

Jesus Christ: The Savior

John 3:1-17

Introduction

We want to look at **Jesus Christ as our Savior**. As I thought about that this week, my focus kept coming back to this well-known Scripture verse, *“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)*. Sometimes, a thing can become so familiar, that it loses its meaning. Today, we’re going to unpack this verse and recover all the meaning that is there.

The Need for a Savior

Before we get into the verse, we must see **why** we need a Savior. The fact that most people are unaware of is that we are all doomed. The Bible is clear that **all people are sinners** and *fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)*. It also tells us that *the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)*. So, we all deserve death, not just physical death, but spiritual death. We’re talking eternal death in hell. This death, this second death, is not **annihilation**, but intense **suffering for eternity**. When confronted with this, most people ask, “How could a loving God send people to hell for eternity?” The answer is two-fold: 1) God made hell for the devil and his angels (*Matthew 25:41*). 2) Our condemnation is our own fault, because of original sin and the sins we commit. The point is: there’s nothing we can do about our situation. We must have outside help. **We need a Savior**.

For God So Loved—God’s Motivation for Salvation

Question 181 in the *Explanation of the Small Catechism*, says, WHAT MOVES GOD TO FORGIVE SINS? The answer is: *“God forgives sins because He is merciful and because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice for sinners.”* The motivation for God’s benevolent actions toward us is none other than **love**. Of course, it’s a love we can’t understand, because it’s so unlike any human love. He needs no outside motivation; He does for us, because He loves us. He loves us because He is love. **Love** is what it’s all about.

The World—The Scope of God’s Love

I once asked Jesus how much He loved me. He stretched His arms out to His side and said, “I love you this much” and then He died. This phrase, “the world”, shows us the scope of God’s love. How great is it? It’s so great that it encompasses the whole world. But not just the world. In **Romans 8:22**, Paul says, *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now*. All of Creation is affected by the fall, so God is reconciling the whole creation. His love encompasses the **universe**. Think about this: our galaxy is 100,000 light years in diameter and 1,000 light years thick and there are approximately 100 billion galaxies we can see with the Hubble telescope. And it’s all encompassed by God’s love. How vast is the love of God!

That He Gave—Freely and without Condition

God’s love moved Him to do something for us. He **gave**. He freely and unconditionally gave us **Jesus** to be our **Savior**. He didn’t loan and He didn’t sell. He gave with no strings attached. And the giving is not just the crucifixion. The giving is in the **Incarnation**. This was the beginning of His state of

humiliation as He *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:6-7)*. We can't begin to imagine how much He gave up.

His Only Begotten Son—Our Savior

What did He give? He gave **Himself**, the **Second Person** of the Trinity, the **Word**, His only begotten **Son**, **Jesus Christ**. Can you imagine giving up your son to die for people who hate you? Some may say, "What about people whose sons have died in the service of their country?" Here's the difference. They didn't die for the people who **killed** them. Jesus did. The first words from the cross were, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (**Luke 23:34**). He was dying for all sinners, you and I included. And our sins held Him on the cross.

Whoever Believes—Faith Alone

These words tell us who receives **salvation**. "*Whoever believes*" means that we receive salvation through faith. Because we are dead in our sins, we cannot, of our own will, choose to have faith in Jesus. Only the **Holy Spirit** can work that faith in us. He works through the **Gospel**. When we share the Gospel with someone, it's not up to us to **convince** them of the truth. The Holy Spirit does that. Or, as AMBROSE said: *I do not demand a reason for Christ. if I am convinced by reason, I deny faith. Abraham believed God. Let us also believe, so that we who are the heirs of his race may likewise be heirs of his faith.* This faith doesn't just accept the fact of His death, but grabs hold of the **promise** that He died for me. Salvation is by **GRACE ALONE**, through **FAITH ALONE**, in **CHRIST ALONE**.

Shall...Have Eternal Life—The Goal of Salvation

This is the goal of salvation—that we do not receive our just desserts, death for our sin. The wages were paid on the cross. We no longer owe that debt. Jesus paid it all. **HE IS OUR SAVIOR**.

Means of Grace

AUGUSTINE summed it up this way: *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* Therefore, we are born spiritually, and in the Spirit we are born by **Word** and **Sacrament**. **JESUS CHRIST IS OUR SAVIOR** and we constantly receive that salvation every time we hear the **Word** and partake in the **Sacrament**. Celebrate our Savior today.

*May the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
