

**Christmas 3:16**  
**The Present of Christmas**  
**John 3:16**

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**Introduction of Text:** For these weeks leading to Christmas, I am preaching on one verse—John 3:16. Someone called it the “Mount Everest of the Scriptures.” I was struck recently with how this one verse communicates to us the message and hope of Christmas. You know the verse, but I pray that God will help us to see His truth is a powerful way. Last Sunday, we considered the premise of Christmas. We said that the premise of Christmas is identified in the first of the verse, “For God so loved the world.” We simply underscored the idea that Christmas begins with the amazing love of God for us and the whole world. He came out of His love. His amazing love prompted His coming.

Today, we will look at the phrase, “that He gave his only begotten Son.” I want to look specifically at the gift that He gave, therefore “The Present of Christmas.”

As we did last week, let’s read together this verse.

**Text:** <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I also want to read this verse from the Holman Christian Standard Bible, my usual translation of public reading of Scripture. You will understand why as we move along this morning in our study.

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

**Introduction:** You would have had a big laugh at me as a beginning Greek student. I took my first class in the Greek language as a Junior in college. The professor’s methodology for teaching Greek was what I would call a “baptism by fire” approach to language learning. After one day to learn the alphabet, we were immediately reading from the Greek text in the Gospel of John. We knew no grammar rules and no vocabulary. The textbook introduced these items while we translated from the gospel. So, in the beginning, it was slow, lots of help from the teacher. We were not expected to know much. We were just getting started. So, a typical translating experience sounded like a preschooler first learning to read. One word at the time, stumbling, getting help from the professor. It was very slow process.

So, imagine the scene as we get to John 3:16. I am the one called on to read as we approach John 3:16. Then, I come to John 3:16. I have a problem. I know John 3:16. Everybody knows John 3:16. How do I make it sound like I am really translating from the Greek text? I was not very convincing. I tried, but I sailed right through the verse. It produced a chuckle. The professor smiled and said, “That was very good. Now, go back to the first word.”

The first word isn’t what we translate “for.” I knew that much, but I didn’t know what the word was. It’s the word *οὕτως*. A great translation for this is “in this way” and it is the first word—what linguists call the emphatic position.

Let's put this together with last week. Last week, we talked about the love of God. In what way did He love us? He came, we said last week. We can do better than that. We can add more to that. He loved us in this way—He gave His only begotten Son. That helps us with our understanding of Christmas and more importantly our understanding of what He came to do—our salvation.

***In Christmas, we understand that...***

**God gave us Himself.**

He gave us His only begotten Son. The term “only begotten Son” is a special phrase in this text. It does not refer to a created son, but rather a begotten son. God made Himself into the form of a human and came to live on this earth. Listen to the way author, C.S. Lewis helps us with this crucial truth. *“Rabbits beget rabbits; horses beget horses; humans beget humans, not statues or portraits; and God begets God -- not humans and not angels.*

Lewis is referring to the fact that angels are called in Scripture “the sons of God.” Angels are “sons of God” by God directly creating them. We, Christians, are also called in Scripture as “sons of God.” We are “sons of God” by adoption. But, Jesus is “the one and only, unique Son of God” not by creation or adoption, but by mere “begetting.” This is why John put it this way in John 1.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*

God, the Father, gave us Himself. In giving us Himself, let me emphasize a couple of things. First, He gave us the very best that He could give us. Second, not only this, but in giving us Himself, He gave us all that He had to give to us.

**Because He gave us Himself, He gave us His Holiness.**

Once we understand that He gave us Himself, we begin to realize the implications of what this means. It means for example that He gave us His heart—His holiness. He took our diseased, sin-soaked heart and gave us a pure heart. He took our sin and gave us a life without sin. He takes our unrighteousness and gives us His righteousness.

Isn't that what this means as we read it in 2 Corinthians 5:17?

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.

Then in 2 Corinthians 5:21.

<sup>21</sup> He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This isn't a transplant; this is a transfer.

I read a testimony of a young lady about to be baptized. The tradition in this church was for the pastor to ask a question or two before the baptism. On this particular occasion, the pastor asked, “Was Jesus

without sin?" Hesitantly, the young lady said, "Well, no." The pastor now stunned asked more pointedly, "You don't believe that Jesus Christ was without sin?" "No," again she replied, "The Bible says "He took upon Himself my sins."

Jesus was indeed without sin, but indeed in a supernatural way, He took upon Himself our sins. That's the ultimate gift that He gave, so that we might have relationship with Him and have eternal life.

This is why the Apostle Paul called it a "gift" in Ephesians 2:8. "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's **gift**—

That leads us to the final thing.

**Because He gave us Himself and His Holiness, He gives us Heaven.**

He gives us heaven, here and now on earth in abundant life. He gives us the promise of eternal life with Him in Heaven forever. What a gift!

What's the best gift you have ever received? It is this gift from God, Himself.

That leads to another question. What's the best gift that you have ever given?

Today, you have an opportunity to give a gift. The first gift to give is yourself. Then, today, in a very significant way you are challenged to make a commitment we have referred to as "Do Something."