

## WHY GOD LOVED

John 10:11-18 Text vs. 17-18

In our text today, Jesus had just healed a man who had been blind from birth. Some Pharisees questioned His authority do such a thing. And when Jesus told them about His authority He said: *“The Father loves Me because I sacrifice My life so I may take it back again. No one can take My life from Me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to, and to take it up again. For this is what My Father has commanded.”* (John 10:17-18)

Those two verses reveal who Jesus was. And you will soon understand it’s one of the most important truths Jesus ever revealed. Because when He said it, He became real. He was no longer just someone who later would be described on a piece of paper. He was more than someone who did wonderful things. He was a living, actual reality! You see, Jesus didn’t just happen to die. His death was planned from the beginning of time. God’s plan was to send His Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world, even before He laid the foundations of the world. He knew humanity would sin and perish without His help. Therefore, God arranged a plan for salvation. A way to be made right with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us a serpent in the Garden of Eden deceived Eve who ate the forbidden fruit and then shared it with Adam. Then their eyes were opened, and they realized their nakedness and covered themselves with fig leaves. After Adam’s sin, God told Adam a Savior would come to crush that serpent’s head, which meant Satan’s defeat. And as you move on through the Old Testament you see more about this Savior. God made a Covenant with Abraham promising Messiah would come through Jewish ancestry. King David received a promise that a King from his line would sit on the throne, forever.

And Old Testament religious practice of animal sacrifice which was central to the worship and religious practice of the earliest Israelites ceased with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews to Babylon. There was no place to give an authorized sacrifice. So, Jesus’ death wasn’t just a spur-of-the-moment tragedy. It was part of God’s predetermined plan to save humanity from sin. Jesus’ life wasn’t forcibly taken from Him. It was voluntary. He willingly laid it down.

At first, His crucifixion appeared as defeat for Him. But it was a defeat for Satan who had cleverly sought to use Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross as a weapon against God’s Divine Plan. But his fallen nature kept him from fully understanding God’s plans or purposes. And in Luke 22:3-6, Satan accepted that Jesus would be executed. So, he used Judas to hasten the process. However, God’s wisdom and love overcame that scheme. God transformed what seemed like defeat into victory for humanity. Jesus’ death and resurrection broke the power of death held by Satan. Through His sacrifice, He rescued humanity and conquered the forces of darkness. Jesus’ voluntary sacrifice made redemption and salvation possible to all who would believe in Him as the Good Shepherd.

Now, that word “good” can be used in several different ways. Sometimes we speak of something as being “good” morally. Or we speak about something having “good” quality. We speak of a good athlete. A good pianist. A good teacher. But we don’t necessarily mean they are *morally* good. They’re good at what they *do*. The good athlete excels at sport. The good pianist plays the piano well. The good teacher is outstanding at teaching. That’s the way the word “good” is used in our lesson today. It can even mean *beautiful*, like the blonde who had gotten sick of all the blonde jokes. So, one day, she decided to get a makeover. She had her blonde hair cut and dyed. Then she bought a new red convertible, put the top down, and set out for a drive in the country letting her new hair blow in the wind. Soon she came across a herd of sheep and decided to stop and talk with the shepherd. After a few minutes of chit-chat, she told him she had a proposition. If she could guess the total number of sheep in his flock, would he let her have one? The shepherd agreed but was shocked when she guessed correctly – 382 sheep! He kept his promise, though. He allowed her to pick one sheep out of his flock to take home. And after she picked out her sheep and put it in her car, the shepherd said he had a proposition for *her*. If he could guess her *real* hair color, could he have his sheep back? . . . Well, he did! . . . And she did! And like a good shepherd, he got his sheep back!

Jesus called Himself the “good” shepherd to those Pharisees, by which He meant He was the perfect example of what a shepherd should be. *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. <sup>13</sup> The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd.”* (vss.11-14a) And as you look at how Jesus fulfilled His role as the “good shepherd” you can see even more why God loved Him. In all of this, Jesus declared His Divine Authority. He declared that no one could forcibly take His life from Him, because He had the power to lay it down. And He had the authority to take it up. That’s what underlines His unique role as the Good Shepherd. He willingly gave His life for His sheep. You and me! That selfless act demonstrated God’s immense love for humanity. And Jesus was fully aware of the suffering that lay ahead. Yet, He chose to endure the cross to settle our sins with God. His sacrifice was the ultimate expression of grace and mercy.

And as a believer, you should find comfort in knowing that Jesus willingly took your sins upon Himself to fill the gap between you and God. Through His resurrection, He triumphed over death. He secured eternal life for those who trust in Him. His sacrifice on the cross was the ultimate demonstration of God's power in humanity's darkest hour. That cross, a symbol of shame, became a symbol of our glory. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, you have been taken from sin and death and given eternal life. His sacrifice is for forgiveness for your sin. And by entrusting your life to Him, you receive eternal salvation. Through faith in Jesus, you receive the gift of eternal life. As the Bible states in John 3:16, say it with me: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

. . . Salvation!

You don't earn it by your own effort. It's not earned by your good deeds. It is a free gift from God after you place your trust in Jesus. Then you are reunited with God and can receive His grace. The parable of the Prodigal Son who squandered his father's inheritance and went home to a forgiving father (Luke 15:11-32) beautifully portrays God's grace. Like the prodigal son, we often wander away from God, squandering His gifts. Seeking fulfillment elsewhere. Yet, when we turn back broken and regretful, God doesn't treat us as unworthy servants. He embraces us. He showers us with His grace and forgiveness which holds immense meaning in Christianity. God's promise of forgiveness is fundamental to Christianity. It involves God's decision not to count your sins against you, but to receive His forgiveness. You must repent and turn away from your old life of sin. Have faith in Jesus Christ. Recognize Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. For the only way to the Father is through Jesus, God's perfect sacrifice who was substituted for your sins by His death on the cross. His blood was poured out for the forgiveness of your sins. And as a believer, your relationship with God is restored.

But what about your relationship with others? The Bible says that when someone hurts you, you're supposed to forgive them. And Jesus is clear on that! *"If you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."* (Matthew 6:14-15, NIV) But what does *forgiveness* mean? It means letting go of anger, bitterness, resentment. Showing God's love and mercy to others. And when *you* are forgiven, *your* responsibility is to forgive *others*. Forgiveness restores broken relationships. Forgiveness reflects love. And forgiveness ultimately will affect your eternal destiny. But when trust is deeply broken, rebuilding takes time. It's a process that's sometimes lengthy. Genuine repentance is vital for reconciliation. Offenders must recognize the harm they've caused and accept that healing takes time. Even if an offender confesses and seeks forgiveness, the offended person may say, *"I forgive you. But it might take time to regain trust and restore our relationship."*

Remember, forgiveness isn't easy. But it's necessary! Forgiveness makes strong bonds that can withstand challenges. Forgiveness is like having a delicate garden in your heart where you can sow seeds of grace. Then nurture them with purpose. Prune away bitterness. Water with kindness. And then, when you have forgiveness in your heart, you will flourish with forgiveness. Embrace forgiveness as did Jesus. Extend it to those who have wronged you. That's why, say it with me again. *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16) Remember, Jesus' sacrifice is the cornerstone of your faith. It proves both His love for you, and His Divine Authority. . . . Let us pray: *"Dear Father, we thank You for the gift of Jesus. His voluntary sacrifice on the cross reveals Your love and His authority. May we trust in His redemptive work and find eternal life through Him. Praise and glory be to You, Father. And to your Son, who is forever praised. Amen."*