be an oasis of love in a dark and hateful world. And in saying that, this love for others should probably start in our homes, probably start with our closest relationships. In other words, since God loves your spouse and your kids, your grandkids, whatever, then you should love them too. And then, and from there,

that concentric circle, God loves the people in your church, you should too. God loves the people at your job or in your school, you should too. God loves lost people and you should too. Concentric circles move out from there.

Third, how well should we respond to God's great love for us? 1 John, 5:3, "This is the love of God, that we keep as commandments." In other words, God's love... Let's put it this way. Love for God is seen in obedience to God. God loves us first so we respond to him with love, and then we we love him... Now, our emotions don't like, "Oh, I love you so much and I feel these great emotions." Our our love for him is proved by doing what he tells us to do, not to earn our salvation. Impossible. But, from a standpoint of, "You love me that much. Whatever you want me to do, I'm yours." Which leads to the fourth way we should respond to God's love for us found in 1 John 2:15, we looked at it already.

"If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In other words, if God loves us first, we respond to His love, how? By removing the things that express the world's war on God that's in our lives, by by removing the things that encourage God's war in our hearts. Just ridding ourselves of that. "Don't want any of your enemies in my life. I don't want that encouraging me to do things that you hate. Going to get that out of my life."

And fifth and finally, how should we respond to God's great love for us? It's found in Jesus' warning to the Pharisees in Luke 11:42. We should not 'neglect' the love of God. One last time. Please do not ever think the love of God is something you grow past for better, deeper truths about God. Grow deeper and deeper in God's love. Don't neglect it. So the greatest verse begins with the proclamation of the greatest love, the greatest possible love, which is God's great love for a greatly, rebellious world. God's love is beyond comprehension. It surpasses knowledge. You got the word 'marvelous' in your mind. It is more marvelous than everything we call marvelous. It is better than anything we think is the best, so much so that if you are in God's love, if you have God's love, then no one has it better than you. You may look out at the world and like, "Why don't I have this? Why don't I have that?" If you have God's love, you have everything. Nobody has it better than you.

When I moved here 11 years ago, I knew intellectually that it was going to be brown. I was not quite ready for how brown the desert really is. I mean, if there's no mountain in the background, I don't even think the desert is nice. I know that's fighting words for some of you. Lots of dirt and rocks and bushes. Lots of rusted-out cars. Lots of abandoned, broken down buildings, which is interesting. People moved out 50 years ago and I'm like, "I get why you left here. I get why you moved into something where there's more civilization and less dirt. I get it." I've often wondered if the desert is proof of the fall. I mean, when God put Adam and Eve into an environment, it was a desert? No, no, no. It was a garden, right? And what do we do? We plant trees and flowers and put in water features. Why? To forget that we're in a desert. That's why.

I mean, I haven't met too many people. I'm sure I'm going to meet you though at the back door in a minute. But I haven't met too many people who drive past Signal Butte or drive down Ironwood and just pull the car over and just get out of their car and look and just admire the beauty and the wonder of the arid, desolate desert. I don't know many people like that. Very few look at the desert and think, "That's nice. That's beautiful. I just love that." See, if we're God, we'd look at the world the way that most people look at the desert. I mean, at least in our desert there's an occasional desert flower. You go, "Oh, that's pretty." Surrounded by desolation. "That's pretty." But, there is nothing appealing in the world to God.



God looks at the world and says nothing attractive there at all. Nothing beautiful, nothing at all that's lovely. Just hatred for my truth, war with me, rejection of my word, rejection of my Son, who I gave to rescue people out of the world that hates me. That's what God sees. But, aren't you glad, aren't you glad that you're not God? Aren't you glad that the one, true and living God is a God of love? Who loves this rebellious, ugly, evil world? I know I'm glad. Because if it wasn't for God's great love, I'm still in the world. If it wasn't for God's great love, I am perishing forever, and so are you, but God is a God who loves the world.

Let's pray. God, thank you for being a God who loves rebels. Thank you for being a God who loves sinners. God, we will spend eternity thanking you for your love. As every as every moment, we will experience more and more of your love than we did the previous moment. We will be continually blown away at the love that you have for sinners. We can't even scratch the surface right now of what it means for you to love us, a God who is generous and extravagant in your love for sinners. But yet, that is who you are, and you prove it by giving your Son for the salvation of the world, which we will see next week. So, it is right for us if we're going to be worshiping you for all eternity because of your love, it is right for us to worship you now. Not just in our singing, not just with our lips, but with our lives.

May you use our time together to draw us closer and closer to you, whether it's it's finally like, I'm gonna, I'm going to bow my knee to Christ because I now know that God is for me. God loves me and will forgive my sins. Or, maybe it's being drawn closer to you and saying, "Gosh, you love me that much? I'll get rid of the things in my life that I know you don't like. You love me that much? I'll obey you. You love me that much? I'll love the people that you love."

Whatever it is, use this use this wonderful text to draw us closer to you and see you more and more rightly as a God of infinite love. We pray these things for the glory of your wonderful name. Amen.