

A Smile for God

By Jim Hill, May 17, 2020

I begin this morning with a heart-warming story. It was on a cold, blustery afternoon, a young boy was wondering the streets of a small town. A local police officer noticed the boy and walking up to him asked what he was doing and why he didn't go home? The young guy responded, "I don't have a home to go to; my mother and father are dead and I don't have other family."

Sympathetically, the officer told him to go down the street about a mile and he would see a big cross with the words "Jesus Saves." Knock on the door and someone will ask you for the password. The boy said, "But I don't know any password." "When they ask," the officer said, "you say John 3:16."

The boy got to the door, knocked, and a kindly looking gentleman answered and asked him for the password. As instructed the boy said, "John 3:16." The kindly gentleman opened the door, invited him in and instructed the boy to warm himself by the fire. As he sat the boy thought to himself, "I don't know what John 3:16 means, but this is very kind of the man."

After the boy had warmed himself, the gentleman asked if he wanted something to eat? The boy responded, "Yes, that would be nice." The gentleman took the boy into a kitchen and gave him some food. Next the gentleman asked the boy if he was tired. The boy responded that he was, so the gentleman showed him into a comfy bedroom and told him to rest his weary soul. As the boy lay on the bed, he thought once again, "I still don't know what John 3:16 means," but he fell asleep anyway. In the early morning hours, the boy woke up and thought long and hard about what had happened to him. As he lay contentedly in the warm comfortable bed with a full stomach, he thought, "I still don't know what John 3:16 means but what I do know is that it brought me to a kindly gentleman who showed me loving kindness, lead me to a fire that warmed me way down inside, fed me, and gave me rest for my weary soul. A wonderful story, and I'm here to tell you today, if you don't know that kindly gentleman you need to. The only difference between you that young boy is you don't have to knock on the door; you don't have to figure out the password because He comes knocking at the door of your heart. "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."

All of us have a favorite Bible text, but this has to be one of the most popular. In just 25 words it describes the essence of the gospel. It tells us three wonderful things.

First, it says that our Father in heaven reaches out to us. Sometimes it seems as if Christianity teaches that Jesus did something that changed God's attitude towards us, from possible disapproval to forgiveness. That there is an angry, disapproving Father and a loving and forgiving Son. This text tells us such

is not the case; God started it all. He sent His Son and He sent the Son because He loves us. Behind everything is the love of God.

Next, the text tells us that the essence of God's being is love. It is easy to think of God looking at us in our frequently selfish, commonly reckless and often thoughtless ways and thinking, "I'll show them, I'll punish them, I'll discipline them." We sometimes don't understand God's purposes and think He wants our obedience to satisfy His desire for power. John 3:16 clearly tells us that He does it not for His sake but for ours. He is not happy until His children come home. He yearns for our return and encourages it with His love.

Lastly, this passage tells of the vastness of God's love. It says, "God so loved the world..." He does not love only good people or only one nation. He does love only those who love him. He loves all, those who don't love Him and those who never think about Him. He loves the unwashed and the unlovable. He loves those who have no one else to love them. He loves those who struggle to obey Him and those ignore Him. All are included in His vast network of love. St. Augustine says it well, "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us."

God loves each of us, despite ourselves, and because of that we have some responsibility. Mother Teresa said it best, "Love cannot remain by itself – it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action, and that action is service." No matter your place or situation, your fitness or restriction, you can be of service. Again, let Mother Teresa explain, "We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do." So smile because of God's love.

Let us pray:

We, your children of every nation turn to you in this time of uncertainty. Our troubles seem numerous; our fears large. Allow us to place them at Your feet. Allow the weak and vulnerable to find refuge. We are grateful to find shelter in your most kind Heart and obtain peace, healing, and rescue. Father, you are help for all our needs.

And, we who are weary pray, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril, or sword?... in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God..." (Romans 8:35-39). Amen.