

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

From the gospel reading which Jim Smith shared with us, we have probably one of the most familiar verse of scripture. One, which many of us learned as children.

John, chapter 3, verse 16, and I am quoting from the NRSV Bible here – “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

What we have here is a sort of mini ‘gospel summary’ if you will. If we take this one verse of scripture and divide it into how we might perceive what God is doing, we may find something like this:

The verse opens with a statement of God’s Grace – “For God so loved the world”.

Next, we have a statement about what it is that God is offering as His Gift. - That “he gave his only begotten Son”.

The third part of this verse speaks to us as believers and offers this gift to all who turn and believe in the Gospel – “That whosoever believes in him may not perish”.

And finally, a statement about the prize, the ultimate gift, the crowning Glory of God’s love – “But {that we might} have everlasting life”.

So now I want to show you one way that might help us to grasp the immensity of God’s love and how we might get some idea of how we might measure His love.

This morning I brought several things that we often use to measure things.

If we were building something like this church building, we might use a tape measure to measure the length, width and maybe even the height of something we planned to use in this building. The tape measure works great for measuring the dimensions of objects, say this table that I am using this morning for this sermon. But the tape measure would not work to measure just how big is God’s love for us. The Bible tells us that God’s love is greater than all the heavens.

Psalm 108, verse 4 says this, speaking about how much God loves us – “For your loving-kindness is greater than the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.” It is here that the tape measure reaches its limit. It would not be long enough to reach to the clouds. So, for measuring God’s love, the tape measure doesn’t work, does it?

So, what if we tried to measure God’s love like we measure time? I wonder if we could use a watch or the timer on my phone to measure how long God’s love for all creation will last? In Psalm 103, verse 17 we read – “The merciful goodness of the Lord endures for ever and ever, on those who {believe} in him”. Well, I know that my phone battery won’t last for ever and I don’t know of any watch that will last forever, either. I guess a watch or my phone will not be good choices to measure God’s love for us, will they?

There must be another way. What about using a measuring cup? Yes, that might work, right? We use a measuring cup to make sure that we put the right amount of flour, and sugar, and maybe even milk into the mixture when we are making cookies. I wonder if we might be able to use a measuring cup to measure how much God loves all creation? Again, the Bible tells us in Psalm 23, verse 1 - “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want” and in verse 5 – “You spread a table before me ... and my cup is running over.” I guess a measuring cup is not going to work either to measure God’s love, because God’s love is overflowing.

I have one more thing to show you which I think might help us to understand how much God loves all creation. And here it is. You are probably wondering how a plain glass container is going to show us how much God loves us. Let’s say that this container represents God’s out-stretched arms, ready to contain all of creation. Now, I am going to use this stone to represent me. I am going to place my stone into the bottom of the container, because I know that God loves me. But I also know that God loves all the people around me, in my community, in Canada, and in all the world. So, I am going to add a bunch more stones to the container until it is filled to the top. Do you think this represents all of God’s love for creation? No, it doesn’t yet.

Let's take some sand and pour it into the container so that it fills in all the spaces between the stones. Look at that. The sand is finding its way down into all those little holes. Wow! God's love is getting pretty big, now, but do you think we are finished? Did you say YES? Well, you were wrong.

God's love for creation is still bigger than his love for me, and you, and all the animals, and plants.

I have one more thing to add to the container. Do you know what that might be? It is something that will find its way into every tiny unfilled space in the container. It will move between the stones and the sand until the container will be filled to the top. It's water. Watch what happens when we add more of God's love to this container. Here we go.

The water is like God's love seeping into every heart, every being, and into every place in creation. Soon, we will have the container filled to the top.

Oh my, look what is happening. The water is overflowing the top of the container. There is more water than the container can hold. Do you know what? God's love is like that, greater than all creation. Isn't that neat?

God loves us so much that the love of the Holy Trinity is overflowing and will continue for ever. That is what the word of Holy Scripture tells us. And Jesus was God's gift to us so that we might come to know how much God loves us.

This was fun, wasn't it? I hope it helped you to see how much God loves us all. Can we love God back with all our hearts? Can our love for God overflow our hearts? I believe it can.

Amen