

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. (John 3:16)

Our gospel lesson for this coming Sunday (fourth Sunday in Lent) is John 3:14-21. The lesson really begins with verse one of John 3. John 3:1-21 comprises the well-known conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. It has rightly been said that John 3:1-21 contains the whole of Christ's teaching. If we had nothing except these twenty one verses, we would know the way of salvation.

As we have known from childhood, John 3:16 is the gospel in a nutshell. It is the focal point of this week's gospel lesson. God loving the world points to the great truth that motivated God's plan of salvation. Love here is agape love. It is a love that is self-sacrificing on the part of God and asks nothing in return. God's love does not denote limitation but is an open invitation to everyone.

The "believes" means to have faith. It is found 90 times in John. Furthermore, "who believes" does not mean that man must do something first to make the atonement an actuality, but rather that God Himself causes the hearers to believe in what has already been done for all.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee who relied on rule after human rule. That had been and was the center of his current profession. Therefore the new teaching of Christ was confusing to him. Jesus patiently helps Nicodemus through his misperception. Jesus does this for us when we get things turned around.

Sometimes we, too, can be a bit obtuse when it comes to spiritual matters. This may especially be so when we are battered by all that goes on in our world. It is at those times that we can fearlessly come to God knowing that he loves us unconditionally. We can lay out our frustrations and concerns knowing that he not only already knows about them, but already has solutions on the way.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank you loving us, always. Thank you for sending your dear Son to die for all of our sins and working faith in our hearts. When confusing times come, help us to come running to you with our whole load of cares and needs. Amen