

For God so loved...

Introduction

Hard to focus

- Hard to believe it's Christmas Sunday
- Very busy season - and hard to focus
- Plus the news of Becky's passing
- Enemy would keep us preoccupied

Reminder: babe in a manger

- Chosen this simple image to help us focus
- Christmas is about a baby born in a manger some 2000 years ago
- Give me a few minutes this morning to share

Text

- Familiar scripture
- **John 3:16 (ESV)** (16) *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
- Three words that speak to me about this passage

Message

Choice

Love is God's choice

- Christmas is about God's choice to love
- He has made the choice to love mankind
- *For God so loved*

- All love is a choice - to act in the best interest of the loved one
- Consider **1 Cor 13:4-8 (ESV)** *(4) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends...*
- The birth of Jesus is the expression of God's love to us
- We are loved this morning

Long ago

- We celebrate the birth of Jesus 2,000 years ago
- 2,000 years ago, the angels announce **Luke 2:8-14 (ESV)** *(8) And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. (9) And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. (10) And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. (11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (12) And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." (13) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, (14) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*
- The choice that brought about his birth is older than that
- Consider Revelation 13:8 refers to Jesus as the lamb "slain from the foundation of the world" (KJV)
- Before the world was put into place - God made the choice to love you.
- Not the universal you... but you. Sitting here in the pew today

Not based on you

- Such an important truth
- God's choice to love isn't based on you
- You didn't earn it / deserve it / intrinsically merit it
- God's choice to love is based on Him - His nature, His character His plan for us
- This may seem hard at first - but God's choice to love you has nothing to do with you - and everything to do with Him
- Embracing this idea sets us free from a lot of struggle, burden and competition!

Cost

Love always comes at a price

On this communion Sunday we reflect on the price He paid for us

For him

- Jesus left everything to die for us
- Born in humble circumstances
- But he paid the price for us
- Consider **Rom 5:8 (ESV)** (8) *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- Or Isaiah's prophecy **Isa 53:3-6 (ESV)** (3) *He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- I always try to celebrate communion during the Christmas service to remind us of the price he paid

For us

- But for us there is a cost to be paid
- We receive His love, His gift
- He asks that we give our lives in return
- He tells the parable **Matt 13:44-46 (ESV)** (44) *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (45) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, (46) who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Consequences

The final word that comes to mind from our reflection: consequences

Life eternal

- Jesus came to die that we might live
- Consider text and promise of the day **John 3:16-17 (ESV)** (16) *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) 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.*
- We deserved God's wrath - but in love He made the choice
- We can be saved
- See the promise of life eternal **John 11:25-26 (ESV)** (25) *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Our future is in our hands

- Let me return to the word Choice
- God made a choice to love us
- He gave us a choice to receive his love and be saved
- Our future is in our hands
- God has made salvation possible - that's the story of Christmas
- Your story? Will you receive that and partake of it?

Closing

- What will you do with your free will
- Example of Becky
- What will people say about you?

Communion

1 Cor 11:23-26 (ESV) (23) For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, (24) and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (25) In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.