

Meditation #17: Creator so Loved the WORLD

What does it say?

STUDY: John 3:1-17

GOLDEN TEXT: John 3:16 = *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.*

What does it mean?

Because this passage has been used so effectively to communicate simply and powerfully the message of God's love and salvation, Martin Luther, a leader of the Protestant Reformation, called John 3:16 "the Gospel in a nutshell." What is "hidden" in plain view is the extraordinary love God has for his world—literally, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "God so loved the *cosmos*..." We know that the prime recipients of his love are human beings—his children. Still, the saving work of God is explicitly part of his love for all his creation, his cosmos, "the world."

1. What does God's giving us his only Son—our Lord Jesus Christ—reveal about the depth of God's love? In what ways do we reveal our love for him? What is the depth of our love for the Creator's cosmos, his "world"?
2. Are men and women the loving stewards of all his creation? How is creation-care fueled by our love for our Creator and his creation?
3. Is "he gave his only..." the first model for Christmas giving? How did God show his abundant love even before Christmas? [Hint: Psalm 89 and other passages]
4. What would be different if God loved people, but not anything else in his creation? Would nature seem different to us? Do we behave sometimes as if he loves only us humans—and not the rest of the creation?

What are we going to do about it?

5. Can we represent Jesus—or be God's images—without loving "the world" that he "so loved"? How is that love for the world demonstrated? How do we teach it?
6. John 3:16 says we can have eternal life by believing in God's only begotten Son, whose birthday we celebrate. Secure in him, can we then risk time and money to "improve and protect" the world that God so loves? With eternity taken care of, can we concentrate on our temporal ways of honoring and pleasing him?
7. How does our love of God's creation help empower and equip our love for people? How does love for people help intensify and direct our love of the creation, and the Creator?

***Truth To Celebrate:** The greatest Christmas gift ever—the Creator giving his only begotten Son for us—demonstrates his priceless love for all of his world, his creation.*

***Advent-Action:** Find out if your electric utility gives you an option of buying energy from renewable sources, such as wind and solar for home, Church or work. Consider signing up as you weigh the benefits of buying energy that neither depletes natural resources nor pollutes the God's world.*

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