

# John 3:14-18

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Preacher: Chris Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 3 : 30 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And as the conversation develops, we see Jesus speak about his own death.

Just have a look at the number 14 there on the sheets. Jesus says, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

Now, in John's language, Jesus there is using an illustration based on a story about Moses in the Old Testament to illustrate his own death.

So, first of all, Jesus speaks about his own death as something that is intentional. It's intentional. It's intentional. Now, I'm going to put that word up. It's intentional. It's intentional. Jesus' death is planned. His death is not a blunder or the result of God's vengefulness.

[ 4 : 37 ] Jesus himself speaks about his death as something that he knows about and that is planned. Jesus knows that he's come to die.

Now, later in John's book, he records Jesus speaking about himself like a shepherd. It's a lovely image of Jesus as a shepherd looking after his people, saving them.

And he says this in John chapter 10, I'm the good shepherd because I lay my life down for my sheep. And he goes on to say, No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

So, Jesus says, My purpose on earth is to be a shepherd, to protect and save people. And in doing that, I will die.

I will lay my life down. In another gospel, Luke's gospel, Jesus says many, many times that he must suffer and be rejected and be killed and on the third day rise.

[ 5 : 42 ] Jesus understood his great mission in life was his death. And all through the gospel accounts, we actually read about Jesus having this inner compulsion to go and die as a shepherd.

We see that he could have avoided death on many occasions. So, he died in Jerusalem in the south of Israel. He could have stayed in the north, in the country.

But he resolutely went towards Jerusalem where he knew there would be trouble. And he knew he would die. When other people, when his friends and disciples say to him, Jesus, you don't have to die.

He tells them off for that. He lays his own life down of his own accord. So, that's the first thing. Jesus' death is intentional.

It's intentional. God is a loving God, but Jesus died. No, it was intentional. But secondly, this afternoon, Jesus' death was a loving thing.

[ 6 : 53 ] It was loving. Let me put that up. It's a loving thing to do. So, looking back at that passage in John's book there, we've got printed out, just notice the connection between Jesus' death and God's love.

It's probably one of the most famous verses in the whole of the Bible, isn't it? Look at number 16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Love, and not vengeance or hatred or anger, is the motivation for the plan.

God so loved the world. If you've got Sky TV, you may have seen the Discovery Channel. And a couple of years ago, the Discovery Channel launched an ad campaign to kind of advertise their channel.

And the advert had two minutes of Discovery Channel shots of the Amazon rainforest and the Grand Canyon, and it was fantastic. And the tagline at the end said, The world is just awesome. And it had a song which said, I love the mountains. I love the clear blue skies. I love the oceans. I love the whole world. I love all of its sights and sounds. I love giant squids.

[ 8 : 13 ] I love it when the air's thin. I love the whole world. It's such a wonderful place. And according to Louis Armstrong, it's a wonderful, wonderful world. There is lots to love about the world, isn't there?

It really is an amazing place. But the thing is that when we read this passage, we start to think in Discovery Channel mode, don't we? Where everything has a kind of lens over it.

So actually, when we read that God loved the world, it doesn't surprise us that much. That's how we expect God to treat the world. That's perhaps how we expect God to treat and feel about us too, isn't it?

We're good people. I know a lot of you here, we're all very nice people. That's how we expect each other to feel about us. But can I ask you, if people knew all there was to know about you, would you still expect them to love you?

If people knew every single thought that you've had about them, everything that you've said in private, every moment of anger, if all the hidden things of your life were somehow revealed and recorded, and we could show them on that screen right now with everybody here, what would your expectation be of other people then?

[ 9 : 43 ] I've got to say, love is the last thing I would expect you to feel for me. Actually, I'm pretty unlovable when you strip away the veneer. It would make me feel pretty ashamed.

And so it's amazing really how we feel like that with other people, with the real me. We can at all imagine that God would love us with all that he knows about us.

Do you see the shock of what Jesus is saying here? Jesus' death was motivated by God's love of the real you.

God loves the unlovable. Now, at this point you may be thinking, well, if God loves me, he's got a really funny way of showing it, hasn't he? And if I say, I love you, and then run out onto Uxbridge Road in front of a bus, it would just look weird, wouldn't it?

It would kind of look like a sort of suicidal, unrequited love. Wouldn't make sense. Well, the third thing that we need to see about Jesus' death, it was intentional, it was loving, because, thirdly, it was absolutely necessary.

[ 11 : 00 ] It was necessary. It was necessary. Have a look at the number 14 there. Just halfway through there, Jesus says, So must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

And if you look at the end of verse 17, we're given the reason for that. In order that the world might be saved through him.

So John is saying there, isn't he, that because Jesus dies, we can have life by believing in him. But, unless Jesus dies, there is no life.

Unless Jesus dies, we are in danger. We need saving, John says. Jesus' death is loving, because it's absolutely necessary, in some way.

And, you know, I think we get a clue about why that is, in sentence 18 there. John says, Whoever believes in him, is not condemned. But whoever does not believe, is condemned already, because he's not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

[ 12 : 30 ] On the BBC at the moment, they're showing a programme, a programme about the life of inmates, in death row. It's called Life and Death Row. I don't know if you've seen it.

It's quite full on actually. The BBC gives you a warning. This may contain upsetting scenes. But without going into too much gore, it gives an amazing insight, into the lives and families, of those people on death row, in some of the southern states of America.

One prison, like that, is called the San Quentin State Prison. And inmates there, are sometimes there for years, or even decades.

And their fate is clear, at the end of that. But you know, what is truly bizarre, about this place, about the prison, is that outside, prisoners, can while away their time, until that fateful day, playing basketball.

There are tables, with inmates, playing games of cards. And they're chatting, and enjoying their sports. It's a bizarre scene. Knowing that the day, is not far away, when they will pay, the ultimate

price, for their crimes.

[13:47] But while they may seem, as if they've got, some semblance of life, in their prison, they're constantly reminded, of who they are. So to get into the building, to walk back into the building, you have to walk, past the sign, which says, East Condemned Block.

There are signs, in the basketball court, saying, Condemned, Exercise Yard. Then in the corridors, the signs say, Condemned Robe.

And no matter, how much basketball you play, no matter how many, card games you win, you cannot forget, who you are. You're condemned.

And inmates are reminded of that, every single day. And John is saying here, that that's why, Jesus' mission was necessary. He's a God of love, but, he doesn't love everything.

He doesn't love child abuse, or murder, for example. He doesn't love everything. He hates some things.

[15:01] And that is good, isn't it? God would not be a loving God, if he said about child abuse, you know, actually it doesn't matter. Let's just sweep it under the carpet. He is a loving God, but he doesn't love everything.

He hates wrong things. And he does something about those wrong things, and the injustice in the world, he condemns them. He sets a date, just like in that prison, when those things will be put right, when punishment will be dealt out.

And you know, the more we look at ourselves, the more we realise, that actually we are part, of those condemned things. He's a God of love, but he doesn't love everything.

He doesn't love pride. He doesn't love anger. He doesn't love envy. He doesn't love cheating. He doesn't love lying.

And the more we go through that list, the more it gets quite close to the bone, doesn't it? It gets quite close to home. And it makes me feel pretty ashamed.

[16:15] You know, the problem is that when Jesus comes, we think, don't we, that we're kind of morally neutral, or that we're good folk. But John says that the verdict's already been given, even before Jesus comes.

God is a God of love, but he doesn't love everything. He condemns all evil, and that's a good thing. And so that means, as well as child abusers and murderers, I am also in danger.

So Jesus comes intentionally. It's not a mistake. It's the plan. And he comes lovingly. To bear the weight of my condemnation.

Of my shame. And of your shame. He dies on the cross, in our place. And you remember the end of number 17 there.

In order that the world might be saved through him. Now just notice that there are no other ways, of us avoiding that condemnation, that I think we know we deserve.

[17:30] John 3.16, that famous verse, says, God gives his only son, that we should be saved through him. There is no other way.

So I hope we've seen that it's less that God is a loving God, but Jesus dies. And it's actually all about God being a loving God.

So, Jesus is sent, to die. It is intentional. It was planned by Jesus. It was loving. Loving the real you. And it was necessary. Because we're in danger. We're condemned. Now I've talked for long enough. We'll break for a couple of minutes. Maybe write down any questions you've got, and then we'll open up the floor for questions.

But actually, you do have to think, if you need to go, that's fine. You do have to think about the options. And the options of how you respond. The one thing that you cannot do, is be indifferent, to what John is saying here.

[18:37] You can't just sit on the fence. Your response will either say, you know, all this is just make-believe. None of it's true.

And Jesus hasn't done anything worth me paying attention to at all. Or, I can see that Jesus does show me a God, who has everything to do with me.

And he is my only hope, in the face of condemnation. I'm going to leave us in a short prayer.