**“God So Loved”**

Genesis 12:1-9

Romans 4:1-8, 13-17

John 3:1-17

Lent 2

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

It takes us until the Second weekend in Lent to get to the **summary of the whole Bible**. “God **in this way** loved the world”. “God, **in the particular manner that this Book describes**, loved the world”. And it was necessary that He loved all of it, or else all of it would perish. “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

**Text**

The **dilemma** we heard of last week. We’d **chosen knowledge of “evil”** through the fall of mankind by Adam then our continuing decisions desiring that much-expanded knowledge. **We watch** television shows about that much-broader bit of information, news is full of it tickling the interest, we crave what intrigues us (most often, the flawed), **we relish** comparing ourselves to further-than-we-think-we-are despicable ones, **we complain about** the deficits in this world. **We** **are** deficits in this world (some might recognize of us more than we do).

Some of what we think might be our best and brightest are pagan worshipers. Abram was. He worshiped literally any seeming deity that he could get his hands on. A **powerful** man, one might think his way of thinking a profitable one … and maybe it was financially profitable (to think of, largely, one’s own interests and “what we can gain out of any influence”), that might be successful paths to riches and power, the accumulation of things and influence ourselves.

“**Leave** much of what you’ve acquired in prestige here and **go where I send you**” God told him. Now all that he’d built for himself, much God made use of, but God was in control verses a pretty self-satisfied man.

Jesus interacted with a pretty bright gentleman by the name of Nicodemus. **Learned** beyond most any others, this man had to sneak to Him in the night out of prideful concern. **How listening to this carpenter might look** was almost more important than **what he had questions about**. But he snuck to Him (Jesus), and Jesus told him to be something called “**born again**” or else **walk unsaved** (**apart from the even-he-knew desired position of in the “kingdom of God”**).

**Both** would **submit to this salvation**.

God **“in the manner of” Abram** **“gave”** to the world salvation by **His “Offspring”**, the **“Blessing for the world”** given a place set aside (by God) to prepare there the sacrifice of a joint son. Isaac would be shown as a (for a lesson) “placeholder” (an example), but **Abram and Isaac’s joint son with God the Father** would be the **real sacrificial offering**. “Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and downstream, David’s, **Offspring**” would be Jesus headed for Mount Mariah’s crucifixion. The “manner of God’s giving” that salvation was **a lineage** from Adam through Seth and Noah and Shem and, then, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, and descendants until Mary to Mary’s boy. “God in the manner of Old Testament **lineage**” brought Abram’s Offspring to a day whipped and hung upon a cross having been baptized into the despicable nature of fallen humanity.

Baptized by water and Spirit into that, all the world could gain what God’s Son, Jesus, won for the world in His death and resurrection. **God “in the manner of” the baptism into that eventually submitted-to of a Pharisee named Nicodemus saved Him**. Of water and the Holy Spirit of God, what the well-trained human elite didn’t understand, he **settled into, so received** with the God-given time to do so. He buried Jesus later … and heard His Words from the cross. He believed the notion of **all things necessary “being finished” as for himself to be baptized into**.

“God so loved the world” is a **methodology** statement. **“So” / “in this manner”** answers the question of “**how**”, and the Bible is the Book that tells **that “manner”** **of it all**. It’s a **descriptive Book of “Means by which”** that **makes seeking “Means by which” these days appropriate**. I still happily-note that people cherish that John 3:16 **passage** because of its **seeming** **rationale for God’s favor upon the world**, but the logistical **methodology and means of saving the world, then individuals**, that is instructive to **how one enjoys and finds comfort there** or **has no comfort**.

**Application**

The **end result** is that God not only loves the world as the **rationale** for His saving work, but **actively constructed it**. He **worked, by desire and will**, in ways **identifiable (which is the Bible’s story)**. And if He did **that**, did He **ever stop?** And the answer is “**No”, He did not**. He, **now**, “desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”. The cross’s killing, then Christ’s resurrection from the dead were, for everyone in the world, **redemption “Means” and methodology … and, again, for all mankind**. The world gained an eternally Good potential by the “**how**” of the death and rising of Jesus. But way too much, if any, of the world will not (most probably) **receive** the grace of that redemptive gift. Too, possibly, self-powerful or financially well-off or, maybe, too learned in the wrong kinds of learnings, many won’t get the Holy Spirit by a water re-birth that they won’t acknowledge as **God doing anything through**.

I think (personally) that a portion of mankind knows “how” **redemption** occurred yet, then, has only opinions about how **salvation** does. Many think that salvation is **their job** **(or God’s responsibility to respect “how” they think they’re owed it)**. I think “morality” plays a role in far too many people’s thinking, so God’s “**Means**” of loving is an interesting start or gesture, but not the **totality of things** **(death and resurrection of Christ then baptism into that)**.

Many would, chosenly, **be** (with Nicodemus) an initial skeptic or only earthly minded curiosity thinker, but **not go home to consider** **the Words of Jesus who dictates a re-birth into the cross by “water and Spirit”**. Our **epidemic that direction** is immense in today’s world.

We stopped our John 3 reading at the wonderful verse 17, but 18 adds that “whoever believes in Him” (Jesus and what He says about that belief obviously) “is not condemned, but whoever has not believed is condemned already, because he has not believed in the **name** of the only Son of God” and that **name as “reborn into” to be believed (crucified in the flesh then reborn by water and Spirit into)**.

Most certainly, revel and enjoy the **rationale of love** for God’s saving work (God does, indeed … did indeed and continues to, indeed, love all humans, and that’s every human you can name or imagine, often undeserving ones come to mind and I do pray that we all add our names to the list of the undeserving, yet loved by God in rationale for blessings and blessedness). But note (and never forget this part) God’s **“Means” and methodology of love for the world** (through, certainly, history’s lineage in Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and folks both, also, before and after all three of these guys, but also an incarnation of the Son of the Godhead, Jesus, born to be the sacrifice following His Father’s will to a cross … then through it to a resurrection and a name and reality into which people / all people can be reborn into by “water and Holy Spirit” / baptized).

Does God **still work actively in love today? He most certainly does**, and **continues giving** by **“Means” and methodology to actually see and believe of His loving promise**.

May **our seeing and hearing** be, always, **believing** reborn into eternal life … **in, most certainly and concretely always, Jesus’ name**. Amen.