

Sunday Sermon: January 13, 2018

Sermon Text: Mark 1:9-11

Sermon Theme: I am Well-Pleased 1. To Love You 2. To Save You

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ **And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."**

Last week we began our Epiphany season with a look at our extraordinary Savior. We saw that the extraordinary Savior was revealed to ordinary people to show that he came to save ordinary, sinful people like you and me.

As we continue to look at our Extraordinary God and Savior this morning we see that he is extraordinary because he took a personal approach in saving you and me. He not only told us how to be saved, he also came and show us the way to heaven.

Some of the worst teachers I had in school told me how to do something, but if I didn't understand, they just told me the same thing again. On the other hand, some of the best teachers I ever had, not only told me what to do, they also showed me how to do it. There was the lab teacher who didn't just tell us about the experiment, but also did it along with us, the Social Studies teacher who not only told us about government, but also had a state representative come in and speak to us, the Phy Ed teacher who not only told us to do the front roll, but showed us how to do it correctly, or the shop teacher who not only told us about the car, but also got his hands dirty in taking it apart.

Jesus did not just come to earth to just tell us about heaven, he came to earth to be our path to heaven and to show us that heaven is through him. All that Jesus did while he walked on earth teaches us one of two things. It either teaches us that forgiveness and eternal life are through Jesus alone, or it teaches us how to live a life of thanks to God for what he has given to us.

Today, we look at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, his baptism. After his baptism, Jesus went out and preached that he was the Savior. All that Jesus did and would do for us is summed up in the words from heaven, **"This is my Son. With Him I am Well-Pleased."** With these words we hear that God is well-pleased to love his Son and to show that he loves us through his Son, even though we don't deserve it. He loves us so much he is pleased to send his Son to stand in our place to save us.

Love seems like a fairly simple emotion. But loving something can also be complicated. There is loving a person or loving a thing. There is loving family member or loving other people. We often ask ourselves if we really love something or just like it. There is infatuation which feels like love, but then wears off over time

The emotion of love can be difficult for us, but how we show our love to others can be even more complicated. We all know the passage from 1 Corinthians that says that **love is patient, love is kind, it is not self-seeking, it keeps no record of wrong.** We can use that as a checklist of the ways that we haven't loved correctly. Instead of loving freely, we place qualifications on our love, "I will only love you if...." Sometimes our love lasts only a short time, as soon as something causes us trouble or issue, we don't love it anymore. Sometimes we love grudgingly because we have to. Sometimes, we love because it will make us look good in others people's eyes. Even though we want to love someone freely, we are selfish and get angry at them instead.

Love can be so complicated because our sin gets in the way of showing love to others. Our sinful nature tells us that love is a commodity, something that can be used for us and against others. Our sinful nature tells us to use our kindness, compassion, and forgiveness as a bargaining tool that gains us influence and keeps our friends close and our enemies far away.

But this is not the love that God has shown us and it is not the love that he wants us to show others. The Apostle John says, **"This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."**

God's love is different. When God said, **"This is my Son, with him I am well-pleased,"** he wasn't patting his Son on the head after a home run or an great report card, he saying he loves his Son because God is putting his love for us into action through his Son. This is a kind of love that we do not experience from

anyone, except God. God does not love us grudgingly, because he has to. God does not love us for a time and then forget about us. God does not love us to look good in front of others. God does not love us because we can give something back to him. There are no conditions on God's love. God does not love us as long as we don't cause him trouble or problem.

God's love is perfectly **patient and kind, not self-seeking and God does not keep a record of wrongs**. If God did not love like this, we would have no hope because we do not deserve to be loved. We sin against God. We refuse to listen, we refuse to walk in God's way, choosing our own way instead. At times we even challenge and question that God loves us by thinking, "If I would only see God's love in my life directly, then I would know that God loves me."

But even though we fail to trust in our God and his promises as we should, God still says I am pleased to love you. Listen again to the final verses of Isaiah, "**It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.**"

God loves the world, that's you and me, enough to send his Son to bring salvation to a world which doesn't listen to him, which more often than not does not love him back. Even though the sinful world stands against God, he still says, "I am well-pleased to love you. I love you so much that I am well-pleased to send my Son to save you.

Jesus took a personal approach to save us. He stood in our place. We have a Savior who has walked this earth as we walk the earth. He has experienced what we have experienced. He has stood in our place and knows the types of temptations that we go through every day. Jesus was tempted in every way that we are tempted. He knows the devil attacks when we are weak, he knows the devil attacks when we least expect it, he knows the devil attacks our thoughts, words and actions. There was only one difference between what Jesus experienced as he lived and walked on earth and what we experience. Jesus did not sin. The writer of Hebrews says, "**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.**"

Jesus stood in our place to do everything that God required in his Law. Those Laws were meant for us. Everything the Law says, it says to us. Everything that the Law demands, it demands of us. And every time we sin, we fail to live up to the Law and sign our ticket to hell. But Jesus stood in our place. As he walked this earth, all that he did fulfilled the Laws for us. When Jesus lived this life perfectly, he did that for us.

Jesus stood in our place at his baptism. He was not baptized because he needed to be baptized to take away his sins, but because we would need to be baptized to take away our sins. He showed us that God wants us to be baptized because in baptism we receive all the blessing that he won for us. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, we must be reborn of the water and of the Spirit so that our sins are washed away and we are made children of God. God promises that this happens through the Holy Spirit at baptism.

Jesus stood in our place as he suffered. The suffering he endured was the punishment for sins. But the punishment was not because he had sinned. He stood in our place to receive the punishment that we deserved for our sins. He took our sins when we have failed to love others in a God-pleasing way, he took our sins when we have failed to love God and follow him as we should. He took these and all our other sins on himself and received from God the punishment that was rightfully ours.

Jesus stood in our place and died. The Bible is clear that there is a punishment for sin. That punishment is death. This is not just death on earth, but an eternal death in hell. This punishment will fall on us, unless someone takes our place and satisfies all the standards that the Law demands. If our substitute cannot do that we will surely die forever and be given the punishment and death we deserve. Jesus stood in our place and was our substitute. He received that punishment, he experienced the pain of hell, he even died in our place so that we will not have to experience those things.

Jesus stood in our place to overcome sin, death and the devil. When he rose from the dead he showed us that he has completed all the work that his Father has given him to do. Now we are standing in his place. We are forgiven because of Jesus. We are children of God because of Jesus. Our place in heaven awaits because of Jesus. He has stood in our place perfectly to save us from our sins and now we stand perfect in God's sight because of what Jesus has done.

We have an extraordinary God and Savior. God wanted us to know how he felt about us and what he wants for all people. As his Son began his public ministry, God the Father said, **“This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well-pleased.”**

It makes God happy to love us, even though we don't deserve that love. It makes God happy to put his love into action and to save us. Through the Holy Spirit, we will never experience a lack of God's love. The love of the Lord will lead us in this world and from this world to the next.