

John031617-120411
Bridge of Hope
December 4, 2011

“Radical Love: The Object of God’s Love”

Introduction: Good morning! We are glad that you have joined us for worship today as we enjoy the Advent season culminating in celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

Last week we talked about the truth that God is the source of love. We discovered that God is the initiator of love and has lavished His love upon us. If you missed the talk last week you can find some notes from the message on our website – bridgeofhopechurch.net. Today we are going to continue with some dialogue as we take a look at the 2nd part of what makes John 3:16 such an awesome text of scripture. We are going to discuss “The Object of God’s Love.” To make things a little easier I ask you to raise your hand if you want to answer one of questions so we can keep from speaking on top of one another. I can’t promise to get to everyone but will do my best to give different people an opportunity to be a part of our dialogue.

Let’s get started today with taking a look at the famous text of scripture in **John 3:16-17** (NIV)
*“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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

If God is the source of love and both initiates and lavishes love, then it would seem to follow that the next obvious question we need to look at is one we can all answer together.

WHO OR WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF GOD’S LOVE?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE OBJECT OF A PERSON’S LOVE? LIKE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF MARRIAGE, FAMILY, OR FRIENDSHIP.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE OBJECT OF GOD’S LOVE?

Most of us know what it means to be the object of a person’s love. We know what that looks like. And being the object of God’s love isn’t really all that different. Let’s talk about what it looks like.

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE

- **FORGIVES – HOW DOES BEING FORGIVEN MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE THE OBJECT OF LOVE? (DISCUSSION)**
LET ME TAKE A COUPLE OF MOMENTS TO SHARE SOME THOUGHTS THAT I HAD ON FORGIVENESS.
 1. **One of the things that lets you know that someone loves you is when they are willing to forgive you for a wrong that has been committed.**
 - It is powerful when this kind of love goes into action.
 - This kind of love changes lives.
 2. **This is the way that God loves us. As the object of His love He extends us forgiveness for the wrongs that we have committed against Him.**
 - You know that He loves you when you experience His forgiveness.

- Maybe this is why so many have a difficult time understanding the love of God, they have never experienced His forgiveness in their lives.
- 3. This is why the emblems of communion are so powerful in our lives as Christians as they speak of forgiveness and love.
 - Jesus tied them together when He ate the Passover meal with His disciples.
 - Speaking of Jesus Paul said, *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:7-10 NIV)
- 4. When we are forgiven for the wrongs that we have done we realize that we are the object of love. Jesus forgives us and loves us all at the same time.
- 5. Let's continue our discussion with taking a look at another thought.

- **GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE CARES – IN WHAT WAY DOES CARING FOR SOMEONE SPEAK THAT THEY ARE THE OBJECT OF LOVE? (DISCUSSION)**

THINKING ABOUT THIS IDEA BROUGHT THESE THOUGHTS TO MIND ABOUT CARING.

1. It seems as if expressing love by caring for someone is about meeting their needs.
 - And everyone has needs of some kind.
 - The problem for some people is that they don't want to let anyone help them with their needs; they want to handle it all on their own.
 - This is so unfortunate because it stops us from being loved by another.
2. The Bible says this truth about being the object of God's love in **1 Peter 5:6-7** (NIV) *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*
3. We don't have to carry the worries of this life and let them weigh us down; as the objects of God's love we can cast our anxieties on Him because He cares for us.
 - This is pretty amazing because most world religions require you to do the caring as you work your way through the worries and concerns of life.
 - You have to learn how to manage your anxiety.
 - But with Christ He promises to carry them for you if you will give them to Him and then trust Him as He cares for you.
4. Loving for God is about caring for people as they are the object of His love
5. Now let's turn our attention to the idea of blessing someone as the object of love.

- **GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE BLESSES – HOW DOES BLESSING SOMEONE MAKE THEM THE OBJECT OF LOVE? (DISCUSSION)**

AS I THOUGHT ABOUT THIS IT STRUCK ME THAT . . .

1. It really is a natural byproduct of loving; when you love someone you want to bless them.
 - You want them to know you love them so you share the extras that didn't have to be given. The extras speak volumes about the love you have for them.
2. The Bible gives this insight to blessing in . . .
 - **Ephesians 1:3-6** (NIV) *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his*

pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

3. As the objects of God's love we are blessed because our sins are forgiven and no longer held against us.
 - We are blessed because He gives us every spiritual blessing, things like grace and redemption.
 - God loved us, the people of this world, and sent Jesus to tell us about His love.
 - To be the object of God's love includes receiving the blessing of His love.
4. There is also this dimension about being the object of God's love: discipline.

- **GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE DISCIPLINES – WHAT DOES LOVING DISCIPLINE LOOK LIKE? (DISCUSSION)**

LOOKING AT THIS BROUGHT THIS REALIZATION TO ME THAT . . .

1. Some may not ever think about this part of loving because maybe they have never experienced what loving discipline looks like.
 - The result when we ignore this part of loving is that we wind up out of balance.
 - And that usually leads us to hurt.
2. The Scripture says in **Hebrews 12:5-11 (NIV)** *"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

3. To let someone go on destroying their lives or running into danger or even being a difficult person is not really loving them.
 - There are times when rebuke is necessary and love requires it be shared and enforced.
 - To not discipline is to not love.
4. As the objects of His love, Jesus loves us enough to make sure things are not ignored.
 - He is willing to go the distance and discipline us so that we can remain in His love and be the person we have set out to be.
5. As the object of God's love there is another aspect that we need to notice.

- **FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE WATCHES OVER – WHEN DOES WATCHING OVER SOMEONE SHOW LOVE? (DISCUSSION)**

STUDYING FOR THIS BROUGHT TO MY MIND THAT . . .

1. There are reasons we resist this concept of being the object of love. We resist because:
 - of past experiences where someone became too possessive as they controlled, manipulated, or abused what it met to watch over another. That isn't love at work.
 - we don't want someone watching over us because we don't want them seeing what we are doing. We hide ourselves away so that they can't tell us what we already know.
 - we don't want someone else in our business. We want full control and then think it will be lost when we let them in.

2. Like it or not the truth is that as the object of love there is a part of it that makes you your brother's keeper; you do need to watch over one another and be watched over yourself.
 - In a truly loving and healthy way we need to pay attention and do what we can to watch over others.
3. To watch over another is really about protecting and providing.
 - It is about noticing when a need comes up and meeting that need.
 - It is also about seeing when the person we love is in potential danger and doing everything we can to help them be safe.
4. As the object of God's love He watches over us.
 - Always, without fail, He never intrudes to control or manipulate but rather to protect and provide. He watches over us to make sure that we are safe in Him.
5. The Bible describes it this way in **Psalms 121:1-8** (NIV) *I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip — he **who watches over you** will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD **watches over you** — the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm — he will **watch over your life**; the LORD will **watch over your** coming and going both now and forevermore.*
6. When done in a loving way, to be watched over, is comforting and provides peace to our lives. It is isn't about controlling but rather about shielding.

Conclusion: We are the objects of God's love, all of us, all people. God loves us; He has initiated that love and wants to lavish His love on our lives. What we have looked at today is only a sampling of what it means to be the object of His love.

We know that we are the object of God's love because Jesus came and showed us His love. Jesus said to His disciples in **John 10:11-18** (NIV) *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

The Apostle John went on to write in his epistle, *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.* (**1 John 3:16** NIV) We are the objects of God's love, let's live that way. Let us first receive His love and then share His love with others.