



Email: manseltonurc@gmail.com

Weekly Letter – 10 March 2024

John 3:14-21

God so loved the world...

At the heart of this passage is the gospel in a nutshell: '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.' (John 3:16). We could spend all the time available appreciating that and really taking in what it means.

God reaches out in love. The word for 'world' here is 'cosmos' which we use for the whole universe. In creating the cosmos, God made a creation to love that could accept or reject that love. In giving Jesus, or coming in the person of Jesus, God showed his love with a human face, in a way that people could accept or reject or ignore. Giving his only Son shows the lengths God is willing to go to. Pause to give thanks that God's love is all embracing and that includes each of us.

God enters into a lasting relationship with us. 'Believes' in this sense is not about knowing and believing facts about Jesus, it is more putting our trust in him, getting to know him and God whom he reveals. As God is beyond time and space, a relationship begun with God now does not end in death: it carries us through to eternal life. This is not only for after this life, because in John 17:3 we hear Jesus pray, 'this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' So knowing God through Jesus gives an eternal quality to life now, which is about relationship *with* God, not just knowing things *about* God. Pause to be aware that God is close, even when we are not aware of God.

This verse is often quoted on its own, but it is worth looking at the rest of the passage. After this verse it suggests that God has no interest in condemning people, but by our choices we judge ourselves. A relationship involves effort on both sides, but God continues to reach out in love, even when we turn away. The image of light and dark are recurring themes in John, and it captures something about whether we would be happy for others to see our actions and even our inner thoughts. It reminds us of the verse in the Sermon on the Mount where we hear Jesus say, 'let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.' (Matt 5:16). Make some time in the next week to let God shine some light into the areas of life we would prefer to keep hidden. Pray that God will give healing for hurt, forgiveness for failure, and a renewed relationship for purpose and direction.

This verse is introduced with a reference back to Numbers 21:9 where the people of Israel were being bitten by poisonous snakes in the wilderness and God tells Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole so that people could look on it and live. John often makes links back to show the continuity of God's saving actions, and this underlines the role of trust. Here it also becomes a prediction of the crucifixion. In the other gospels, Jesus' predictions of his suffering, dying and rising get more graphic as he and the disciples get closer to Jerusalem, John uses metaphor: the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; the temple destroyed and rebuilt in three days; the lifting up of the life-giving serpent; and numerous references to being 'glorified'. As we continue on the journey through Lent, ask God to help you appreciate what it means to affirm that God so loved the world that he gave his Son that we might have eternal life.

Simon

**Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling.
Bible Readings for Mothering Sunday: Luke 13.31-35 and Isaiah 66.10-13.**

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Uniting Church, Sketty

Dates for your Diary

Saturday - 9th March at 10.30 until 12.00 'Going Greener Coffee Morning'

Tuesday 12th Tea and Chat – 2-4 pm – 'Easter Parade'

Lent Discussion – on Zoom, Tuesday 12/03/24 at 7pm (finish by 8:30pm)

Our Lent conversations will follow the thread of what kind of followers of Jesus are we looking to be and to grow. We will be talking about what it means to be a disciple today, but to give a longer view we will also reflect on Mark 8:22-38 and Mark 10:46-52.

Church Meeting will be held on Tuesday 19th March at 7 pm in the Lounge

Induction of the New Synod Moderator – at Beulah URC, Rhiwbina, Cardiff on **Saturday, 6th APRIL at 2pm**

The unpaid debt – Fourth Sunday of Lent

(Numbers 21.4-9: Psalm 107.1-3, 17-22: Ephesians 2.1-10: John 3.14-21)

For a long time I didn't know you – I thought I did, but not how I know you now.

Thank you, God for all your goodness to me.

I was suffering but didn't ask for your help – you already knew and helped me anyway.

I want to give you something in return without expecting anything back
but you continue to bestow your blessings upon me.

I try to do what I can to serve you and you still give me more back than I give.

i can never repay you, God, for all your goodness to me. Amen.

Julia Marsh

(URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

