

**Sermon Series: “10 Words from Jesus on Sharing the Faith”**  
**“#10 Love: The Inspiration for the Gospel”**  
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**Sunday, October 24, 2021**

What inspired someone to do something is important to know in understanding what was done. For example, It is interesting to know what inspired certain songs. E.g., in 1983 the rock group The Police came out with the song, “Every Breath You Take”, where Sting sings, “Every breath you take/Every move you make/Every bond you break/Every step you take/I’ll be watching you” and “since you’ve gone I’ve been lost without a trace/I dream at night and I can only see your face/I look around and it’s you I can’t replace/I feel so cold and I long for your embrace/I keep crying baby, baby, please”. Is it a stalker song, or a love song? I recall reading someone’s reaction to this song on the internet and he said, “I remember when I picked up my girlfriend her father was singing this song while cleaning his gun.” From what I recall Sting, who wrote this song, was inspired by his recent divorce from his wife. E.g., also in 1983 U2 came out with an album called “War”, and contained the song, “Sunday Bloody Sunday”, which was inspired by a tragic and bloody incident in Northern Ireland in 1972 have to do with the Troubles there. It is interesting to hear what inspired things we recognize in our culture, from songs to movies to books and so one. It helps us understand them better. The same is true with what inspired the greatest thing we know in our culture— the gospel.

READ John 3:16-17 (p. 94)

**CONTEXT:** Jesus has been speaking to the Pharisee Nicodemus about being born again by the water and the Spirit. Jesus said that just as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness during the exodus and people were healed, so He, the Son of Man, must be lifted up, which was a reference to His cross.

READ v 16. “The greatness of God’s love is manifested through contrasts. We see this first in v 16 with world and only Son as well as with destruction and eternal life. Cf. 1:14,18. New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce rightly comments on v 16: ‘If there is one sentence more than another which sums up the message of the Fourth Gospel, it is this. The love of God is limitless, it embraces all of mankind’ (*John*, pp. 89-90).” This first contrast is a stark and severe one to be sure—the world, for whom the Father sent His only Son. E.g., I am reminded of a story that reflects the enormous sacrifice God the Father has made here. There once was a man who operated a bridge that went up and down— up to let the ships pass through, and down for when the train came across the bridge. One day he brought his young son on the job with him, and his son went off to play when the bridge was up, and he played among the gears which moved the bridge. Suddenly a train was coming and the father had to operate the bridge so that it came down, but he heard a cry as the bridge was coming down— and the father realized his son’s clothes were caught in the gears of the bridge and he could not get out, and the father had no time to stop the bridge— if he did then the quickly oncoming train would crash, with hundreds of passengers onboard. The father had to make a decision, and decide he did— to continue having the bridge come down, knowing it would crush his son. As the train crossed the bridge, the father through tears looked and the commuting passengers, calmly reading their books and newspapers, oblivious to the enormous sacrifice he had made for their well-being: the one for the many. And that story helps us understand a bit better the

tremendous sacrifice our Lord has made for you and me, for the entire world. And even for a world that is apathetic and indifferent about this tremendous sacrifice. The other striking contrast here is between destruction and eternal life. In John's gospel it is clear that eternal life is not just for the future after-life, but for today as well. In John 17:3 Jesus said that this is eternal life, to know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. In a similar way, destruction is not just for the future judgement day, but also can be experienced here— a spiritual death which can encompass the total person. Sometimes we see this visually. E.g., Kurt Cobain, lead singer and guitarist for the rock group from the 1900s Nirvana, had a very troubled inner-life; he dealt with heroin addiction and was in and out of addiction-treatment centers, and even though he was hugely loved and successful, he took his own life. E.g., I recall in one of our prayer times in the French Quarter talking to a guy who seemed to be a drifter, who at about noon was drinking a bottle of liquor, and one whom I could see the hardness and toil of life in his face and body; I asked him how old he was, thinking probably in his 70s, and the age he gave me was very close to mine, and it startled me: but by the grace of God go I. But the love of God can give someone eternal life even though their body may be racked with pain. E.g., I recall as a young pastor visiting an invalid Mrs. Mary and bringing her communion; from what I recall she lived in a small house and could not get around much as all, but she had a wonderful love for the Lord, and true joy about her, and I loved visiting her. E.g., there was once an elderly grandmother who was very sad after a big family gathering, because now it was time for everyone to go home and leave, and she started crying, but one of the family members came up to her and said in effect, "For those who follow Jesus, it only gets better from here!" What inspired these two contrasts— world and the sacrifice of the only Son, destruction and the hope of eternal life, was God's love.

READ v 17. “In v 17 we see God’s love manifested in the contrasts of the condemnation of the world and the salvation of the world, with His focus on the latter. Cf. 9:39; 12:46-47.” Many think that Jesus came to be a killjoy and condemn the world, and this is a popular view today of Christians. E.g., we probably have heard of Dana Carvey’s character “The Church Lady” on Saturday Night Live, as in one sketch where Dennis Hopper, who had struggled with drugs and a wild lifestyle and had started to change, was treated in a self-righteous way by the Church Lady, saying things like, “Isn’t that special?”. But this condemning attitude is the antithesis of the gospel, as we see in v 17. It is true that in John 9:39 Jesus said He came into the world for judgement, but in the context the meaning is that people will have to decide whether to follow Him or not, as 3:18 states. READ John 12:46-47. It does not mean that there is no judgment day and no hell, but rather that all of us deserve it and God is willing to go to enormous lengths to be sure we don’t go there. E.g., I recall when I was in seminary, one of my professors told about one preacher who gave a sermon on hell, and after the service on the congregation members was asked what he thought of the sermon and the focus on hell, and he said he could listen to the preacher and appreciate the sermon, because when he talked about hell there were tears in his eyes. God wants us to be saved. Have you ever known someone to save someone? E.g., I recall reading a book about a man during World War II in Nazi-occupied Hungary, and the man was Jewish but looked Arian. The Jews had killed a German officer and confiscated his uniform, which fit him well. So this Jewish man would go to the German prisons where certain Jews were and request the release of the Jews into his care for questioning, and thereby save them— whisk them to freedom! This helps us understand what our God has done for us— we are condemned in our sins, but He sets the prisoners free!

“How should God’s love, which inspired the gospel, inspire us in the sharing of the gospel?” Servant evangelism. When we think of where we have come in this sermon series, we can see the fullness of the gospel from Jesus’ perspective: harvest, ransom, repent, repentance, eat, learn, cost, know, and shake. How can we get the world to hear this message? If we love them and serve them in God’s love, in God’s way— sometimes by simply listening to them and their struggles in life— then we will earn the right for them to hear from us what remarkable healing the Lord has done in our lives.