

a sermon:

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. A PRAYER

II. A PROPOSITION

III. A SCRIPTURE - JOHN 3:14-17 – FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

IV. INTRUDOCTION

V. CHRIST OVERCAME DEATH AND IS LIFTED UP IN HEAVEN

VI. FAITH IN CHRIST BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE

VII. GOD LOVES US SO MUCH THAT HE SACRIFICED CHRIST FOR US

VIII. GOD OFFERS NOT CONDEMNATION BUT SALVATION TO ALL MEN

IX. IN CONCLUSION

X. REFERENCES

I. A PRAYER

Let us pray: “Glory to GOD in the highest, and peace to His people on earth. Lord GOD, heavenly King, Almighty GOD and Father, we worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory. Lord JESUS CHRIST, only Son of The Father, Lord GOD, Lamb of GOD, You take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; You are seated at the right hand of The Father: receive our prayer. For You alone are The Holy One, You alone are The Most High, JESUS CRHIST, with The HOLY SPIRIT, in the glory of GOD The Father! Amen.”¹

II. A PROPOSITION

GOD The Father so loves us that He gave up The Son to die on The Cross, that our souls should not perish, but that we should receive eternal life!

III. A SCRIPTURE - JOHN 3:14-17 – FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For GOD sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.²

IV. INTRUDOCTION

The Bible tells us in I JOHN 4:8b, “GOD is love.”³ But what exactly is “love?” The action of love towards another person means “to be pleased with; to regard with affection.” It is having “benevolence or good will” for others.” We may love a one who is kind, a friend or a family member. And “if our hearts are right, we love GOD above all things.”⁴ Indeed, “the love of GOD is the first duty of man.”⁵

¹ Catholic Family Prayer Book, The Gloria, p 72.

² 2, KJV, JOHN 3:14-17.

³ 2, KJV, I JOHN 4:8b.

⁴ 3, Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “LOVE,” verb, 1 and 2, p LOU - LOV. Pages not numbered.

⁵ 3, Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “LOVE,” noun, 1, p LOU-LOV. Pages not numbered.

But how much does GOD love us? Does The Almighty really care what happens to us in our earthly lives? Does The LORD love us enough to save our eternal souls, so that we may dwell with Him in Heaven when we leave this mortal world? The answer to these questions may be found in The Holy Scriptures, where St. John records the Words of GOD in JOHN 3:16 which assure us that “GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!”⁶

V. CHRIST OVERCAME DEATH AND IS LIFTED UP IN HEAVEN

JOHN 3:14 tells us, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:”⁷ What is this reference that St. John makes to Moses lifting up a serpent in the wilderness? In NUMBERS 21 we are told that “Moses lifted up a bronze snake on a pole as a cure for a punishment due to disobedience” of the doubting and complaining children of Israel in the wilderness. When the children of Israel when were afflicted with the bite of deadly serpents, they cried out to GOD for deliverance.⁸

So when the ancient Israelites looked upon that emblem, they were cured of their physical sickness caused by the sin of murmuring against Moses and against GOD. How were the Israelites cured? It was through faith in the one forgiving GOD. Only by faith was the power of the serpent’s bite to cause physical death made of no effect. Thus through repentance and obedience were the earthly lives of the people saved!

Just as the emblem fashioned by Moses at GOD’s command brought salvation of the body, so CHRIST was “lifted up on a cross for people’s sin” to bring salvation to the souls of the faithful.⁹ So when we look with faith upon the empty Cross, we are cured of our spiritual diseases caused by our sins of rebellion against GOD. This is the great blessing of faith in CHRIST: the power of satan’s bite to cause spiritual death is made of

⁶ 2, KJV, JOHN 3:16.

⁷ 2, KJV, JOHN 3:14.

⁸ 5, Bible Knowledge Commentary, JOHN 3:14-15, p 281-282.

⁹ 5, Ibid.

no effect and we our eternal lives are secured!

Now we can see the comparison of Moses lifting up the serpent and CHRIST being lifted up from death. “CHRIST died for us, and was buried... [and] went down into Hell.”¹⁰ But He was then lifted up, for “CHRIST did truly rise again from death, and took again his body... He ascended into Heaven, and there sit[s], until He return[s] to judge all Men at the last day.”¹¹

Now we can better understand that the prophet Isaiah foresaw the lifting up of The Messiah and His healing power to save men’s souls from eternal darkness when he wrote in ISAIAH 53:5,10a,12b these words, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. Yet it pleased The LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin... because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”¹²

This is why St. Luke recorded in LUKE 24:46 the explanation of The risen Lord when He appeared to His Apostles after The Resurrection, “...Thus it is written, and thus it behoved CHRIST to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:”¹³

VI. FAITH IN CHRIST BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE

JOHN 3:15 tells us, “That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”¹⁴ What is St. John speaking to us of? The issue at stake here is nothing less than eternal life or eternal damnation of our very souls! The soul that sins is not subject to “annihilation but [rather] the tragedy of being cut off eternally from GOD!”¹⁵ I JOHN I:5 says, “GOD is light.”¹⁶ Why would any man wish to cut himself off from

¹⁰ 4, 39 Articles of Religion, Article III, “Of the going down of CHRIST into Hell.”

¹¹ 4, Ibid., Article IV, “Of the Resurrection of CHRIST.”

¹² 2, KJV, ISAIAH 53: 5,10a,12b.

¹³ 2, KJV, LUKE 24:46.

¹⁴ 2, KJV, JOHN 3:15.

¹⁵ 6, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, JOHN 3:14-15, p 1078.

GOD the source of light for our souls and eternal life? The answer is sin. “Love for sin prompts men to reject the light of CHRIST, whereas those who welcome the light [of GOD] are ready to put their trust in Him.”¹⁷

How is a man reconciled to GOD, so that His Divine light will shine through us in this life and enlighten our souls before His presence in Heaven in the next? The answer lies only in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. “The Son... truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile His Father to us.” How so? CHRIST suffered in our place “to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt [of mankind], but also for [the] actual sins of men.”¹⁸

We can not earn GOD’s forgiveness for our sins, nor do enough good works in this life to merit reconciliation with The Creator. Our reconciliation to The LORD is on account of His grace that He offers to all penitent men at The Cross of CHRIST. And so “we are accounted righteous before GOD, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior JESUS CHRIST by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings.”¹⁹

This is why we read in ISAIAH 45:18a,21b,22, “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens... there is no GOD else beside Me; a just GOD and a Savior; there is none beside Me. Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am GOD, and there is none else.”²⁰ And this is why we read in ROMANS 8:1-2, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”²¹

¹⁶ 2, KJV, I JOHN 1:5.

¹⁷ 6, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, JOHN 3:14-15, p 1078.

¹⁸ 4, 39 Articles of Religion, Article II, “Of the Word or Son of GOD, which was made very Man.”

¹⁹ 4, Ibid., Article XI, “Of the Justification of Man.”

²⁰ 2, KJV, ISAIAH 45: 18a,21b,22.

²¹ 2, KJV, ROMANS 8:1-2.

VII. GOD LOVES US SO MUCH THAT HE SACRIFICED CHRIST FOR US

JOHN 3:16 tells us, “For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”²² How much does GOD love us? Note that GOD loves us so dearly that He “not only sent... [CHRIST] into the world with full and ample power to negotiate a peace between heaven and earth, but He gave... [His Son] up to suffer and die for us, as the great propitiation.” GOD loves us so much that He Himself in The Son made on The Cross a “payment for all of man’s sins!”²³

Is salvation offered to all men? Most certainly, for all men are called to confess that CHRIST came to be “our prophet, priest and king.” Such is GOD’s love for all men that we are all called to “give ourselves to be ruled, taught and saved by Him!”²⁴ And by the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord, we who believe in Him as our Saviour “are entitled to the joys of Heaven..., [for we] shall have everlasting life! If [we are] believers, then [we are] children [of GOD]. And if [we are] children [of GOD], then [we are] heirs” of CHRIST’s Kingdom!²⁵

This is the great Gospel Truth, that CHRIST secures for the Christian eternal life! For “CHRIST... was made like unto us in all things, ...except [sin], from which He was clearly void [of], both in His flesh, and in His Spirit. He came to be the Lamb without spot, Who, by sacrifice of Himself once... [on The Cross], should take away the sins of the world!”²⁶ This is why we read in I TIMOTHY 1:15 St. Paul’s testimony of The Gospel, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief!”²⁷ And this is why we read in JOHN 1:12, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of GOD, even to them that believe on His Name!”²⁸

²² 2, KJV, JOHN 3:16.

²³ 7, Matthew Henry’s Commentary, JOHN 3:1-21, 3,[2.],First, [3rd column], p 1930.

²⁴ 7, Ibid.

²⁵ 7, Ibid.,

²⁶ 4, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XI, “Of CHRIST alone without Sin.”

²⁷ 2, KJV, I TIMOTHY 1:15.

²⁸ 2, KJV, JOHN 1:12.

VIII. GOD OFFERS NOT CONDEMNATION BUT SALVATION TO ALL MEN

JOHN 3:17 declares, “For GOD sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”²⁹ What does this tell us about The Creator Himself? Here we have a glimpse into the very heart of The Almighty, for “GOD does not delight in the death of the wicked... [, but rather] He desires that... [all men] be saved.”³⁰

What are the blessings of salvation in CHRIST? When we willingly bend the knee in true faith at The Cross of our Lord “[and] ...through grace obey the calling: [we are] ...justified freely; [we are] ...made sons of GOD by adoption; [we are] ...made like the image of... [The Father’s] only-begotten Son JESUS CHRIST; [we in righteousness then] ...walk... in good works; and at length, by GOD’s mercy, [we] ...attain everlasting... [joyous life in Heaven forever]!”³¹

This is why we read in EZEKIEL 18:23, “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”³² CHRIST’s work at The Cross show that GOD desires all men to repent and reconcile to Him. Thus we read in II PETER 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”³³

IX. IN CONCLUSION

What then can we say of love, and GOD’s love for us, in particular? And do our own lives reflect that Divine love that caused The Father to give His Son, so that we might obtain forgiveness for our sins, friendship with GOD and eternal life in Heaven? What shall we say to The LORD on our day of judgment if, having known The Holy Scriptures and all it says of love, should we in our earthly lives have neglected to love others as CHRIST loves us? What shall we do if, when we come before the judgment

²⁹ 2, KJV, JOHN 3:17.

³⁰ 5, The Knowledge Bible Commentary, JOHN 3:17, p 282.

³¹ 4, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XVII, “Of Predestination and Election.”

³² 2, KJV, EZEKIEL 18:23.

seat of CHRIST, our Lord and Savior says to us, “Be gone, for I never knew you?”

Oh, but GOD forbid such needless and sorrowful suffering of our earthly lives and eternal souls! For we have seen that, just as the bronze serpent was lifted up before the ancient Israelites in the wilderness, so very CHRIST Himself carried our sins at The Cross and has been lifted up to Heaven! We have seen that CHRIST alone is The Salvation of men and that, being made righteous in Him, our eternal life in Heaven is assured! We have seen that it is GOD’s unspeakably deep love for us that sent The Lord JESUS CHRIST to The Cross so that our souls might not perish in sin! And we have seen that, if we obey the call of The Father’s grace to us to accept the justification of The Cross, then we shall be accounted as the very sons of GOD and be remade in the very image of The Son!

So we see from our Scripture passage of JOHN 3:14-17 these things: That “Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” Why? In part to foreshadow that “even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” on The Cross. For what reason? So that “whosoever believeth in Him should not perish!” And what is secured? That we are to “have eternal life!” How much then does GOD love us? “For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” to suffer for our sins! To what end? “That whosoever should believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” in Heaven! Why then did GOD send His Son into this world? “GOD sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved!”³⁴

This then is what The LORD revealed to St. John as he wrote Holy Scripture under the HOLY SPIRIT’s guidance of The Divine Love which brings us His saints into eternal life as in I JOHN 4:8b, that “GOD is love!”³⁵ Indeed, GOD The Father so loves us that He gave up The Son to die on The Cross, that our souls should not perish, but that we should receive eternal life! In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

³³ 2, KJV, II PETER 3:9.

³⁴ 2, KJV, JOHN 3:14-17.

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³⁵ 2, KJV, 2, KJV, I JOHN 4:8b.