

**March 10, 2024 – Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**“God Loves Us” by Pastor Julio Romero**

**Gospel: John 3:14-21**

C.S. Lewis once said: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

Today's Gospel contains one of the most well-known verses in the entire Bible among Christians. I want to repeat it for you again:

*<sup>16</sup>“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. <sup>17</sup>“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.*

You may be surprised to hear that there are over 150 creeds and confessions in Christianity. The most common one is the Apostle's Creed, which we all are familiar with, as well as the Nicene Creed, among many others.

A creed is a statement of belief that helped the early church as well as believers of all times to cement and guide their faith through every single word written in them. This is why the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed are part of our liturgy in every worship service.

I can easily make verses 16 and 17, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter in the Gospel of John, as my personal creed.

I see Christianity and the entire Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through these two verses.

God loves us. God loves you and loves me in ways we can not imagine. He loves us so much that He sent his Son to die for us, not only to save a few or a group of selected ones but the whole world.

Hard to believe it, isn't it? The whole world He came to save, why? Because God is fond of each of us, despite our imperfections, brokenness, lack of discipline, etc.

God loves us and doesn't want us being condemned, thrown into the dungeon or eternal darkness.

The truth is that God wants us to live forever with him in a place you and I call heaven, paradise. And it is through these verses that I see everything, that I see my current existence as well as the one to come.

God's love and promise of salvation is this invisible force that feels so real and so powerful that makes us think of it every single day.

Everyday, I remind myself of God's love, of God's salvation, I don't see it, but I know it is there.

Somebody asked, "is seeing believing? Or are there things that are very real that we cannot see?" For example, our garage doors open by unseen forces at the touch of a button. We put our food in little boxes, not seeing a heating element and yet believing the microwaves will make it hot. We click a button on a TV remote control believing that it will change the channel or the show we are watching.

Why is it then that sometimes we doubt or question God's love for us, when His miracles are all around us?

Changing some words to the phrase from C.S. Lewis that I opened this sermon with, I would say "'I believe in God's love for me as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

It is indeed a great blessing to believe in God's love and to see everything else through it. And, as I ponder on this great love from God and our belief in it and in the gift of salvation, I wonder what it would be like for me not to believe that God loves me, that I am not saved?

I think my life would be a mess. Sometimes I wonder, how would I have coped with the loss of my mother, father and my beloved brother? How would I have responded to the news that I could die in the operating room without believing that the Lord Jesus already saved me?

What my life would have been without knowing that God had a reason and a purpose for my life and that wherever I go He is there with me, because He loves me?

I think, my life would have been without hope, looking for answers in the wrong places. My life would have been like having a spaghetti dinner with parmesan cheese

on top, holding my grandson on one arm and wearing a white shirt. It would be a mess, a disaster.

This is a story related to the picture of the spaghetti dinner told by a believer in our Lord Jesus:

“I still remember the suppertime. We were having spaghetti – and what’s spaghetti without adding Parmesan cheese. As you know Parmesan, once refrigerated, tends to clump together. So, I took the jar of Parmesan, and in dramatic fashion, held it in front of my face and began to shake it violently. The clumps started to blow apart – unfortunately the lid was loose and the now busted clumps flew into my face and hair. Lots of laughter ensued, but without the lid...what a mess!

Just like life – without believing in God, in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit, what a mess. God keeps the lid on and holds everything in its place”.

I truly feel that not believing that God loves me beyond what I can imagine, without believing that my sins have been washed with His own blood and saved by His grace through my faith, I would not have peace. I would not feel compelled to forgive others the way He forgives me. I would not believe that there is an everlasting life waiting for me.

Sometimes we feel that God doesn’t loves us enough, because He doesn’t do the things we want Him to do for us, because He doesn’t keep things in its place the way we want it. But isn’t that the way we feel about the people whose love for us is unconditional and unquestionable?

We forget that life must run its course. We forget that in this finite, fragile and limited life, it would not feel real without its up and downs. Let’s not forget that it is in the moments of suffering, of complete hopelessness, when God is the nearest, the closest to us.

.<sup>16</sup>“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. <sup>17</sup>“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.” Amen.

"Let’s believe in God’s love and salvation as we believe that the sun has risen: not only because we see it, but because by it, we see everything else." **Amen.**