

Date: June 9, 2013

Theme: God's Love is Immeasurable

Object: Measuring Cup, Tape Measure and Watch

Scripture: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

(John 3:16 NASB)

Slide One of my favorite Bible verses begins, "For God so loved the world." I was thinking about that verse and wondering -- just how great is God's love and how could we measure it? This morning I brought several things that we often use in measuring other things. I thought they might help us measure God's love.

Sometimes we use a measuring cup to measure things. If I were making some cookies, I would use a measuring cup to make sure that I put in exactly the right amount of flour, sugar, and milk. I wonder if we might use a measuring cup to measure God's love? The Bible says, "**The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want....my cup runneth over.**" (Psalm 23:1 & 5) Well, if our cup runs over with God's love, I don't guess we could use a measuring cup to measure it.

If we were building something, we might use a tape measure to measure the length, width, and height of different things. I wonder if we might use a tape measure to measure God's love? The Bible tells us that God's love is higher than the heavens. (Psalm 108:4) If God's love is higher than the heavens, I don't think we could use a tape measure to measure it, could we?

We use a watch to measure time. There will probably be some people here this morning who will use their watch to measure how long the pastor's sermon lasts. I wonder if we could use a watch to measure how long God's love will last. The Bible tells us that God's love is from everlasting to everlasting. (Psalm 103:17)

Wow! If God's love is from everlasting to everlasting, I don't guess we could measure it with a watch.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." How do you measure a love like that? We can't measure it -- we don't need to -- but we do need to experience it.

My prayer for you today is, "That you may understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience it, though it is so great you will never fully understand it." (Ephesians 3:18-19)

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love -- a love so great that you gave your one and only Son so that we could have eternal life. Amen.

READING – John 3:11-21

John 3:15-21

Slide Faith is Believing

Sermon #17

Open in Prayer **Blank**

This morning we continue the dialog between Jesus and Nicodemus that began with verse one. Although at this point there is not much dialog since there are no responses recorded by Nicodemus. Jesus made clear to Nicodemus that one must be born-again in order to be saved. Now we return to verses 15 to 17 and will add to them verses 18 to 21 of John 3. We will focus this Fathers Day on two words that are related and I believe are critically important to every Christian father. Those two words are “Faith” and “Believe”. Let me begin by reading the four verses that begin with 15, **Slide** “... whoever **believes** will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who **believes** in Him is not judged; he who does not **Slide** **believe** has been judged already, because he has not **Slide** **believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God. In these four verses Jesus uses the verb “believe” five times. Therefore, I believe it is important that we understand what this word means. **Slide** The Greek word used here and translated as “believe” is πιστεύω *pisteuō* (*pis-ti-voō*) to believe. John writes using *pisteuō* the verb in the present active state; meaning it is current and active and on going. The root word of *pisteuō* is *pistis* (*pis'-tis*) which is the word translated as “faith”. It is the word used in the other three gospels and is the normative singular noun. Faith is used 250 times in the Bible, 4 times in the Old Testament and 246 times in the New Testament. No wonderful Nicodemus

struggled with having faith if he solely based it on the scriptures. **Blank**

What does all this mean? Let me look at what “faith” means and then build upon this to define and understand what “believe” means. Faith is a gift of God and cannot be earned by works of men. Faith can be defined as our trust or dependence on God based on the fact that we take God at His word and believe what He has said in the Bible to be true. Paul was clear and to the point when he wrote in Romans chapter one, **Slide**¹⁶ “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who **believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”¹⁷ For in it *the righteousness of God is revealed from **faith to faith**; as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’*” Now then the word “believe” grows out of “faith” and puts faith into action. “Believing” means to live out “faith” to think, behave, act and speak built upon one’s faith. “Believing” is a much stronger concept in the New Testament where it is used 353 times compared to the 48 times in the Old Testament. Holy “faith” is of God – a gift to people and the only truly holy One is God and it is not to be applied to people, because people are often unfaithful and untrustworthy.

Blank We often read of negotiations between management and labor where they come together and work out labor’s demands and employer’s conditions of employment in “good faith”. This implies that each side works out the conditions and considerations honestly or as often is referred to as working in “good faith”. However, once they have reached an agreement the first thing that is done is to draw up a written version of their agreement in which each party is to sign. Why is this done? Because even though it was agreed upon in “good faith” both parties know that men by their nature are untrustworthy and therefore they need a written agreement to hold each party accountable to its conditions. So too it is with the church our faith is to be placed in God and His Word, not in men or traditions or rituals. We have the conditions and terms of the agreement in writing, it is the Holy

Bible – true it is one sided, because it comes from God alone – our choice is to agree or not to agree. If we agree it is because God has given us the gift of faith and now God wants action. James writes, **Slide** “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being by itself.*” (James 2:17 NASB) The word in this verse translated as “dead” would better be translated as useless or vain or ineffective, which a dead person certainly is. **Blank** So too faith is useless that does not result in one believing and live out their faith. True faith, saving faith produces believing and believing produces “Fruit of the Spirit” in one life.

The fallen world sees faith as foolish and faith is something that “spiritual” people have bought into and it lacks reason and proof. They think faith lacks proof because one cannot see, or hear or taste it. The evil one works hard to keep mankind from desiring and understanding faith. This effort of the evil one has crept into the church as well. The church use to influence our society, but sadly our society now influences the church. Faith in the church has become subjective, that which I wish to have faith in does not have to be related to truth or evidence or ground in the scripture. Against this background of a lost world which has no faith and believes in no faith and the subjective existentialism of faith in many churches; the Christian must stand apart and insist that biblical faith is true and reliable not just because history has proven it so, but because faith in the God of the Bible is true and right. For many centuries now, men with great minds of intellect have worked hard to disprove the Bible and yet, the Bible still stands as truth and as the Word of God and it still convicts the world of its sin and its desperate need of salvation and a Savior. Faith then is submission to God in the following ways; first, God asks that we believe that we are less than perfect and that He is perfect. Since He is perfect and we are not, it is right that the result is we should be separated from God forever. We are sinners and it is right for a holy God to punish sinning sinners. The second truth that

follows is that we must believe that God loves us in spite of our sins and the He acted in Jesus Christ to remove our sins so that we might again be in the presence of His holiness by being conformed to the image of the perfect and sinless Christ. Thirdly, God asks us to believe as John has written – believing being a verb then means we are to move beyond intellectual conviction into action of living out this belief. Living faith is believing and believing is standing against the current of the fast flowing sin of the world. The father is the shepherd of his home and is to lead by living faith or believing in Jesus in his heart, mind and soul. He is to guide his wife and children through the pitfalls of the world and to the sanctuary of Jesus and the Bible. This is a big job.

This is where verses 18 to 20 of John 3 comes into play. There is now a shift from the wonderful hope of verses 16 and 17, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” Once we read these two verses the thought arises, “Yes, but what of those who do **not** believe?” Verses 18 to 20 now deal with this question. Those who do not believe are now, at this very time, under God’s condemnation. Verse 18 says, “He who **believes** in Him is not judged; he who does not **believe** has been judged already, because he has not **believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Here John uses the word “**believe**” three times in this one verse. Are you beginning to see this this verb “**believe**” is important to what John is expressing. Believing is putting faith into action. Here to **believe** is to actively live out your faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and when you live this then you are **not judged**. The gospel of John makes a distinction throughout the book between believing “on” Jesus, meaning that Jesus lived in history and did many great things and believing “in” Jesus as the Son of God and your personal Savior who

has reconciled you back to God. The entire chapter 11 of Hebrews speaks to **Slide** faith throughout the ages has been demonstrated in action. I hope you will take the time to read Hebrews chapter 11, in your homes, with your family and discuss how you see faith demonstrated and what this means in each of our lives. I chose not to do that this morning because of the time constraints.

The gospel of John also speaks of “genuine” belief versus “inadequate” belief. Genuine belief results in preserving to the end and produces eternal life. On the other hand, inadequate faith results in eternal death. We saw in John 2:23 to 25 this reference to inadequate faith. Many believed because of the signs Jesus performed. It is true that to believe on the basis of miraculous signs is better than not to believe at all – Jesus, says, **Slide** “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” (John 10:37-38 NASB) Look at Jesus’ response to those who witnessed His signs at Passover in John chapter 2, it calls their faith into question, **Slide** “But Jesus, on His part, was not **entrusting** Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.” (John 2:24-25 NASB) If these people in verse 23 were genuine believers then why would Jesus not entrust Himself to them if they “believed”. In verse 23 the word “**believe**” and in verse 24 the word “**entrust**” are the same word translated and applied differently. This then would make it impossible for Jesus not to “entrust” Himself to them if they truly “believed” in Him as the Son of God, not just a man who can do miracles and is considered a prophet. **Blank** Inadequate faith is the subject of John 6 verses 60 to 66. After Jesus has explained that He is the “bread of life” come from heaven and sets the stage for what we now call the Lord’s Supper many began to question how Jesus could be this “bread of life” and they chose not to proceed with

His instruction and teaching but to question and move away from Jesus. They had inadequate faith, faith for only some of Christ, but not for all of Christ. We cannot, I say we cannot, have faith in only some of Christ, for even much of the world has faith that Jesus was a good man like Gandhi or Mother Theresa of recent history. This is not saving faith, but weak and inadequate faith. We must believe in Jesus Christ completely – that He is none other than the Son of God and through Him and Him alone is salvation. We must be sold out to Christ, He must be our Lord and Savior for anything less is where the fallen world is.

Verses 19 and 20 of our study this morning says, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. It is easy to look at the world and say there is a murder or there is a kidnapper or there is a thief and say these are men of evil. But the world and the church make exceptions to so many behaviors that are sin, but are no longer called sin that we are becoming confused of what is true and right and what is wrong and evil. The world sees no problem with adultery, fornication and homosexuality, in truth the world celebrates these. Look how our society has influenced all that was once good into something not good. The Boy Scouts just voted to allow young men who are openly homosexual to join. Many churches are now marrying homosexuals, they no longer have a problem with their people living together prior to marriage and allowing women to serve as elders. We are people of God and that means we are to live by God’s standards and His standards do not change with time or the whims of society. We find the words of Jesus in chapter 15 of John instructing us, **Slide** “You are My friends if you do what I command you.” This is clear and to the point – to be considered a friend of Christ we are to live out His commands. Jesus continues, **Slide** “No longer do I call you slaves,

for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:14-15 NASB) **Blank** Are then we slaves to the world and to sin or have we become friends of Christ and are saved by Christ because He has made known to us God the Father through His life, death and resurrection and the scriptures? Why do we want to keep one foot in the world and one the realm of Christ? When we do this it is inadequate faith. It is a faith that fails for it wants to be in the light on one hand and act in darkness on the other, this is not truly faith and it does not save. Millions who call themselves Christian have fooled themselves into believing in a false Christ and have placed themselves above Christ by picking and choosing what they will or will not believe of the scriptures. Where is the evidence of their faith? Where is the “Fruit of the Spirit”? May this never be said of us my brothers and sisters! May we believe “in” Christ and not “of” Christ as some do. May we submit to our Lord and Savior for He is our only hope!

May we live as verse 21 instructs, “But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” It is my prayer that we are a people who believe in Christ and live the scriptures, for the scriptures are truth and when we live the scriptures we live in the Light, not just the light of day, but the Light of verse 21, which is in the spiritual Light, which is Jesus, the Son of God, the Light that shines truth before the whole world and convicts the world of their sin and their need for a Savior. We, all of us, are to be beams of light shining out into this dark world. Today I want to finish by encouraging fathers to be the light of God. In a world where men are no longer men of honor, truth and right – we are to be such men. We are to be the light of Christ in this world – the whole world – first in our hearts and then as leaders of our families and then at work before all others. Paul tells us, **Slide** “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like

men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” (1Corinthians 16:13-14 NASB)

Men to be Christian husbands and fathers we must place the needs of our wives before our own and then the needs of our children next and then our spiritual needs and after these comes our careers. This is balance of the scriptures, not the balance of the world. If we seek Christ with a passion – spending time in prayer and in the study of His Word – it is this that will guide not only us, but also our families to peace in a troubled world. Sleep is over rated, money is over rated, houses and beautiful yards are over rated, they are good and fine when they do not interfere with our spiritual needs. For when they interfere then all too often the spiritual responsibilities are under rated. We can rest in heaven, but while here on earth we have a holy job to do and this job is a job with eternal affects, it begins with prayer and then study of the Word. Are you praying enough? Are you leading your family in prayer every day? Are you reading the Word of God and then reading it with your family? Are you committed to holy things – serving your Lord Jesus and His community we call Canyon Bible Church above sports and hobbies. To be a Christian husband and father means to set aside many interesting things in this life and pursue Christ. It means being tired, but it means being blessed and it means blessing your wife and children. It means being blessed as God blessed Abraham. Let me read out of Genesis chapter 12. In verse God says to Abraham, **Slide** “I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great” - God did do this for Abraham, but God ultimately did this for His own glory and for a second reason that we see as the verse continues, **Slide** “and so you shall be a blessing.” God blesses people so they may bless others in His name. Let me ask you, look at your life – are you blessing others in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Verse three then continues, **Slide** “And I will bless those who bless you.” When we are blessing to others in the name of the one true God then they in turn will be a blessing to us

and to others. **Slide** It is like dropping a pebble into a still pond and watching the ripples go out and if we drop a second pebble the ripples overlap. As the verse continues, **Slide** “And the one who curses you I will curse.” (Genesis 12:3-4 NASB) We are not to worry about getting even with those who hurt us – that is God’s job – not ours. We have all been deeply hurt by people, even people who call themselves Christian, even churches who call themselves Christian. God will take care of these – for if we seek revenge then we will become just like them and God calls us not to be like them but to be a blessing. It is amazing to realize that when we live as God commands and when we live with a passion for our Lord Jesus the end result will be, **Slide** “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Live for the Lord and live with a holy love for all His children. Teach this to your children. Men shepherd your family for this is a great calling. **Slide** “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” (1Corinthians 16:13-14 NASB) Amen