

## Heart to Heart Sisters

### Text: John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.



### Theme: Love that Takes Sacrifice

As Christians we love to talk about missions and evangelism. We desire to reach people of other cultures, but are we willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to share the love of Christ? John 3:16 says, “*God so loved the world.*” When you think of God’s love for us, it always involves sacrifice on His part, especially the gift of His Son. Our salvation cost His dearest treasure.

We sometimes have the idea that when we share the Gospel people will follow us as though we were the Pied Piper. We also hope that they will become like us. They will speak our language, eat our foods, dress like us, and worship the way that we do.

We are often not willing to make the sacrifices that missions takes. Today I would like to look at love that takes sacrifice.

#### I. God’s love for us meant the ultimate sacrifice.

There were many people who were hoping for a redemption of the world with no sacrifice. Whenever Jesus spoke of His upcoming passion, the disciples didn’t understand what He was talking about, and once Peter even rebuked the Lord for talking that way. There was the time when the mother of James and John asked if her sons could sit at Jesus right and left in His kingdom. The disciples were often fighting about who was the greatest. They were sure that Jesus would enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and defeat His enemies in a glorious way.

The truth is that God’s love for this world took the ultimate sacrifice. After Adam and Eve sinned, God promised them a Savior, born of a woman, who would redeem this world from our sins. Remember the end of that promise. God said to satan, “*He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel*” The redemption of the world would mean the sacrifice of the life of the Savior. When the time was right, God sent His Son, born of a woman, to redeem us. Jesus didn’t not redeem us in a glorious way. It was ugly. He was whipped, beaten, mocked, and nailed on a cross to die. He redeemed us by sacrificing His own life to redeem us from our sins.

Everyone who looks to Him will be saved. Jesus said, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that every one who believes in Him will have eternal life.” When we look to Him as the one who made the ultimate Sacrifice for our sins, we are born again. Baptism in His name washes away our sins and makes us into God’s beloved children. We look to the cross of Christ as see the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate gift of love. God gave this world His own Son, so that all who believe in Him will have eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we thank and praise God the Father for the gift of His Son, and we give Jesus all glory and honor for giving His innocent life to save us. We know that as He rose victoriously from the dead, so we will live eternally with Him as our Savior.

## II. Our Christian love for this world also takes sacrifice, but it is worth it.

I would like to give you a couple examples from our own congregation. People often remark that it must be wonderful to have these various cultures here in one place, but if you were to ask any of our groups, they would all answer that it is not heaven on earth. To be honest, we don't always understand each other. We have some differences in language, but also in the ways that we do things. Even planning this event today had some misunderstandings. There is the issue of how we worship. There have been times when I have attended English, Hmong, German, and African services here on the same Sunday. The music and style of worship is as different as different can be, even though they are all Lutheran services. When we eat, there are new things that I have grown to love in the Hmong and African foods, but even though Pastor Gui tells me that they are the best part, I still will not try the fish heads, nor do I like the tripe in the Hmong dishes.

Missions is never easy. It is always hard, but it is always worth it. I would like to give you a great example of that. A few weeks ago we had one of our reoccurring problems. We had two events at the same time. It ended up that we had the Valentines Dinner, sponsored by the Hmong youth in the church, and the French African event in the other building. Each event had about 100 people, which is a lot for the other building. The next day, I was not happy when I found a couple of chicken bones, left by the kids in youth room of the other building. But the next day, everything was put in perspective. Pastor Gui told me that he received a call from the police in Chicago. Somehow they got his number. They didn't know what to do with a Congolese family, which had just arrived after winning the Green Card Lottery. The person that promised to pick them up never came. They spent two nights at the airport, not knowing what they would do. You can imagine how scared that they were. They were in a country where they knew no one nor the language, and they only had a few hundred dollars. Pastor Gui told the police to put them on the bus to Milwaukee. They were welcomed by his congregation. They found housing, and even had a job within a week. We were also able to use money from an LCMS Human Care Grant to get them some of the initial food and other things that they needed. Throughout the last 10 years, sharing the Gospel with new groups of people around us has been a lot of work. It has put me in a lot of situations, which are outside my comfort zone, but it has all been worth it. I have seen the hand of God at work. I have come to know many people with whom I can hardly communicate and with whom I have very little in common, as dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Wherever we share the Gospel it always takes sacrifice, but it is worth it. It doesn't matter if you are sharing the Gospel with your family and friends, with neighbors or coworkers, with people just like you or a completely different culture, or with people on the other side of the world through your support of our missionaries. It always takes sacrifice of some kind. How many mothers gladly bring their two year old children to church? How many of you rejoice when that two year old is sitting in front of you? It sometimes takes a lot of courage to speak about your faith with someone who is hurting. There are times when people reject the good intentions that we had in sharing the Gospel. Sometimes it leads us into places and among people where we don't feel very comfortable. Yes, it does mean that we sacrifice our money as we support of ministries and missionaries.

But it is always worth it. God's Word does not return empty. It does create faith. It assures people of the forgiveness of sins in Christ. It reassures them that God is always there for them, and gives them the hope of eternal life. It also creates a bond, a bond that is stronger than anything that would

divide us.

III. That bond that Christ gives us here by faith will last for eternity.

Jesus said, that God gave His Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. Can you imagine what our eternal life will be like? In Revelation 7 John writes that there are people of every nation, tribe, people, and language. Heaven will be the most multicultural place ever. There will be a smorgasbord of all the best foods. We will be singing our Lord's praises in a variety of ways. For all of eternity, we will celebrate together, the great love and sacrifice of the God who sent His only Son to save us.

I cannot stress how important it is that we realize that love always takes sacrifice. God's love for us meant the sacrifice of His own Son. Our love for those around us also takes sacrifice on our part. But it is always worth it. Jesus' sacrifice redeemed the world. The sacrifices that we make to share the love of God in this world will never be in vain. They help to create the strongest bond ever. They make us into brothers and sisters in Christ.

Amen.

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