

Is God's Story your Story?

This past week I got to wondering about a few things... for instance:

1. If you throw a cat out a car window, does it become cat litter?
2. When a cow laughs, does milk come out its nose?
3. Since a fool and his money are soon parted, how did that fool and his money get together in the first place?
4. How do they get deer to cross at that yellow road sign?
5. We're presently in hunting season, and it got me to thinking: when it's tourist season, why can't we shoot them?
6. What is another word for thesaurus?
7. Why is abbreviation such a long word?
8. How do you know when it's time to tune your bagpipes?
9. Why is there an expiration date on a sour cream container?
10. Why do they call it a TV set when you only get one?
11. If you shoot a mime, should you use a silencer?
12. Is it true, that cannibals won't eat clowns because they taste funny?
13. Why isn't phonetics spelled the way it sounds?
14. Why do TV stations report power outages?
15. What hair color do they put on the driver's license of a bald man?
16. If a balding man comes to a barber shop for a haircut does he charge half price?
17. What wrong with people? (Video)

Those are all silly Questions. They don't make sense and they're not supposed to. However, this morning I want to ask a question that does make sense and needs to be answered. That question is simply: **Is God's story my story?** Is God's story of his love our story of our love? Does the love God has for us find it's way through us so as to touch others with that same love? Can our community, those around us, see God's love for them through us? That's an important question, because one of the things, the main thing, we are here to do as a church is to **share the love and compassion of Jesus Christ with our community**. That's why we are here - isn't it?

As I have spent time with un-churched, unsaved people, I have found that the basic question they want to ask is this: **Does God really care?** I have found that most of them believe in God. Studies have shown that over 95% of the people in America say they believe in God, but what they want to know, if you can distill down all of their questions is basically: Does God really care? Because in their minds, a God who doesn't care, doesn't count! So they really want to know, "Does God care?" We need to be able to give them an answer.

Is God's Story Our Story? Is the love of God for us finding it's way out of us so that others will know God's love? Is His story of love our story of love? Well, as I studied again the passage, I thought, "Lord, would you let your love for us in this church so fill us that it will begin to pour out through us?" "God, you can do that for us, can't you?" You can make our worship services so precious that we will sense your Holy Spirit settle down upon us every time we gather. And you can touch us in such a way with the fire of your love that the most natural thing for us to do would be to let that love reach out to touch the lives of others in our community. God's story really can become our story. **God's love for us can become God's love through us until it becomes God's love for someone else!** And folks, that's how it works, true? Let's look at this beloved passage of Scripture on God's love for us, and let me give you **six principles concerning God's love**.

1) Here's the first principle: **God's love is a universal love.**

It says, **"For God so loved the world."** Just stop right there, and notice the word, world. God's love is universal. It is so expansive, it's a big world.

Facebook is an amazing thing. I have learned that there are people all over the United States that I know. It has giving me the ability to reconnect to people from my past.

I mean I am meeting people that I went to school with back in the 90's. They are spread out over this great nation.

If I have learned anything since joining Facebook it is the fact that, "It really is a small world isn't it?" I mean, I was four states away, and 17 years later and am talking with someone I had gone to school with. It really is a small world, isn't it?

Or is it? The truth of the matter is that isn't a small world. It's a great big world. It is a world with billions of people in it, and when we come across this passage of truth, that God loved the world. We realize just how universal that love is, because it's a big world, and incredibly big world. God's love is incredibly big as well. Now, if you have read your bibles, you know that this passage in John is part of the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night. And there were two things, two discoveries that Nicodemus made when he talked to Jesus.

a) The first was the discovery that **God loves everyone**. That's what we see in this universal love of God.

b) But there is another discovery Nicodemus made, **Even a good man needs God**. That is something we need to understand here today as well. Nicodemus was a good man. He was a teacher, a member of the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders. And that night, he found out that no matter how good we are, we all need God.

I have this sneaking suspicion that in our society, in America which has so many opportunities to know God's word, I have a sneaking suspicion that there are many many people who really don't know and don't understand that even a good man needs God. A bad man, they would quickly agree needs God. A person in trouble, they would quickly agree needs prayer. But the concept that even a good man needs God, has never entered their minds. And I am convinced that a lot of people, even in our circles of influence, need a touch of God's universal love to change them, because they don't understand the principle that even a good man needs God.

2) Not only is God's love a universal love, **God's love is an active love**.

It says, **"For God so loved the world that He gave."** God's love is an active love, He gave. The whole process of God's love shows his commitment to us. He gave his Son. It's not a passive love, it's an active love. It's not a love that stands back and says, "We've got problems in this world." It's a love that rolls up its sleeves and gets involved. It's a love that says, I must give. God's love is a committed and active love. The only question is this: Is our love that active and that committed?

Since the first day I heard it, I have never forgotten it. It was written anonymously, but it is still a strikingly honest statement about the commitment of most people, even Christians. It goes like this:

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please, no more, no less. Just \$3 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine.

I don't want enough of him to make me love a black man, or pick beats with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth.

I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.

God's love, however, is **a committed love**. And the only way our story will ever become God's story is if our love also becomes a committed love. Because there is a power to commitment. I have learned that until I am committed, there is a hesitancy, a chance to draw back. But the moment, I definitely commit myself, then God moves too, and a whole stream of events erupts. All manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings, persons, and spiritual assistance, which I could never have dreamed would come my way, begins to flow toward me. The moment I make a commitment.

What's going to happen when the love of God gets a hold of your life, and you start spreading that fire? What is going to happen as you become committed to sharing that love, to reaching your family and friends for Christ, for reaching this community for Christ? What's going to happen when the Love of God gets a hold of this church and it starts spreading the fire? I'll tell you what is going to happen, God is going to work in unbelievable ways; and all types of unforeseen, unexpected opportunities and blessings are going to fall in our laps.

I am convinced that many of us miss the best that God has for us because we ask for him to send the blessing and then we will make the commitment. But God is saying, "Child of mine, you make the commitment and I'll send the blessing." Step over that line of commitment and make yourself available to reach others for Christ and you will discover more opportunity and more blessing than you ever imagined. The story of God's love is a story of an active, committed love. The only question is whether it's the story of our love.

3) And then the third principle I find concerning God's love : God's love is a universal love and an active love, and **God's love is a sacrificial love.**

It says, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son.**" That was the sacrifice. All great commitments involve a sacrifice, and Jesus himself is the tangible expression of God's sacrificial love.

Years ago I remember reading the news reports of a coal mining accident in the Alleghany Mountains. Many miners escaped with their lives, but three men were still trapped somewhere deep within the earth's crust. Whether they were dead or alive, no one knew.

What made the accident even more threatening to life was the presence of intense heat and noxious gases within the mine itself. If the men were not crushed by the rock, they could well have been asphyxiated by the fumes or killed by the heat.

Two days went by before a search expedition was allowed to even enter the mine because of the heat and fumes. Even then, there was great danger in store for anyone who would dare descend into what could well be a deep, black, grave. I don't remember what happened to those three men.

I do remember reading the interview conducted with one of the members of the search party as he was preparing to enter the mine. A reporter asked him if he knew of the noxious gases and the extreme danger of the mine. The man said, "Yes."

"And you are still going down?" And the man said, "Those men may still be alive."

Without another word of explanation, he put on his gas mask, climbed into the elevator, and descended into the black inferno of the mine. He put his life on the line that others might live.

That is what Christ does, because God's love is a sacrificial love. Now, I want you to think about one person in your circle of influence who needs to receive God's love into their life. Have you thought about them, yet? A son or daughter, or grandchild? A parent or other relative. A coworker or a school mate. Have you thought about them? Now, decide what you will give to them that will prepare the way for their salvation. Begin to ask God, "What can I do? How can I bridge the gap. What good thing can I do to bridge that gap and led them to Christ." Look and see what you can give to develop a relationship to bring them to the Lord makes God's story of sacrificial love, your story.

4) And then notice with me the fourth principle concerning God's love. God's love is not only a universal love, and an active love, and a sacrificial love, but also **God's love is a personal love.**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever." Can you see it? God's love is not just universal, it is personal. **For God so loved the world - that is universal and includes everyone. That whosoever - that's personal and means you!** Isn't it interesting that only the God of love could take something so universal and make it so personal? This love goes from the world to me! It goes from something that includes everyone, to something that says, "If everyone else ignored this great love of God, He still died for me." Just me. We're special, aren't we?

A couple of weeks ago, I decided to live real dangerously and take my life into my hands, and so I went down on the expressway in Chicago during the Christmas season.

And as I was driving, there was this other car, and the driver of that car evidently didn't appreciate something I had done.

Now, I can't imagine my driving ever offending anyone. I mean, can you?

But, for some reason, this guy was really upset. And he was yelling. And what he was saying, wasn't very nice. I mean, he was really ranting and raving and using God's name.

I thought about saying, "So, you know God, too?" But I didn't think that it would help matters.

Well, I survived that close encounter with death that day. And as I was preparing this message, it hit me: God loves that man. Because God loves not only the world that sings "How Great Thou Art," But he also loves the individual who blasphemes and calls God's name! Tell me: Is God's story, your story? Have you learned to love others that way so that they will learn God loves them that way?

5) The fifth principle concerning God's love is that God's love is not only a universal love, and an active love, and a sacrificial love, and a personal love; but **God's love is also a risky love.**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him." Can you see it? God's love is risky. To say "whosoever believes" is a risky statement, don't you think? God didn't send Jesus with the agreement that he would love only those and give his son only to those who gave their lives to him. No, he said, "I will give you my son, period." That is a risky love. God gave without any promise of a return. He gave without any commitment from sinful man that he would accept the sacrifice of Christ. He just gave. Period. Now, as we begin to make God's story our story, we have to understand that loving others the way God wants us to is risky.

When I start to share the love of Christ with others, I take a risk. I risk that they will reject me. The number one reason people give for not sharing their faith more is the fear of rejection. What if somebody says, "No." "What if they reject me?" If you experience rejection, you simply will find yourself in good company. Think of all the great characters of the Bible, the ones we love to hear about the most. They all experienced rejection for the cause of God. **From Noah** who was ridiculed by his neighbors for building an ark, **to Daniel** who was thrown to the Lions Den, **to Paul** who was stoned (with big rocks) for his faith, **to Christ** each of these suffered rejection for the cause. Now, I'm not trying to give you a martyr's complex. I just want you to know that God's love is a risky love. And if you are going to make his story your story, it's going to take a risky love on your part as well. But when you do, don't ever forget who is holding on to you.

It seems a party of botanists were exploring inaccessible regions of the Alps in search of new flowers. One day, through a field glass, they spotted a flower of rare beauty. It lay in a place where it could only be reached by someone being lowered down by rope into a deep ravine.

A native lad, watching the activity, was approached and offered a sum of money if he would allow himself to be lowered to pick the flower and then be pulled up again. He took one look at the dizzy depths and said, "Wait, I'll be back."

Soon he returned with an older man. He approached the botanist and said, "I'll go over the cliff now and get the flower if you let this man hold onto the rope."

The botanist agreed, but asked, "Who is this man?"

The boy replied, "He's my dad!"

It really makes a difference who holds the rope, doesn't it? Our Heavenly Father has promised "I will never leave you, or forsake you." So, you can take the risk! I know how to hold on to the rope.

6) Well, the last principle concerning God's love is that not only is God's love a universal love, and an active love, and a sacrificial love, and a personal love, and a risky love; but **God's love is also a transforming love.**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." God's love is a transforming love. It transforms us from sinners bound for hell, to children bound for heaven! Isn't God's love wonderful! One of the best things that we can ever do when we share Christ with people is let them know that Jesus has the answer for their lives. His love is a transforming love. It can change their guilt into grace, their pain into peace, their confusion into confidence, and their loneliness into love. The love of God is a transforming love. And when we as believers begin to really love others the way God has loved us, it will transform their lives as well. It's God's love and it's transforming!

A renown German theologian was once asked at a press conference what the greatest thought was that ever came across his mind, theologically.

And without hesitation, he said, "Jesus loves me, this I know for the bible tells me so!"

Isn't that incredible? (sing that with me will you?)

Jesus loves me this I know, For the Bible tells me so

Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong

Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me.

For the Bible tells me So!

Conclusion: (While sitting, bow heads, close eyes)

1) If you have never accepted that love of God which brings forgiveness of sins and salvation of soul; I encourage you to do it today. Stand where you are.

2) If you would like for God to build a new love in you for others the way he loves others, make that commitment today. Ask God to give you a love like his love. Then stand where you are.

3) If you would like to pray for a loved one, a neighbor, a child or grandchild that doesn't know Christ. Pray that they will experience God's love. Pray that they will experience God's love through you. Stand where you are at.

Is God's Story Your Story?

John 3:16

The Right Question: Is God's Story Your Story?

Six Principles Concerning God's Love:

God's love is a UNIVERSAL love.

"For God so loved the world."

Two discoveries of Nicodemus:

- 1) God loves EVERYONE.
- 2) Even a GOOD MAN needs God.

God's love is an ACTIVE love.

"For God so loved the world that He gave."

God's love is a SACRIFICIAL love.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son."

Who is one person in your circle of influence who needs God loves?
What are you going to sacrifice to bring them to Christ?

God's love is a PERSONAL love.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever."

The *world* – means everyone.

Whosoever – means ME.

God's love is a RISKY love.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him."

God's love is a TRANSFORMING love.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."