

Session 2

HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON

John 1:1-5; 3:16; 1 Peter 1:13-22

Memory Verse

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

– JOHN 3:16, CSB




He Gave His Only Son

THEOLOGICAL THEME: There is no one like Jesus. He is God's only Son. He was sent by God as the most incredible gift to us. God's plan for the redemption of man always included Jesus; He is our living hope. God's great love for us means He sent His most beloved Son to save us from our sins.

There are different schools of thought on the most effective gift giving practices. Think about your own habits. How do you rate yourself as a gift giver? Are you the kind that starts early and plans things out to perfection, or do you wait until the last minute and just grab something easy? Whatever your gift buying style is, one thing most people have in common is a desire for our gifts to be received well. We want people to like and appreciate what we give them.

How do you know whether someone likes a gift you give or not? Sometimes it is in their expression and reaction when they receive the gift. It may be the way that they use the gift. Do they put on an item of clothing immediately? Can you see evidence that the gift you gave them is being used and enjoyed? If you give someone a very nice gift and they never take it out of the package or just set it aside without using it at all, that is an indicator that your gift was not well received. Today we are talking about how we receive the gift of Jesus that God gave the world and what we can do to show how much we appreciate the unique gift of Jesus.

 What type of gift giver are you? What type of gift receiver are you?

How do you recognize if someone likes or appreciates a gift?

Session Summary


God loved the world so much that He gave us the best gift ever. He sent His perfect, unique Son Jesus to save us from our sins. Jesus has been God's plan for our reconciliation from the beginning, and He is our living hope. There is no other plan for salvation; it's by grace through faith in Christ alone. Each person has a choice of how he or she will respond to the gift of Jesus offered out of love from the Father.

Once we receive the gift of Jesus, our lives are forever changed. We have a responsibility to live differently because of Jesus. We are called to be holy because He is holy, and when we make that our goal, we will have a strong influence on the world around us.

1. The Father's Gift (John 1:1-5; 3:16)

The second phrase of John 3:16 tells us the gift God gave because of His great love for the whole world. Out of His love, God offers all people the opportunity to be redeemed and made right with Him. This could only be accomplished through Jesus Christ. So, God gave us His only beloved Son so that we can be forgiven of our sins. The perfect Lamb of God became the perfect once-for-all sacrifice.

It is interesting to note that Jesus is not one possible option—He is the only way to God (see John 14:6). He was the plan from the beginning, and He is still the only plan. Jesus is the Son of God and therefore perfect and holy. He alone is uniquely qualified to redeem the lost world. It reflects God's great love for man that He sent His Son to die on the cross for us. John 1 references some of the characteristics that make Christ the only one who could do this.


 What is one of the unique characteristics of Jesus that stands out to you from John 1:1-5?

John said Jesus was there in the beginning. He referenced the trinity and stressed that Jesus was fully God even as He came to earth fully man. He is the unique combination of God made flesh. This is an important concept. Understanding the Trinity is a basic tenet of the Christian faith.

Why is it important to know Jesus is unique?

John described Jesus as the Word and noted that all things were created by Him and through Him. He is an uncreated being who is the source of life. Think about how Jesus is not just the source of biological life but also the source of our spiritual life. It is in Him that we find new life and receive eternal life. When we don't understand who Jesus is and what makes Him unique, we miss out on the incredible things He wants to do in our lives.

John also used the analogy of light and darkness. Though this world is full of darkness, Jesus is the light and in Him we have the light so that we are never overcome by the darkness. Jesus is the giver of life and the giver of light. Without Jesus we are dead in the darkness and with Him we have life and light. It is each person's choice to trust in the One who is light and gives life or to listen to the voices of the darkness.

 **Application: How do you need to adjust your expectations of who Jesus is? What would change if you truly viewed Him as He is described in John 1?**

2. Our Response (1 Peter 1:13-16)

As we better grasp who Jesus is and all He has done for us, there should be a response evident in our lives. Jesus is light and gives life. The way we choose to act, think, and speak makes a difference because we are always representing Christ to the people around us. We must take our own lives seriously so that we point others to Jesus.

Peter said believers should prepare ourselves for action. Think of this like rolling up your sleeves to get ready for hard work. The Christian life is not about coasting by and toying with the things of the world. When you truly understand who Jesus is and what He has done for you, it should prompt you to take your faith seriously. To be ready for the hard work it takes to live as a sold-out believer in this dark world. To be clear, we do not and cannot work to earn salvation, but once we have received the gift of salvation, it will always lead to good works (see James 2:26).

Why should believers be prepared for hard work?

The challenge is not just for believers to be ready for hard work, Peter also stressed that the way we think matters. To make “your [mind] ready for action” (v. 13) is to guard your thoughts from being sloppy and careless. It is easy to be lax about what we allow into our minds and what we allow our minds to focus on. Your thought life is extremely important. To live the way God calls you to live, it is imperative that you be intentional about controlling what goes into your mind. The concept of “garbage in, garbage out” is true. How careful are you about what goes into your mind?

Why does it matter what you allow into your mind and what you focus your thoughts on?

Every action in your life starts as a thought. As you grow and mature into a Christian who lives like Jesus, you will have more control over your thought life. In considering how much Jesus loves us and all that He did on our behalf, we respond by striving to be more like Jesus. No one wants to be the gift giver who offers something but sees no response from the recipient. Yet, that is how many people act toward Jesus. We may appreciate and be thankful for the gift of grace and forgiveness He offers us, but do we live differently in response to that grace?

The choice comes down to whether we want to become more like the world or more like Jesus. The pressure to conform to the world is not a new issue. Peter knew the Christians he was encouraging struggled just as we do today. He instructed, “Be holy, because [God is] holy” (v. 16). There is no way to be holy like Jesus and conform to the ways of the world at the same time. For believers, it is time to make a choice of which direction you will go. Do you want to become more like the world or more like Jesus?

? Application: In what area do you need to be more intentional about striving for holiness? What changes will you make?

3. The Call to Love (1 Peter 1:17-22)

Jesus set the ultimate example of love. Just as we are called to be holy as He is holy, we are also called to be like Him in other ways. Being holy means being set apart and one of the things that sets believers apart from the world is the way that we love. It may seem like an impossible calling to love like Jesus, but it is because of Him that we are able to love deeply.

We are given the freedom to call on the Father to help us obey and conduct ourselves the way that we should. There is no higher power we can seek than the power that comes from God Himself. Peter pointed out that God shows no impartiality in answering His children so we can appeal to Him for help and know He will respond. Because He is fair, just, and impartial, He takes seriously how His children act. Your conduct matters because you align yourself with Jesus, and He takes His reputation very seriously.

? Why do you think believers should take their conduct seriously? If we don't heed the call to holiness, what might that say about our relationship with Jesus?

For those who were still tempted to straddle the line between being like the world and being like Jesus, Peter laid out a strong motivation for why godly living should be the goal. He stated that though it is a high calling to be choose godly conduct, it is a reasonable request when you consider the high price that was paid for your life. Your

redemption was bought with the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus did not suffer, die, and rise again so that you could live like the world. He acted out of love and wants you to live in the fullness of that love as you reflect Him to the world around you.

? How should the realization that you were redeemed by the blood of Jesus impact the way you live?

Notice that Peter also called out the “empty way of life” (v. 18) or aimless conduct of his audience’s ancestors that they were also in danger of. This applies to the ways that they continued to try and earn their salvation by following the law. In his instruction to be holy, Peter was not talking about going back to the legalism of the law but living set apart as those motivated by love. We are to recognize the love Jesus has for us and love others the same way. That love is unselfish and focuses on what is best for others. Jesus gave up His life so that we could have eternal life. He is the ultimate demonstration of love that we should emulate. It is completely counter-cultural to live your life unselfishly. To put others first and consider how you can sacrificially serve another is only achievable through the power of Christ at work in us.

It is not easy to live a holy life in this unholy world, but it is always worth it. Peter reminded the people that Jesus was the perfect, sinless, Lamb of God. He also stressed that the plan of redemption was God’s plan from the beginning of time and is for all who believe in God and have their faith in Him. He encourages Christians that faith in God cannot disappoint us because our faith and hope are in the One who defeated death. Nothing is impossible with Him. You can love people who are hard to love. You can control your thoughts and focus on Him. You can choose holy living because He is holy. Our response to Jesus’s great love for us should be to love deeply so that the lost world is drawn to the Savior we place our faith in.

? Application: Who do you need to show godly love to this week? How will you act?

Conclusion

The greatest gift possible has been given to us in the person of Jesus. He was the perfect, sinless Lamb of God who offered Himself willingly to redeem us from our sins. It is vital that we never forget who Jesus is and what He has done for us. There is no other way or plan for man to be reconciled into right relationship with God the Father. Jesus was the plan from the beginning, and we have the choice of receiving Him or not.

Being a good gift recipient is important. Once we understand who Jesus is and what He did for us, we must decide how we will respond. Peter made it clear that our response should include seriousness about how we conduct ourselves. We must be intentional about guarding our thoughts and keeping our focus on things of the Lord, not the things of the world. There is a great temptation to conform to the ways of the world, but believers are called to be holy as God is holy.

Being holy means striving to live like Jesus. The love that He showed in offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice to redeem us from our sins was unconditional and unselfish. As we recognize that love, we should also seek to emulate it. Loving deeply and unselfishly is totally different than how the world loves and how the world teaches us to love. When we love deeply like Jesus, the world will take notice and they will see Him in us. People are drawn to love like that and through it we can be the light we are called to be in this dark world.



How would you describe what Jesus did to offer you redemption?



What do you need to change so that you can honestly say you are seeking holiness because God is holy?

❓ What do you need to do differently to guard your thoughts and control what goes into your mind?

❓ Who do you need to share with about the love of Jesus and the redemption that is available to any who believe?

Here's How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: "What does this say to me?"

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).
- Begin to live for God (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; James 1:19-27).



FOR NEXT WEEK

Whoever Believes

Main Passages

- John 1:12-13; 3:16; Romans 1:16-17; 4:1-5

Session Outline

1. Whoever Believes (John 3:16; 1:12-13)
2. Belief and Righteousness (Romans 4:1-5)
3. Belief Blesses (Romans 1:16-17)

Memorize

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

- John 3:16, CSB