

Confirmation Class 2018

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John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

17 “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16, is probably the world’s most famous Bible verse: “For God so loved the world....”

On this day that you three Affirm your faith ... and the rest of you Christians and Lutherans remember the day you were confirmed ... I thought it would be good to preach on a biblical text that may bring this moment back to you ... when you think about it.

God loves the world, and you are recommitting your life to that God. God is the greater power who loves everybody ... even those who hate Him. In John the 15th Chapter, Jesus is talking about hatred. He is making the point that LOVE is greater than HATE.

Jesus says this about **The World’s Hatred**

18 “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.

Many people in the world do not believe in God, nor do they like God. They did not like Jesus. He said there is a reason for that.

25 It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’

Jesus further said:

26 “When the Advocate (Holy Spirit) comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father.

You are both in this world ... and born again into the world of God ... an eternal world, through Baptism. Remember how Nicodemus struggled with this statement.



We are both body and soul ... worldly AND spiritual. We live in this world, but we have been born again into the spirit of God.

When it comes to LOVE, we don't want to forget the verse that comes next, right after John 3:16 is **John 3:17**, perhaps the world's most *overlooked* Bible verse:

“God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” If you save something, doesn't that mean you have special meaning of it? Doesn't that mean that you have love for it? Saving something does not mean you are about to throw it away. God is not going to throw us away; he sent Jesus to save, not to judge.

God is not vengeful, not demanding of judgment or appeasement, not angry, but loving. Just plain loving. And the cross on which Jesus died is not a mechanism to appease God or satisfy God's justice or thirst for blood, but rather the cross is the **sign of how far God will go** to show us that God already loves us. There is nothing God will not do for us in love. That is what the cross testifies. And then three days later it is the resurrection that promises that God's love is more powerful than all things, even death.

Romans 8:12-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Through the Spirit and out of love, God has adopted us to be His own beloved children. We now inherit all good things. But not just heirs *because* of Christ, but we are heirs *with* Christ.

That's right, God loves us so much that when God looks at us God sees us as no different than Jesus. God doesn't see the mistakes or regrets or missteps or disappointments. **God only sees your goodness.**

Why? Because God loves us. He loves us so much, that God forgives all things and sees only the best in us.



We know ourselves. We carry our faults, disappointments, and insecurities like a snail carries its shell. And so, it is just plain hard to believe that God, who knows all of this as well as we do, still loves us. But it's true.

The love of God is hard-to-believe,

Listen for the voice of God – it is always-important-to-hear his words of love;

God's love for you is a life-changing, indeed life-saving love.

Thank you for affirming your Baptism this day, Go in Peace and serve the Lord.

AMEN

