

Dear Friends of the Foundation:

For God So Loved the World!

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 (ESV)). In this one verse we have the foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the content of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this one verse we have both the reason that we celebrate Christmas and also the reason that we celebrate Easter. We would all do well to hear this good news, to receive this gift, to believe in the only Son of God, and so ourselves to embark upon life eternal.

To believe in God’s only Son is precisely not to believe in ourselves, not to rely upon our own supposed goodness, not to seek what we think we deserve, and not to try to save ourselves. To believe in God’s only Son is instead to live in the love of God and to receive the good gift of God. In fact, it is the only way to receive that gift. And to refuse that gift would be not only to exhibit an ingratitude beyond all comprehension but would be also to reject the very love of God which forms the foundation of the gospel. Surely no one would want to do that! So, in order to receive the good gift of God and to live in the love of God, we are invited and urged to believe in the only Son of God.

Is there a grace of God which forgives our sin? Yes, there is. Is there a grace of God which gives courage before an unknown future? Yes, there is. Is there a grace of God which enables us to accept the brokenness and incompleteness of our lives with hope? Yes, there is. Is there a grace of God which enables us to live with poise and dignity in the presence of the pathetic, the tragic, and the ironic? Yes, there is:

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole,
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin sick soul.

And we learn of it, and receive it, and live by it here in John 3:16.

On January 13, 1982, a plane attempting to take off during a snow storm from what was then called Washington National Airport crashed into the 14th Street Bridge and fell into the icy Potomac River. As a park police helicopter arrived to help to rescue people, they let down a rope to a man who passed it to someone else. They came back for him, and again he passed the rope to someone else. This happened again on the third trip, and on the fourth, and on the fifth. On the sixth trip back, they found that the man had slipped below the water and disappeared. He gave his life so that others could live. For a while, the country had a new hero, whose name we did not even know. I do not know whether the man was Christian or not. I do know that his last act of self-giving embodied, knowingly or unknowingly, a worthy response to, and a remarkable appropriation of, the gospel of giving articulated in John 3:16. May God grant

us such grace!

To God be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

Grace and Peace,

Jim

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