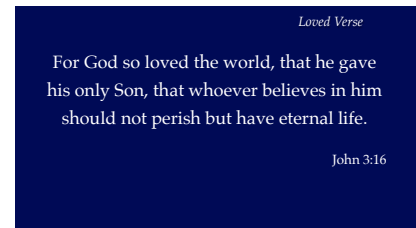


**Opening**

Let's remind our selves of perhaps the most loved passage in the Bible.

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



Do we accept that?  
Can we believe that?

Now a first question.

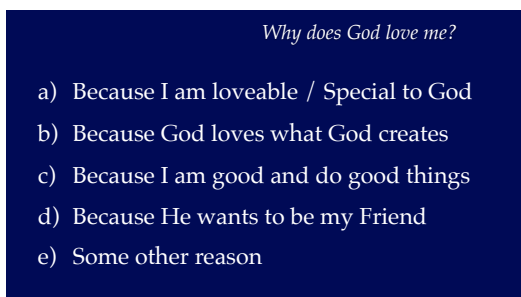
God so loved the world. OK, Does that include you personally? - Yes, No, Perhaps?

The people I want to talk with today are those who answered: “Yes, God loves me.”

If it is ‘Perhaps’ or ‘No’ then I want to assure you, that it’s true. God loves us with a passionate white-hot love that led him to work out our salvation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

So to those who answered “Yes, God loves me personally.”

let me ask a second question: Why you think that is so?  
Why does The Lord God Almighty love you?



Let's consider some commonly held assumptions as to why God might love us.  
Which would you choose?

This is very important.  
Our faith here reveals what we expect of God's love and the quality we believe and expect.

Reflection:

This is not a scripture verse but a statement of faith distilled from scripture.

Nothing we do can make God love us less and nothing we do can make God love us more.

*Why does God love me?*

**Nothing  
we do can make God love us less  
and  
nothing  
we do can make God love us more.**

What this tells us is that there is no way of earning God's love or cutting ourselves off from it. So there is no room for any performance orientation towards being worthy of God's love.

This is demonstrated in Christ.

*Why does God love me?*

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

St Paul tells it this way in Romans 5:6-8

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—<sup>8</sup>but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Qn:** What sort of Love is this?

**A:** This is love as grace. Pure unmerited favour. God extending his favour because... God chooses to.

**Qn:** Why does God choose to love us, people in the world after all that has happened?

The answer lies in God and who God chooses to be and do.

The great I AM is sovereign over himself and chooses love as God's mode of being and doing. This is what was revealed to Moses in the burning bush.

St John said: God is Love. (which is not the same as saying “Love is God”)  
God is love because God so chooses and chooses to be faithful and constant in that love.

The good news worked out in Jesus is that God chose to so love the world that he reached out to it in himself identified as Jesus and gave himself for it.  
God worked his love for you and I as we actually are, or were at our worst in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – his sent and designated son.

Another check,

**Qn:** do you believe this account of God's love as grace?

Nothing we do can make God love us less and nothing we do can make God love us more.

Y/N Really?

I need to warn you, there is a fish-hook in this.  
It is not too good to be true but it is so true that it might annoy you.

Not everyone can accept grace and not everyone is comfortable with it.

**Qn:** How do you feel about being blessed or gifted by someone?

How relaxed are you about receiving a favour?

Do you say things like, “Thanks, I owe you one.” or, “Thanks, I’ll repay you one day?”

This is where God’s love experienced as grace may bring us.

God’s desire is that we receive his loving grace and rest in it.

Accepting grace and resting in it may require a break-through away from parity charity or thinking you have to somehow earn or self-justify to receive God’s love.

The hard point is we cannot earn grace.

We cannot justify it

We can only receive it and be grateful in acknowledging it. That is what Sunday is about!

In Jesus’ day people doubted God’s good intentions for them. Was God’s grace really good?

So he said - as we read in Luke 11:11ff.

<sup>11</sup> What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; <sup>12</sup> or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,

There is a deep-seated doubt in many hearts that God can be trusted to give good things or that God’s loving grace is actually good. Perhaps its best to get our own eggs and fish and not trust on what God might give us?

### **Application**

Living in grace is a choice. It’s a decision in faith.

From my observations it seems to be difficult for people who have worked hard to achieve for themselves.

High achievers often seem more shaped by the fear of loosing what they have than receiving what God wants to give.

Sometimes God’s grace appears unexpectedly and people run a mile from it focusing instead on imagined fears or uncertainty than the grace being offered.

Discernment is required to recognise grace, accept it and rejoice in it.

Some circumstances are covered in grace and others devoid of it.

15 Months ago two assessments were made about how much money Gill Mushtaq and family needed per month to buy their food and household requirements for a family of six. The assessment came at about €300 not allowing for fluctuation in currency exchange.

Kris Pol pasted a photo of the Gill Family on a tin, punched a slot in its lid and set it up at the back of the church. Most weeks since then I have asked her to rattle it during notices. That is about the most unsophisticated appeal for funds I can think of. No email notices - nothing special.

After fifteen months I can tell you that the average monthly transfer to Gill is €349. In my eyes that is testimony to God’s grace. I have no idea where it comes from but I recognise God’s grace in this.

Once a month I get to transfer what has been received to our contact in Sri Lanka - Juan's Uncle - Mr Ranjith- who is another provision in grace.

I have grown so grateful to be part of this process because it is marked by grace. God's grace flows for Gill, even through us and I rejoice in that. In the grace of God, an English speaking church in the Netherlands is sustaining a Persecuted Pakistani Christian Refugee in Sri Lanka until his UNHCR asylum process is completed.

Gill has no difficulty receiving that grace. He knows that it is only God who arranges this. I know that. God's grace is amazing.

This is a flow of grace.

I am convinced that God's grace comes to us often but is often either not recognised or not appreciated. It can appear to make life too complicated for people used to controlling all their own arrangements or overly focused on that they might lose so blinded by fear.

### **Conclusion:**

Here is the challenge to comfortable Christians.

God chooses to extend his love as grace.

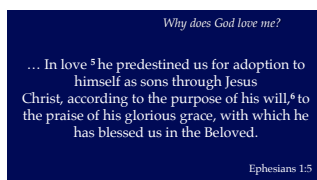
He does not extend it as bumper rewards for good behaviour or as some bonus for good performance.

God does not extend grace to those who think they deserve it.

He gives it as he wills, when he wills and those who seek the God of grace will receive it. Many do not.

Let me end with a blessing and a prayer.

Ephesians 1.3ff.



<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup>even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.