

## God So Loved the World

April 14, 2021 Scott Gunn

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. —John 3:16*

This is the most popular verse in the Bible according to Bible Gateway. If you're of a certain age, you may remember the man who used to go to major sporting events holding up a sign with "John 3:16" on it. In his rainbow wig, he was literally a colorful character.

It's not surprising this verse is so popular. Within a few words, we find the entire Gospel. It begins in love. The Gospel of John makes it clear that the history of our salvation began at the moment of creation and God's love has been eternally present. Again and again, God has sought us out, offering redemption and too many second chance to count. But the ultimate manifestation to us of God's great love is found in Jesus Christ, who is "*the exact imprint of God's very being*" (Hebrews 1:3).

Lest there be any doubt, we read in John 3:16 why God the Father sent his son to live among us: "*so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.*" It's pretty clear from reading the whole of John that eternal life is not just about getting our ticket punched so we can go to heaven but about savoring the joy of God's love in this life and the life to come.

Now, some people have used this popular verse as a blunt weapon to draw lines, saying who is in and who is out. One need only read the very next verse to get a correcting to this kind of judgy thinking. "*Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him*" (John 3:17).

Who is saved and who is not saved is above our pay grade. Jesus makes it crystal clear that judging is his job, not ours. Our job is simply to follow him. If we're not sure what that looks like, he summarized the Christian life into two commandments. Love God. Love our neighbors.

It's all about love. It has always been about love, from the moment of creation up to the present. It will always be about love, until the end of time. It's all about love. And yet, we seem to muddle this point. We get set in our ways. We get comfortable with a familiar faith that doesn't push us too much.

What if we cared about inviting people to enjoy eternal life as much as we cared about sharing movie and restaurant recommendations? What if we grasped that God wants to offer salvation to everyone, and our task is to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ to the whole world? The church and the world would never be the same. That would be amazing.