



When Love Came Down



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For God so loved the world . . . (John 3:16a)

By Pastor Rusty Hayes
John 3:16

Perhaps the most famous verse in the world is John 3:16. For years, almost every sports event had someone holding up a sign with John 3:16 on it. It's not uncommon for children to list it as their favorite verse. And even people who never attend church find it warmly familiar. But have you ever thought of it as a Christmas verse? Christmas, after all, celebrates the reality of God's love. And John 3:16 specifically is about that topic. Let's break the verse down into four Christmas principles.

1. Love came down for the world.

Think about this first statement carefully. God so loved the world. The sentence in the original biblical Greek is constructed to emphasize God's love. In other words, this phrase is saying, "God really, deeply, extraordinarily, from the depths of His heart loved the world."

What makes this so remarkable is not that the fact that God loves. Certainly any conception of a good God would have to include love. But what makes this passage so remarkable is the object of God's love . . . the world. The world is a bad place. Pick up your newspaper and you'll read of murder, greed, lust, selfishness and a whole host of other major problems. We are creatures plagued with deep issues. We are not attractive to a perfect being. Yet, He so loves us!

Years ago, when my youngest daughter was three, she was in a school play dressed as a cow. Well, plagued with the thought that I would be a terrible dad if I didn't videotape every play my kids ever performed in, I charged up the huge video camera we had then, focused the lens directly on her, and started to record. Imagine my surprise when the first image was of her picking her nose in front of God and all creation! It wasn't her most attractive moment. But here's the deal. Why did I take the time to bring her to the play, unpack a camera that could kill an elephant, and video tape her concert? Because I love her. I deeply, deeply adore her, from the depths of my heart. Or, to use biblical language, I so love her.

We're part of the world that love came down for and we are messes. Every single one of us has flaws, and I mean deep flaws. There are things about us that are ugly and make us cringe to even think about. In some sense, we all have our fingers in our noses. But you know what. God adores us! Love came down for the world!

2. Love came down through sacrifice.

. . . that he gave his one and only Son . . . (John 3:16b)

It's remarkable that God loves us, but can you imagine how much God must love His son? If you read about the life of Jesus in the Bible, you can't help but fall in love with Him. His life includes touching the sick, feeding the hungry, and loving the outcast. He is the kindest person to ever walk the planet. And he showed up on Christmas morning as a precious baby in a manger. Can you imagine how hard it must have been for God the Father to give up that child at the first Christmas? That's how much love came down to us! What sacrifice!

You may be thinking, "God doesn't love me. How could He love me with all my problems? I don't even love myself." Well, I want to encourage you to look at the manger and the cross. God so loved you that He gave His one and only Son to give you the great news that you can be forgiven and have peace with God forever. God gave Jesus to the earth to give us forgiveness and peace with Him.

3. Love came down to those who believe.

. . . that whoever believes in him . . . (John 3:16c)

Have you ever found a perfect gift for someone and you just knew, "Yes, this is it! This is the best gift I could give!" Well, that's what the gift of Jesus is like.

But, as with an any gift, there is one requirement that you and I have to fulfill in order to get it. We have to accept the gift! The gift will not be ours until we actually reach out and receive it.

John 3:16 says that God has a present for you this Christmas and it's an eternal, intimate, wonderful relationship with Him that will touch every area of your life. It will give you better health and meaning, improve your relationships, guide you to your purpose in life, and give you a pipeline to the greatest counselor in the universe, God's Holy Spirit. But the requirement is that you have to receive the gift. The word "believes" above has the connotation of receiving. It means to trust that Jesus was the Son of God and accept His death on the cross alone as the payment for your sins.

You may not know God. You know about Him and admire Him; but you don't know Him in your heart. Your inner life isn't intimate with Him. It's like you watch Him on television, but He's never been in your living room. Yet somewhere deep inside of you there is a hole. You know something is missing. That void is Jesus . . . an intimate, life-transforming, deep relationship with God. And God is offering you that gift today.

If you haven't accepted that gift, why not do it this Christmas?

4. Love came down to lift us up.

. . . shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16d)

What does it mean to accept the gift of Jesus, the gift of Christmas? It means eternal life starting now and moving on into the afterlife. It means having a big dose of God in this life and living in Heaven after death. It means God lifts us up eternally.

One of my favorite Christmas carols is "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Remember the line, "God and sinners reconciled?" That's talking about the payment of Jesus on the cross so that we sinners can be reconciled to God. That's why Jesus came. Christmas isn't just about silver and gold, greeting cards, and Santa Clause. It is about eternal life. This Christmas, be lifted up because the love of God Himself actually came down for you. Merry Christmas!!!



Mom's Day Out Times

December
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Mom's Day Out is a ministry of First Free Church dedicated to providing support for mothers of young children through quality, Christ-centered child care.

3 pages

First Evangelical Free Church * 2223 N. Mulford * Rockford * 815.877.7046 * www.momsdayout.net

CARING CATERPILLARS WISH THEIR FAMILIES A JOY FILLED CHRISTMAS!

Merry Christmas!

This is our favorite time of year. Shopping, wrapping, decorating, parties, and baking are a few of the things that keep us busy during December. However, what is most precious to us is that we celebrate the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not too early to begin sharing the story of Our Savior's birth with your precious little one. Here in the Caterpillar room we show picture books and sing songs about Jesus that we hope will be a great foundation for them.

We have seen so many wonderful changes in our babies since the beginning of the year. Zach and Carson are crawling, Ellie Rose, Gavin T, Samantha, and Gavin C. are so close to walking, and Kirin and Mason are running with joy. All of our little ones have made so many discoveries in the past few weeks, and it is always such a pleasure for us to be a part of these miracles.

Please check those diaper bags to make sure that we have a weather-appropriate change of clothes. Also, many are able to switch to finger food. We have a fridge and microwave in our room that may help with lunch options.

Our hope is that you have a joy filled Christmas!

Teachers

Cindy, Sarah, and Kory

READING PROGRAM FINISHERS!!!! HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOUR PRIZE AND BOOK YET? Don't forget to stop by our church bookstore, The Scroll, and get your prize from the Treasure Chest plus pick out a children's book for 50% off!!! Great Job!.

Thank You for supporting Mom's Day Out's Fall Outreach!



Gigi's
PLAYHOUSE

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

www.gigisplayhouse.org

Thank you Mom's Day Out families for helping us support Gigi's Playhouse this past month. We collected: 26 containers of antibacterial wipes, 11 bottles of cleaning spray, 9 bottles of dish soap, 2 bottles of toilet cleaner, 1 cleanser, 1 hand soap, 10 bags of snacks plus a \$100 gift card to Office Max! It was such a joy delivering all of these donations to the Playhouse. They were so appreciative! Thanks for your generous giving.

THE SCROLL
BOOKS & GIFTS

Visit www.scrollbookstore.net

HOURS:

Monday-Thursday 9-2
Wednesday 5:30-8:30
Saturday 4:30-6:30
Sunday 9-12

The mission of First Evangelical Free Church is to bring people into a life-changing and growing relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.



Happenings This Month



Fri, Dec 2nd ~ Special Visitor Mary

"Mary" will be visiting the Chimps, Fish, Giraffes, Lions & Mice classes to tell her story of the angel's good news.



Dec. 2nd & 5th ~ Tumbili House

If your child is in the Hippos, Chimps, Fish, Lions, Giraffes, or Mice, they will be going to the playground today. Please be sure that your child wears socks.



Fri, Dec 9th ~ MDO Christmas Program 12:00

Parents, extended family and friends of all of the children in the program are invite to attend MDO's annual Christmas program.



Mon, Dec 12th ~ Carols by the Tree

All the classes except the Caterpillars will gather around the tree for a special review of the Christmas story and carols.

The last day of Mom's Day Out in December is **MONDAY, DECEMBER 12TH!**



Fri, Dec 16th through (and including) Mon, Jan 2nd ~ Winter Break

Enjoy the Winter Break with your children! We look forward to **seeing you back at Mom's Day Out on Friday, January 6th!**

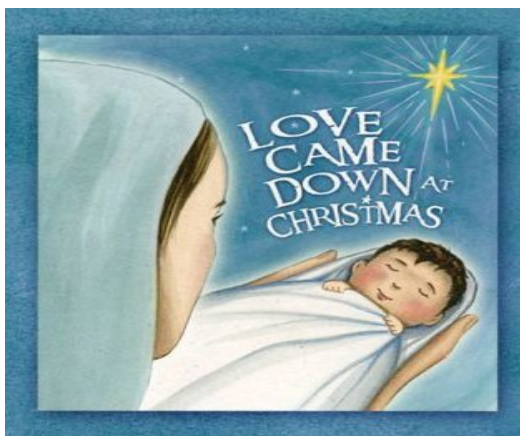
What are you waiting for? Mom's Day Out is now on Facebook! "Like" us and you will have access to current information about what is happening in your child's classroom.



Find us on
Facebook



Mom's Day Out Christmas Program



*The Mom's Day Out Christmas Program is a hit every year! Make sure you put **Friday, December 9th** on your calendar and plan on meeting in the Main Sanctuary here at First Free at noon. Invite grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors to come here the good news of Christ's birth shared through the music from your children. See you there!*



Better Moms Make A Better World
MOPS
Mothers of Preschoolers

**December 14th
Christmas
Brunch**

Speaker Tonia Darge
RSVP to Laura Nothnagel at mrs-reading@yahoo.com by December 6 if childcare is needed.

