

For God So Love the World

John 3:1-17

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

Have you ever heard someone talk about God's plans from the very beginning of time? Yes, God had a plan by which all things were created. On the 6th day of His creative activity God created Adam and Eve as the crowning touch of His creation. They were to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth, and have dominion over it. They were made the stewards of God's creation, to care for it. God had given them the command however, not eat of tree of the knowledge of Good and evil.

However, when Satan deceived them into not trusting the Word of God, they fell into sin. God talked to them after they had tried to hide themselves from Him.

It is at this point that some people begin to buy into a false teaching. Some people say, "If Adam had not eaten of the fruit, if they would have just left well-enough alone, everything would be fine. Adam messed everything up, so God had to come up with a new plan."

This is a wrong answer. The names of those who will be with God, had their names written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13; 17; 20; 21) God's plan, from the very beginning... God's plan when He created Adam and gave him the instructions in the garden... even before their fall into sin, was that God would give His Son as their Redeemer. It is after all, the "book of life of the Lamb who was slain." (Rev. 13:8)

Dear friends, God's plan from the very beginning, from the foundation of the world, was to give the life of His only begotten as the ransom for those whom He loved. Who are those whom He loved? The world! For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 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. (John 3:16-17)

At this point, we should probably address something else that people falsely like to claim about God, that God's loves the sinner but hates the sin. I am not sure exactly where that came from. Yes, it is true that Christ came to die for sinners, to redeem sinners – for God does not "desire" the death of sinner. But He came to redeem them, to buy them back from the death and wrath of God that their sinfulness purchased for them.

As Paul told Timothy, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." (1 Tim. 1:15)

But nowhere does it say God loves sinners. In fact, there are some statements in Scripture which show God's wrath against sinners. If God loves sinners, why does Scripture proclaim that, *the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.* (Psalm 1:5) And again, *but transgressors and sinners will be crushed together, and those who forsake the Lord will come to an end.* (Is. 1:28)

If you truly want to understand God's wrath against sinners, you need look no further than the Passion of our Lord. Jesus, taking our sinfulness into Himself, endured the wrath of God against sinners. We see His suffering the ravages of vile evil who abused His body, and then nailed Him to the cross. We know His agony as He hung there until His death.

And it was not simply the agony of His body, but He endured the shame of God's wrath when we hear Jesus cry out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me." (Matt. 27:46) There is the wrath of God against sinners.

God prophesies through Isaiah's pen about how He will execute His wrath against sinners, by His own Son. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 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...

... Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (Is. 53:4-6; 10-12)

How do we live then, knowing God's wrath against sinners? Do we embrace our sinfulness? Do we turn to our own way? Do we revel in it and excel at it? Or do we repent of it, beg God's mercy and forgiveness, claiming, "I, a poor, miserable, sinner, confess to you all my sins and iniquities?"

Our text also proclaims God's love. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 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.

God, knowing the sinfulness that all would inherit from Adam, put His plan into motion. God's love is declared in the same place as His wrath, in the suffering and death of His only begotten Son. Out of love for the world, the perfect, innocent, Son of God, Jesus, was given unto death as the ransom for sinners. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 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.

Today is Trinity Sunday, and we see the work of the Trinity in your salvation. The Father gave His only begotten Son to die for you, and they sent the Holy Spirit to work faith in you that you might believe and not perish, but have eternal life.

It is the Son who is still being sent by the Father.

It is Christ who comes in water and the Word – it is Christ into whom you are baptized – into His death & resurrection.

Christ comes as the very Word that you hear spoken, forgiving your sinfulness.
It is Christ who comes, for it is His flesh and blood that you eat in the meal He sets before you, filling you with Himself, His forgiveness and life everlasting.

And it is the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son who is at work in water, Word, and meal.

It is the Holy Spirit who leads you to the font, the assembly gathered around the Word, and to the Table.

It is at the font that the Spirit begins faith, so that you might believe in God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is the Spirit, present in the Word you hear spoken, working in you to trust in Christ – the Son who was given to die for you, that as you hear and eat, you might believe in Him and have eternal life.

It is the Father, who sent the Son, who redeemed us with His own precious blood, and His Spirit proceeds from them that we might believe and be saved.

This is your loving God. Who called you to be His own dear child and forgives you all your sin, that you might be His forever.

To this God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and only this God, be all glory forever! Amen.