

John 3:16

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 April 2006

Preacher: Murdo Murchison

[0 : 00] Wesley's famous text was a very obscure one. It was Zechariah 3 verse 2. Is this man not a burning stick snatched from the fire?

As a very small child, Wesley's home went on fire and he was taken miraculously from the fire.

Throughout his life had a sense that God had saved him from that fire. So this text was particularly precious to him.

John Newton's favourite text, understandably, was Romans 5 verse 20. For sin increased, grace increased much more.

The slave trader who turned to become a Christian by the grace of God. Luther's favourite text was Romans 1 verse 17.

[1 : 02] The just will live by faith. Or in the NIV, the righteous will live by faith. And that's the point he had to make to his church of the day.

That it's by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we're saved. Each of these individuals had their own reason. Surely today's text is the universal favourite.

We see it on billboards. We see it all over the place. It's in songs. It's recited by millions of people throughout the world.

It's the gospel in a nutshell. It's an amazing text. St. Augustine said, God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love.

And I find that tremendously encouraging this morning. That the love of God is so amazing. Karl Barth, the great Swiss theologian.

[2 : 13] One of the finest minds that the 20th century produced. Was asked by an American. You can just picture an American asking this question.

What is the greatest thought that has ever gone through your mind? The great man paused for a moment.

And with great simplicity he said this. With great grace. Jesus loves me. This I know.

For the Bible tells me so. Ephesians 2 verses 4 to 5 talks of the great love of God towards us.

God who is rich in mercy has made us alive in Christ Jesus. The word great is a word that is perhaps devalued in the society that we live in.

[3 : 14] And great doesn't even begin to express the love of God. We talk of a great day out. We talk of having great fun at some activity.

We talk of a great party. We talk of going on holiday and having a great holiday. But this. The greatness of God's love.

The word greatness. Can't even express it. Greater love. Scripture says. Had no man than this. Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Who is uniquely. Eternally. And divinely. The son of God. Led down. His life for us. Came in love.

And died on a cross. And rose. On the third day. Moody. The great. Nineteenth century. A preacher.

[4 : 12] Was in England. And. He was introduced to a young man called Henry Moorhouse. And. He said to young Moorhouse. If you're ever over in Chicago.

You. Come. And preach for me. In my congregation. And. A few months later. Of course. Moody never expected Moorhouse to come.

But. He arrived in Chicago. And. Moody was. Away in one of his preaching engagements. For a couple of weeks. And. The elders thought. Well. We'll give the young man a chance.

Let him preach. And he preached on. John chapter 3. And verse 16. And night after night. He ended up. Preaching. On John 3.

16. At special meeting. After special meeting. Of course. The great man came back. And said. What's going on here? This young man. Preaching in my pulpit.

[5 : 12] Every night. On John 3. 16. His wife said to him. Well. He's a better preacher than you. He preaches. On the love. And the mercy of God.

You'll need to come and hear him. And. Skeptical Moody. Came along. And heard the young man. Man preach. And he came into a deeper. Understanding.

Of what the love. And the mercy. Of God. Is about. It's something. Amazing. It's something. That is. Not just great.

But infinite. It lies. Beyond. The probing eye. Of men and women. The correct word. The correct word. Is that it's.

It's unfastened. Larger. Than the whole universe. The love. That's talked of. In John chapter 3. And verse 16.

[6 : 09] It surpasses. The knowledge. Of men and women. In the 21st century. It's such a great thing. Such an infinite thing. This love. Love. And then.

There's a giving. The giving of the son. How much. Does God love you this morning? Enough. To give his son. Is the answer to that.

And almost every text. In the New Testament. Talking about. The love of God the Father. Talks. Of the cross. The amazing love.

That sent Christ. To the cross. What an amazing. Demonstration. Of love. No wonder. Wesley said. In his great hymn.

Love so amazing. So divine. Shall have. My soul. My life. My all. I want this morning.

[7 : 07] To take a couple of examples. In talking of. The love. And the giving of God. From believe it or not. The Old Testament. And.

It's amazing. To me. Every time I consider it. The way. In which. The Old Testament. Is just a shadow. Of the New Testament.

A shadow. Of things to come. So the scripture tells us. And it's. Just amazing. At the things we have. In the Old Testament. And one of the examples.

In talking about. The love of Christ. That I'm going to use. This morning. Is. A. Hosea. You don't need to turn it up. But. You read.

Of this. Great. And frightening. Account. Of the love of God. In Hosea's. Chapter 1. And 2. It's a love.

[8 : 02] That nothing. Will alter. Is the message. Of Hosea. And. A. God. Through Hosea.

Makes his point. Concerning. His loving. Nature. He says. To Hosea. The prophet. Go. And marry. This loose woman.

Called. Gomer. Her. I find it amazing. That God. Would ask Hosea. To do this. She'll be unfaithful. God tells him.

Hard to dig in. But you. Hosea. Must love her. To the end. And Hosea. I'm going to demonstrate. My love. Through your relationship.

With her. You play God. She plays. The part. Of Israel. In. This. Israel. Runs from me.

[9 : 00] Israel. Takes other lovers. Yet. My love. Is constant. A son. Comes along. His name is. Jezreel. Which means.

Scattered. A daughter. Is then born. Her name is. Loruma. Which means. Not pitied. Another.

Son. I think it is. Loami. Which means. Not. My. People. The story. So far. Is.

A bit like. A plot. From. EastEnders. Or one of these. Dreadful. Soaps. But by the end. Jezreel. Becomes. Planted.

Because there were two. Meanings. Of. Scattered. One was to scatter. Seed. Was to plant. So. Jezreel's name. Changed to planted.

[9 : 53] Loruma. Changed to rumma. From not pitied. To pitied. Loami. Becomes. Ami. Or my people. Instead of. Not.

My people. True to form. Eh. Gomer. Leaves. Hosea. And takes a series of lovers. The first partner. No doubt. Could give her.

A Rolls Royce. And a fur coat. And. Great. Prosperity. The second. Partner. Maybe a fur line. Collar. And fake jewellery.

And the third. Partner. Maybe. A Skoda. Maybe I shouldn't. Say a Skoda. Because they're so good now. I should maybe say. A Lada. And an overdraft. And then.

Eh. She. Ends up. With a. Partner. Who couldn't even. Feed. Or clothe her. And she's hungry. God tells Hosea.

[10 : 50] To go. And buy. Her back. To go. And. Eh. Give her. Silver. And gold. He must have been very well off. For a prophet. To have.

The money. To give her. I think it demonstrates to us. Among other things. That. Even when we run from him. God. Pays. The bills.

And God. Ultimately. Whatever. Your abilities are. God. Has given you. These. Abilities. Whatever you achieve. God. Has given you.

The ability. To achieve it. Take the great artist. Who gave. That great artist. The ability. He or she has. In the first place.

Take the wealthiest. Of landowners. Who. Distributed. The land. In that way. In the first place. Who allowed it. God.

[11 : 45] Who is sovereign. Allowed it. And then. Gomer. Goes off again. And sinks. To even.

Lower debts. Than we could imagine. She becomes. A slave. What does God say. To Hosea. Go.

And buy her back. Hosea. Slaves. Were sold. In the market. Market. Naked. And a good looking woman.

Always commanded. More money. In the auction ring. And the bidding. Was strong. That day. Think of the degradation. Of it.

Sometimes people tell me. About. The good old days. And I think. In. There's many areas. Of life. In which. We're a lot more.

[12 : 40] Civilized. Than people. Were in the past. Although there are. A lot of bad things. In. Society. And I think. Of. Part of my job.

Is to go to. Car auctions. Think of. The times. When. Maybe a car. With a value. Of 80 or 100. Thousand. Will go through.

The auction. And. There's a hush. Comes over the place. Because normally. The cars are maybe. Between 5 and 15 thousand. And there's not much.

That more than that. Perhaps it's. A top of the range. Range Rover. Or a Bentley. How much. For this car. 50.

55. 60. 65. 65. Thousand. A real hush. Comes over the place. And even the wee neds. Who do a bit of driving.

[13 : 35] Are totally quiet. And totally in awe. And all eyes. On. The. Man. The two men. The two well dressed men. Who are.

Bidding. For this car. 65. 67 and a half. 70.

71. 72. Someone else comes in. 75. 77. 79. 79 and a half. Sold.

To that man over there. And things soon go back to normal. So here we have. This woman. Being auctioned.

Three. Shekels of silver. Five. Seven. Nine. Eleven.

[14 : 31] Thirteen. Fourteen. Fourteen and a half. Fifteen. And a voice from the back. Fifteen shekels.

And a bushel. Of barley. Hammer goes down. Sold. To Hosea. He bought. His wife. Back. God told Hosea.

To. Buy her. Everything. She needed. And. As she. As she.

He took her away. He clothed her. There's an amazing fact. This morning. That the Christian believer. Is described. As being clothed.

In the righteousness. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is your status. If you're a Christian. You're clothed. In his. Righteousness.

[15 : 28] Yes. We sin. Yes. We go astray. But we're clothed. In the righteousness. Of. The Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. It's an amazing.

Thing. This. The unchanging. Love of God. You and I. Before we came to Christ. Were. Slaves. Placed on the auction.

Block. What were we slaves to? We're slaves. To sin. What am I did? For this soul. Jesus Christ.

Comes along. To the slave market. Of sin. And he says. I'll buy them back. For my blood. And the hammer goes down.

Sold. To Jesus Christ. For his blood. You've been bought. With the blood. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the love. Of Christ. What's our.

[16 : 28] Reaction. To the fact. That. God loves us. In this way. It's surely. To fall. At the. Feet. Of Christ. God.

Commends. His love. Towards us. Perhaps. This morning. You can say. You believe. In Jesus. But your vision. Of him. Has dimmed.

Jesus. Loves us. In such. An amazing. Way. That our minds. Can't. Take it in. So that's the love. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want very briefly. To talk. About. The gift. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Talked about here. And I want to talk about. That word. In the text.

Whoever. Believes. So the gift. The gift. Of Jesus. Is the very best. That God. Had to give. The one who is equal.

- [17 : 28] With God. The one who shares. All his attributes. The only. Begotten. In another translation. Has him as. The unique.
- Son. Of God. The only son. In the universe. Therefore. God gifted. Himself.
- To the world. In a very real sense. Not only. Is it a great gift. It's an eternal gift. The gift. Was planned.
- Before the foundation. Of the world. Isaiah 53. Verse 10. Yet. It was the Lord's will. To crush him. And to put him.
- To death. Acts 2. Verse 3. Handed over. To you. By God's set purpose. And foreknowledge. And you.
- [18 : 23] With the help. Of wicked men. Put him to death. Nailing him. To the cross. Revelation 13. Verse 8. The lamb.
- Slain. Before the foundation. Of the world. Believe me. The fall of mankind. Didn't take God. By surprise.
- He didn't plan. After. The event. Before. He set the universe. In motion. He determined. That his son.
- Had to die. On the cross. And in talking about. This gift. And this giving. As promised. We go to the old testament.
- Again. We look at the experience. Of Abraham. The old testament. The shadow. Of things to come. Here was Abraham.
- [19 : 21] 86 years old. His first son. Had been. Well. He had his first son. Born to a slave girl.
- Called Hagar. You must have thought. Well. God has promised. Me a son. That a nation. Would come out of. But he's given me a son.
- To a slave girl. And then at. The age of a hundred. When. I think Sarah was in her nineties. Abraham was a hundred. Sarah gave birth.
- To Isaac. A great gift. A promised gift. And at the roundabout. The age of a hundred and fifteen. God said to him. That he had to sacrifice.
- This great gift. Of a son. And at one level. God was. Testing his faith. Of course. But at a greater level.
- [20 : 23] It was a shadow. Of Christ. It was a test. Of his spiritual. Perception. And devotion. To God. But also.
- A shadow. Of Christ. It's an amazing story. I find it. Very frightening. That God should test. Abraham. In this way. Yet it fits so perfectly. With John chapter 3. And verse 16. Think of the reasoning.
- That went through. That old man's life. Mind. As he. Went towards. Mount. Moriah. You must have thought. Well. God gave him to me.
- In a supernatural manner. He'll surely bring him. Back to life. When I sacrifice him. Yet again. How. Can God.
- [21 : 18] Fulfill. His great promise. To me. Of that nation. Coming through him. What must he have said. To his son. As he headed. Towards.
- Mount. Moriah. And he told the servants. At the bottom of Mount. Moriah. We'll take. The wood. Up. He clearly. Believed. That a miracle. Would take place.
- How do we know that? We know it. From Hebrews. Chapter 11. Which. Describes. Something. Of what went. What went. Through his mind. God. Tested him.
- He. Passed. The test. Of faith. And earned. His. Place. In the hall. Of fame. Of people. Of faith. In Hebrews. But just. As a knife.

Was about. To fall. There was. The ram. Caught. In the thicket. And he was stopped. By. God. And I believe.

[22 : 13] That. A fat knife. Was stopped. From going down. He looked. Two thousand years. Later. On. And saw.

The Lord. Jesus Christ. And saw. That. One day. God. Would sacrifice. His. Son. On the cross.

He saw. The gift. That we see. So clearly. Today. And it's an interesting point. That here we are. In the twenty-first.

Century. Nearly. Two thousand years. From the death. Of Christ. Christ. And Abraham. As he held that knife.

Looked forward. Two thousand years. To. The coming. Of Christ. God's love. Is the same as it was. In Abraham's day.

[23 : 08] God's. Amazing love. Towards. His people. The day. That God. Who'd his son. To death. On the cross. The ultimate gift.

Was given. In giving his son. To death. God met. Your needs. And my needs. In a perfect way. But what are these needs.

This morning. The great need. Is to live. And not. To die. Jesus Christ. Very topically. Comes along. This morning.

And says this. I. Am the resurrection. And the life. He who believes in me. Will live. Even though he dies.

And whoever lives. And believes in me. Will never. Die. These words are. Later in the book of John. John 11. Verses 25. To verse.

[24 : 04] 26. He meets. Your needs. Perfectly. You're going to die. That death. For you and me. Is a passing incident.

Because. Of this gift. Death. Itself. Has been conquered. Through the cross. We need to be made.

New men and women. And Jesus Christ. Does that. We fall short. Of what God. Intended us to be. Jesus. Jesus. Conforms us.

To God's image. Romans 8. 29. He is completing. A great restoration work. Today then. I'm talking about.

The greatest gift. The world. Has ever been offered. Let me ask you. And ask you. Very pointedly. And personally.

[24 : 59] This morning. How have you responded. To this. Great. Gift. You bowed. At the feet. Of Jesus.

2nd Corinthians. 9. Verse 15. Thanks. Be. To God. For his. Indescribable. Gift. And then.

To move. Swiftly. On. To our final point. The text. Says. That. God. So loved. The world. He gave. His only begotten son. That whoever.

Believes. Whosoever. Believes. If we take. The authorized. Version. And I. Think of it. In the authorized. Version. Whosoever. Believes.

And talking about this. I. Go back. A lot of years. Getting on for 30. Probably. Going to. Coming back.

[25 : 59] From. A youth conference. A free church. Youth conference. And. At the time. David. Meridus. Lived in Skye. I was thinking. A real problem.

I worked with. My father. In a garage. In Wester Ross. And. I said. I've got a real problem. With the old man. He won't. Park. With a load. Of old cars.

From as far back. As the 1940s. I can't. Persuade him. At all. David Meridus. Said to me. I've got the answer. I know.

A scrap man. In Skye. Who's been converted. Why don't you. Persuade your father. To have him along. And so. I persuaded. My father.

To give this chap. Along. And he was. A very recent. Convert. To the faith. An Aberdeen man. Just by coincidence. And.

[26 : 53] Theological. Arguments. Raged. From that day on. And. We'd come up. From the garage. My father worked. At their home. And. We'd go up.

And we'd be taking off. Our boiler suits. And. There wasn't much. Work done. By. Angus. Neil. Or my father. In the afternoon. And.

Angus. Neil. Was. A very small man. Is a very small man. And. Gold. Fillings. In his teeth. And. He. Came in. As he was taking his boiler suit off.

Pointed at my father. And said. Remember. Finley. Whosoever. Remember. The free offer. Of the gospel. And the argument.

Of course. The previous day. Had been. Calvinism. Had been. The sovereignty. Of God. And I think. My father. Is a sort of fellow. If you were to cut.

[27 : 48] His veins. Burning bushes. Would come out. A real. Calvinist. And. As they argued. I thought. Well. I agree.

With both of them. Agree. Exactly. With what my father. Is saying. It's great. To be grounded. In reformation. Thinking. To be grounded.

In the shorter. Catechism. As I said. To the kids. But there is. The free offer. Of the gospel. It's a wonderful thing. Leave.

Election. Up to God. There's an offer here. That. Whosoever. Believes. Whosoever. Has faith.

Has the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11. And verse 6. Says. Without faith. It's impossible. To please. To please. God. Ephesians 2. By grace.

[28 : 43] You've been saved. Through. Faith. The word belief. Means. Faith. And the word faith. Is used 98 times. Throughout the gospel.

Of John. And John claims. In John 20. 30 and 31. That the whole. Of the gospel. Of John. The purpose of it.

Is to bring us. To faith. In. The Lord Jesus Christ. Unfortunately. In the days we live in. Faith. Is devalued.

Just like. Other words. Like the word. Great. Faith. Is devalued. And. Perhaps. A trade union. Is arguing.

With workers. And the news. Reader says. Both. Parties. Are acting. In. Good faith. And it's come to be. A bit of a wishy-washy.

[29 : 40] Thing. It's got overtone. Of wishful. Thinking. And the world. Out there. If you're a Christian believer. Will think of your faith. As being.

Something. A bit. Wishy-washy. A bit. Pie in the sky. A bit. Hopeful. It concerns. What cannot. Be seen.

Now. It's become. Something. That people. Want. To hold on to. Without. Evidence. And it cuts.

Across. The teaching. Of scripture. Hebrews. 11. And 1. Says. Faith. Is being. Sure. Of what we hope. For. And certain. Of what we do not.

See. We must. Tell the world. Out there. That our faith. Is real. That we are certain. About this. Faith.

[30 : 36] Scripture. Tells us. Is the evidence. Of things. Of things. Not seen. In a very real sense. Your faith. Is a title deed.

To heaven itself. And how precious. Our faith is to us. My faith is certainly. Precious. To me. Now.

In this world. Title deeds. Might. Go missing. We've got a parking space. Next to. Dunblane Free Church. And.

There were people. Indiscriminately. Parking. In it. And we thought. We'll have to do something. About this. And. The people. Next door. Said. Well no. It's our.

Piece of ground. You can't. Park there. No. It's ours. And. We thought. Well the answer is. To get the title deeds. So. We phoned up.

[31 : 31] Edinburgh. To get the title deeds. No. We don't have them. We phoned up. Simpson and Marlach. The church's law agents. Do you have the title deeds? No. You must have them.

And. We were. Went round and round. In circles. Eventually. In amongst the old papers. I'll only go back. To the early 90s. I found a letter.

That showed. For sure. That the title deeds. Were held. In the free church offices. In Edinburgh. And went. Through there. Or Alistair.

Or minister did. He got the title deeds. And demonstrated. That the piece of ground. Belonged. To the and lane. Free church. Now it's true that.

Some stupid office worker. Will always. Mislaid. Title deeds. But God. Who is infallible.

[32 : 26] Will never. Misplace. Title deeds. And coming. Coming to Christ. In faith. You are in. The Lord Jesus Christ. God.

Is omnipotent. And infallible. He's the only being. In the universe. Who's entirely. Reliable. First John. Five.

Verse nine. Says. We accept. Man's testimony. But God's testimony. Is greater. So you've got a great thing. In having faith.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me ask you. Do you believe this morning. That you're a sinner. Perhaps not much.

Of a sinner. But every sin. Will send you. To lost eternity. By a just. And holy God.

[33 : 21] Who hates. Loves. And detests sin. And in saying. You're not much. Of a sinner. Cast your mind. Back.

To the big scare. There was. Over canned foods. With poison. One small. Amount. Of botulism. I think it was. Put into. A can.

Of tinned food. Ruined. The whole. Can. And a huge. Scare. And supermarket. Shelves. You'll remember.

Were cleared. And all that was concerned. A tiny. Amount. Of poison. A tiny. Amount. Of sin. Sends you.

To lost. Eternity. And that's why. God. Had to give. Such a great. Gift. He had to give. His son. Perhaps.

[34 : 17] You're saying. This morning. Well. Yes. I hear. What you're saying. I've got. Faith. Faith. But it's weak. And it's small. And however small it is.

However small your faith is. And however little you know about the word of God. That faith. Will bring you. To heaven itself.

