

The Love of God

Great, Everlasting, Indescribable, Rich

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • April 28, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2024

Scripture Reader and Reading: Adam Peugh – John 3.16

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Dominic Meyer – The Love of God (646)

Prelude:

I. How can I speak on the love of God fully in one sermon or a thousand?

A. What do I say and not say?

B. What Scriptures do I include, and what Scriptures do I leave out?

II. Others have struggled with the same dilemma, and

A. some have even put the struggle to music, and

B. I want to use one of those songs as my outline.

III. Fredrick Martin Lehman wrote,

A. “The Love of God,” (#646) in 1917 in Pasadena, California.

B. The lyrics [The last line, verse 3] are based on the Jewish poem Had-damut, written in Aramaic in 1050 by Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai, a synagogue singer in Worms, Germany.

C. Mr. Lehman said:

“One day, during short intervals of inattention to our work, we picked up a scrap of paper and, seated upon an empty lemon box pushed against the wall, with a stub pencil, added the [first] two stanzas and chorus of the song...Since the lines [3rd stanza from the Jewish poem] had been found penciled on the wall of a patient’s room in an insane asylum after he had been carried to his grave, the general opinion was that this inmate had written the epic in moments of sanity.”

D. Mr. Lehman’s daughter, Claudia Mays,

1. did the musical arrangement for the poem.

2. She died February 19, 1973, in Medford and is buried at Siskiyou Memorial Park, Medford, Oregon!

Persuasion:

I. The Love of God: Great

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

A. Spend time in Scripture, meditating on

1. the nature of God,
2. the nature of our sin, and
3. what God did to forgive our sin, and
 - a) you will agree that the love of God outdoes
 - b) what our words, written or oral, can ever declare.
 - (1) The love of God goes to extreme heights,
 - (2) going beyond the the highest star,
 - (a) capturing the attention of angels,
 - (b) it goes to extreme lows,
 - (c) going deeper than the lowest hell-bound soul.

B. God's love reached the guilty pair,

1. Adam and Eve, man and woman, for all history,

2. though bowed down with the heavy burden of sin and guilt.

- a) God won the guilty pair by giving his Son,
- b) reconciling them to him,
- c) pardoning their sin.

C. Ephesians 2 shows the greatness of his love, because we once walked

1. according to the world,
2. following Satan,
3. living by the flesh,
4. headed toward wrath,

4 *But* God, who is rich in mercy, because of His *great love* with which He loved us [saved us]...

– Ephesians 2.4

D. John 3 explains the greatness of God's love, because

1. it includes the world,
2. even those who hate him:

16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

– John 3.16

E. Romans 5 explains why I know John 3.16 includes those who hate God:

6 For when we were *still without strength*, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*. **7** For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a

good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were *still sinners*, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

– Romans 5.6–10

F. How can we describe how it makes us feel to know that God loves us?

II. The Love of God: Everlasting

When hoary time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall;
When men, who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—
The saints' and angels' song.

A. In First Corinthians 13, Paul said

1. love is greater than faith and hope, because
 - a) faith shall become sight one day, and
 - b) hope shall be realized, but
 - (1) God's love will never disappear.
2. Likewise,
 - a) time shall end,
 - b) earthly thrones and kingdoms shall fall, and
 - c) unbelievers shall fail, but

- (1) there will always be God's love,
 - (a) still enduring,
 - (b) still measureless,
 - (c) still strong,
 - i) bringing grace to Adam's race, and
 - ii) the saints and the angels will sing of God's love.

B. Isaiah 49

1. tells the heavens to sing and
2. the earth to be joyful, because
3. the Lord comforts his people.
 - a) Yet, God's people question God's comfort and love:

**14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me,
And my Lord has forgotten me."**

– Isaiah 49.14

- b) He answers like this, showing his everlasting love,

**15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child,
And not have compassion on the son of her womb?
Surely they may forget,
Yet I will not forget you.**

**16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
Your walls are continually before Me."**

– Isaiah 49.15–16

C. We counter him, arguing that bad things happen to us.

1. Romans 8 had us in mind,
2. showing that nothing
 - a) on the earth,
 - b) above the earth, or
 - c) below the earth, and nothing
 - (1) in heaven or hell
 - (2) can separate God's love for us:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written:

**“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”**

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

– Romans 8.35–39

D. How can we describe how it makes us feel to know that God loves us?

III. The Love of God: Indescribable

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,

To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

A. I know this verse of the song is true, because

1. in the last verse of the Gospel According to John,
2. the apostle said that we cannot write everything there is about Jesus:

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

– John 21.25

- a) Yet, Jesus is the love of God.
 - (1) Speak of the love of God and you cannot avoid Jesus.
 - (2) Speak of Jesus and you cannot avoid the love of God.
- b) In Jesus, the love of God expressed itself fully.
 - (1) Therefore, the world itself cannot hold all the books
 - (2) that could we could write on the love of God.

B. Truly, if we could drain the ocean of water and fill it with ink,

1. if we could convert the skies into parchment,
2. if we could use every stalk as a pen,
3. if every person took up the job of writing,
 - a) we would run out of ink, and
 - b) we would fill up the sky-sized paper.

C. Paul said accurately, “the love of Christ...passes knowledge” (Eph 3.19).

D. Listen to the way John said it in First John 3.

1. He wants us to look at something,
2. look at this thing and think about it:

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, *that we should be called children of God!* Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

– 1 John 3.1–2

- a) We had been children of the devil, but
- b) now we can be called children of God, because
 - (1) God loved us and
 - (2) took us from the devil’s family.
- c) Now that we are children of God,
 - (1) John said we have the hope of becoming like Jesus is,
 - (2) that is, we shall have glorified bodies as he does.
 - (a) From children of the devil
 - (b) to children of God.

E. How can we describe how it makes us feel to know that God loves us?

IV. The Love of God: Rich

**O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!**

**It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.**

A. We have not known this kind of love before.

1. How can we measure the love of God?
2. How can we picture the strength of the love of God?
 - a) It endures forever and
 - b) with the angels, the saints on earth sing of his love.

B. First John 4 says all that I have tried to say today, and

1. it shows just how rich the love of God is:

9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

– 1 John 4.9–10

2. What more shall I say?
3. For the time would fail me to list every sign of the love of God.

C. How can we describe how it makes us feel to know that God loves us?

Exhortation:

I. In all his expressions of love,

- A. did you know that God had you specifically in mind?
- B. He is thinking of you right now!

II. Right now he offers you the gift of his love,

- A. which is the gift of his Son,

B. dying in your place

C. for the punishment of your sins.

1. Do you believe that?
2. Do you want to turn your life around?
3. Do you want to start over?