

John 3:1-17

1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. **2** He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." **3** Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." **4** Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" **5** Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. **6** What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' **8** The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." **9** Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" **10** Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? **11** Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. **12** If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? **13** No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. **14** And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. **16** For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. **17** Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Sermon – "Love"

For God so loved the world...So let's talk about love.

What is love? Baby don't hurt me!

Well, lets not talk about love like that...

Love is an active verb, a commitment twined with a motion and action. You see, love is a many

splendored thing, knowable but ungraspable, felt yet not touched, prone to pain but heedlessly hopeful.

Love is a God who does not give up on a departed creation, but pursues the prodigal. Love is a God who reaches beyond heaven and commits to earth. Love is a God who creates by playing in the dirt, forming mounds of clay into a divine image, and breathing (deep breath), breathing (deep breath), breathing (deep breath), life into the dust.

Love does not ignore our mistakes but refuses to give the last word to folly. Love never dwells in shame, but assures of promise. Love does not dwell in the past,

but inspires the present and gives shape to futures of fullness.

Love lives in the face of death, and love flies in spite of gravity. Love doubles down in spite of the odds, and love is a risk, a ridiculous risk, a ludicrous, loony, laughable risk. But it is a risk that God takes anyway.

Because, you see, in Jesus we find love, but it is not easy. It is never easy. Love, above all, is a sacrifice.

To love is to care for another more than for yourself, and that is a risk. Love is a commitment to what is best for someone else rather than a personal pursuit of selfish desires, and that is a risk. Love is a sacrifice

to ensure the success others, even at the risk of your own safety, even at the **risk** of your own life.

Love is not an isolated thing. A great cultural lie is that love is an individual experience, but love – true love, divine love – is a love that requires someone else. It is a love that can't help but create a community.

Jesus is that love.

Jesus is the love that creates the church out of broken people and isolated individuals. Jesus is the love that redeems creation. For in Jesus we come to know the love that overflows from the everlasting relationships of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to

make us all children of the Father, to remake us in the image of the Son, to fill us with the Holy Spirit.

So this is no soap opera love that sparks and fizzles like a Roman Candle. This is no top 40 love that relies on slick licks from a serpents forked tongue to get your clothes off, naked before God. This is no secret love, spoken only in hushed voices and shy whispers.

This love is an eternal star, giving energy for passion and light for compassion. This love is steadfast, constant, the nothing can separate us from the love of God kind of love. This is the kind of loves that woos us with truth, that convinces us with action. This love keeps promises and gives robes of righteousness to

cover our naked shame. This is a love that demands to be screamed, that wants to rain down from a mountain, over the hills and everywhere. This is the love will take your breath away and then let you breathe love, only love, and breathe (deep breath), breathe (deep breath), breathe love deep.

For love sings sweetly the sounds of salvation even as the devil demands damnation. Love resonates with righteousness that justice might reign. Love relentlessly rescues us for redemption, refusing to give permanence to pain.

“For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not

perish but may have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

What is love? The world is saved through love. Amen.