

Sermon: “The Most Important Passage of Scripture”

Scripture: John 3:16-21

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. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Introduction

Perhaps you have watched a sporting event or seen a billboard on the side of the highway with the Bible verse “John 3:16”. The most famous verse of the Bible is John 3:16, and most likely because it is the most famous, it over shadows what I consider to be the most important verse in the Bible.

If there is one Bible verse people might know it would be John 3:16 which says, “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”. John 3:16 is the assurance of eternal life.

I believe the most important verse in the Bible is John 3:17. The reason I say that is because those who often quote John 3:16 often miss the message of John 3:17. John 3:17 says, “God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world”. See, God did not send His son to condemn but to save the world. The whole reason Jesus came was to save the world, not to condemn it.

PART I.

Several years ago, I was at an Ecclesiastical Council for Ordination. The candidate had written in her ordination paper that she saw no redemptive value in the death of Christ upon cross. In her paper she viewed it as an example of the brutality and injustice of the world.

I was able to ask her the question, if Jesus could have chosen to come down from the cross, why did he choose to stay on the cross? The soldiers and the crowd mocked Jesus saying if he was able to save others why wouldn’t he save himself. Why did Jesus say on the cross, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” It is because Jesus came to save the world, not to condemn it.

PART II.

Jesus taught the importance of forgiveness. While Jesus had the authority to condemn, he chose to welcome and accept others into the kingdom of heaven who had already been told they were condemned. This is the ultimate expression of God's love, the welcoming grace offered to all to be forgiven and redeemed.

As Christians who strive to be Christ-like, it is our calling to be loving and welcoming as Jesus was. It is not our place to condemn others, but rather to share the good news that grace has been found in Jesus the Christ.

PART III.

It is important to remember that God does love the world. That God saw something in us that is worth redeeming. We should not condemn what God has redeemed. While we may not always get along with others, it is important to always look at others and acknowledge the value God sees in them.

Just because we may condemn others, it is important to remember that they are still loved by God. Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save the world. Because God loves us so much, it was worth the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross to forgive our sins and redeem us.

Conclusion

As Christians, it is important that we love one another as Christ loved us. It should never be our place to offer condemnation of others. We should always strive to love others and treat them with the value that God has placed on them.

The most important scripture in the Bible is John 3:17, "God did not send his son to condemn the world, but to save the world". As disciples of Jesus, we should always look at ways to save the world. And that begins with treating people with love and respect, even if it is not reciprocated.

The second most important scripture, I believe, in the Bible is 1 Peter 4:8 - "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." Together these two passages teach the important lesson of don't condemn but love one another as God has loved us. This is what it means to truly live out the good news.