

# **HARVEST ROCK CHURCH**

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## **CHRISTMAS AND GOD'S LOVE**

### **CHRISTMAS SERIES**

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**Christmas Day, December 25, 2022**

**TEXT: John 3:13 “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. 14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.**

**16 “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. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 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. 19 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. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”**

INTRO: At the heart of our Christmas text is John 3:16, a verse that many people, including unbelievers, know about through sports. At live football games, people still hold up signs saying “John 3:16.” I remember when **Tim Tebow**, who is a sports announcer today, won the national championship in Division I football for University of Florida, and he had John 3:16 painted on his face.

PURPOSE STATEMENT: I want to give a running commentary of John 3:13-21 and then go into more detail on John 3:16.

#### **I. RUNNING COMMENTARY OF OUR TEXT, JOHN 3:13-21**

##### **A. The context of our text is the story of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night.**

1. I call this “Nick by Night.” Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a religious leader who was a member of the Sanhedrin, the religious ruling body.
2. Jesus told Nicodemus that he “had to be born again” (John 3:3).
3. **John 3:5 “Unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”**



4. In my opinion, water represents repentance and water baptism (\*keep in mind that water baptism was taking place by John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus; see John 1:25-26 and 3:22-23). And the “Spirit” is the Holy Spirit. It is a supernatural encounter, when you repent and give your life to Jesus, then the Holy Spirit comes inside, brings your dead spirit to life, and begins to transform you into the image and character of Christ.

**B. John 3:13 “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.”**

1. Jesus descended from heaven and came to earth. Christmas is about the incarnation of Jesus, how God came to earth as a baby.
2. This is not a rags-to-riches story. It is a riches-to-rags story. Jesus left the riches of heaven. He laid aside His right to deity. And as God, in His sovereignty, He chose to be like one of us.
3. He came as a baby in the womb of Mary. Born in Bethlehem, He was wrapped in clothing and placed in a manger, a feeding trough for the animals. He would come to die for the sins of the world.
4. But Jesus is also prophesying about His resurrection and ascension. The cross is only half of the act. The most important act is that God raised Jesus from the dead. That is why this verse begins with **John 3:13 “No one has ascended into heaven, but He... the Son of Man.”** But back to the cross.

**C. John 3:14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.”**

1. This is in reference to Numbers 21:8-9. The people of Israel were judged for sinning against God in the wilderness. God sent poisonous snakes to bite them. The snake represented Satan and evil in the book of Genesis.
  2. Israel repented. God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on a staff, and everyone who would look at this serpent would get healed.
- D.** Jesus prophesies that He would die on the cross and take away the sins of the people if they would believe in Him. I also believe that sickness will be healed. I will explain later in this message what it means to believe in Him.

**E. John 3:16 “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.”**

1. We will come back to John 3:16 more in depth, but I want to finish the running commentary on the rest of the text.

**F. John 3:17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”**

1. Jesus did not come to condemn and judge the world. He came to save. Paul says it this way: God's heart is to save all. **1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
- G. **John 3:18 "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."**
1. We who believe will not face the Great Day of Judgment when we die.
- H. **John 3:19 "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."**
1. People who refuse to repent are judged already. They love their evil sins.
- I. **John 3:20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."**
1. They love their sins but also hate The Light, Jesus.
2. **John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."**

## II. FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

### A. GOD IS LOVE

1. 1 John 4:8 and also **1 John 4:16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**
2. I see God's love every day. The story of being in New York last month.
3. **We are to love in real knowledge and all discernment (Philippians 1:9).**
4. 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is not jealous. It is not boastful or proud. It is not selfish. It is not provoked. It is not rude. It is not easily offended. [Get Patricia King's new book, *Live Unoffendable*]
5. **1 Corinthians 3:6 Love does not rejoice in evil [adikia- unrighteousness] but rejoices with the truth.** Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endure all things.

### B. JOHN 3:16 "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD"

1. It doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, where you've been, or where you are headed. God loves you personally, individually.
2. There are over 7 billion people on this planet, and God loves everyone. It has been estimated that there have been 106 billion people since the beginning of

humanity, and God loved each person. Why? Because God is love (1 John 4:8 and 16). God loves those who hate him and who are evil.

3. God revealed His love to me when I was at the height of rebellion and doing evil every day. Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

### III. GOD GAVE HIS ONLY SON

#### A. LOVE GIVES SACRIFICIALLY

B. Paul prays that we would be rooted and grounded in love. That we would know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge. That we will be filled with the fullness of God. We need a daily revelation of God's love.

1. **Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**
2. To know Christ's love, which is a self-giving, sacrificial love.
3. **Romans 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**
4. "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, March 3, 1863, has awarded in the name of the Congress the Medal of Honor to Master Sergeant Roy P. BENAVIDEZ United States Army, Retired for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty:

"On 2 May 1968, Master Sergeant (then Staff Sergeant) Roy P. Benavidez distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely valorous actions while assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters of the 240th Assault Helicopter Company in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam to gather intelligence information about confirmed

large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army. After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance, and requested emergency extraction. Three helicopters attempted extraction but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire.

“Sergeant BENAVIDEZ was at the Forward Operating Base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters, of the 240th Assault Helicopter Company, returned to off-load wounded crew members and to assess aircraft damage. Sergeant BENAVIDEZ voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing where he jumped from the hovering helicopter and ran approximately 75 meters under withering small arms fire to the crippled team.

“Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face, and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft, and the loading of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position. Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader.

“When he reached the leader's body, Sergeant BENAVIDEZ was severely wounded by small arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sergeant BENAVIDEZ secured the classified documents and made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter. Under increasing enemy automatic weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men, reinstalling in them a will to live and fight. Facing a buildup of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Sergeant BENAVIDEZ mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gunships to suppress the enemy's fire and so permit another extraction attempt.

“He was wounded again in his thigh by small arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before another extraction helicopter was able to land. His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed from behind by an enemy soldier. In the ensuing hand-to-hand combat, he sustained additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter. Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed two enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed, and to bring in the remaining wounded.

“Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft. Sergeant BENAVIDEZ' gallant choice to join voluntarily his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the lives of at least eight men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.” — *President Ronald Reagan*

5. God's generosity isn't just lavish, not just creative; it is continual. It is ceaseless. It is unstoppable. This is from the Book of Lamentations, "Your mercies are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness." Every morning, God is saying: *Did you like that sunrise yesterday? Here's another one. Here is food for your body. Here is air for your lungs. Here is beauty for your eyes. Here is music for your ears. Here is strength for your needs. Here are friends for your heart. Here is a purpose for your day. Here are thoughts for your mind.*

#### IV. WHOEVER BELIEVES IN JESUS...

##### A. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELIEVE IN JESUS?

##### B. WHAT FAITH IS NOT

1. Faith is not to believe intellectually. The Bible says, “**The demons also believe, and shudder**” (James 2:19).

##### C. WHAT FAITH IS

1. **John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”**

2. **Faith and obedience are used interchangeably in John 3:36.**
3. New Testament faith is to so believe with your heart that you give your life to Him and that you are willing to make Him the Lord of your life.
4. **Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**
5. Sue and I love Yosemite National Park. John Muir took President Teddy Roosevelt to Yosemite and convinced him to set Yosemite apart as a National Park in 1906. I heard a story of a rock climber who was climbing on Half Dome when he slipped and fell, his safety rope broke, and there he was hanging by a small ledge a hundred feet from the top and a thousand feet from the bottom. He cried up and yelled for help. All of sudden a voice rang out from the top, “Do you believe that I can help you?” “Yes, who is up there?” “It is Jesus. Do you really believe that I can help you?” “Yes!” “Let go.” “Is there anyone else up there?”

**V. WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE**

**A. AN ABUNDANT LIFE: John 10:10**

**B. A RIGHTEOUS LIFE: 2 Corinthians 5:21**

**C. A SUPERNATURAL LIFE: Acts 1:8**

**D. A LIFE OF PEACE AND JOY: Romans 14:17**

**E. A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS LIFE: 3 John 2**

**CONCLUSION: REPENT & BELIEVE IN JESUS**

