

God's Valentine to Us

Remember back in Elementary School when your Mom would be a box of Valentine's Day cards for you to write in? On the "big day" you would bring your bag of Valentine's and drop them in the appropriate boxes/bags for a boy or for a girl... And remember the Valentine you **hoped** you'd get from that "special someone?" You know, the person you would tease in class maybe, but secretly steal glances at during lunch and recess?! Remember?

We're all thinking about Valentine's Day (guys, only 2 1/2 days left!!!) and what to give that special someone that will express the feelings of our hearts... But how awesome to think that 2,000 years ago God gave us a valentine – His name was Jesus Christ!

A certain medieval monk announced he would be preaching next Sunday evening on "The Love of God..." As the shadows fell and the light ceased to come in through the cathedral windows, the congregation gathered. In the darkness of the altar, the monk lighted a candle and carried it to the crucifix. First of all, he illumined the crown of thorns, next, the two wounded hands, then the marks of the spear wound. In the hush that fell, he blew out the candle and left the chancel. There was nothing else to say.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16, NIV)

This passage, like no other in Scripture to me is God's Valentine to us and highlights for us no less than 12 of the greatest promises we'll ever receive...

- 1) **God** – The greatest lover of all mankind since His creation. Only the Lord has the capacity to love every one because He created us and knows us intimately. When we are fully aware of His great love then we will not look to any other for the love that satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with what is good. (1 John 4:9-10)
- 2) **So Loved** – The Lord loves us in the greatest degree. There is **NO** love that can exceed the depth, breadth, length and height of His magnificent love. Whenever you begin to wonder if His love is sufficient for your problem know that His love far exceeds any dimension of the human mind. (Ephesians 3:17b-19)

- 3) *The World*** – The greatest audience. No one, except our great God can say that He knows everyone who has been come into the world from the seed of Adam and Eve. The Creator of the universe is the only One who can speak to the hearts of everyone in the world at the same time without any delay, distraction or distortion. His Spirit covers the whole universe without any hindrance.
- 4) *That He gave*** – The greatest act in history occurred when the Father sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to be a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The Father willingly offered up His Son so that everyone can find a substitutionary payment for the forgiveness of their sins if they will just acknowledge their sin, believe in Him and ask Him to be the Lord and Savior of their life. (Romans 5:1-10)
- 5) *His One and only Son*** – The greatest gift. Even though the gift of a new baby is wonderful it does not come close to the indescribable gift of Christ dying on the cross and resurrecting from the grave so that all who believe in name can have eternal life. (Acts 4:12)
- 6) *That whoever*** – The greatest opportunity. It's sad to note that approximately 90% of the world has failed to take advantage of the opportunity to be born again by saving faith in Jesus Christ. Billions will someday stand before the judgment seat of Christ and He will say, "*I never knew you. Depart from me into everlasting fires in hell reserved for the devil and his angels.*" Oh please do not miss out in taking advantage of the opportunity given to you in this verse. (Matthew 7:22-24)
- 7) *Believes*** – The greatest simple act to gain eternal life and forgiveness and deliverance from the penalty of our sins – hell, eternal separation from God and judgment. Only believe. The things that are impossible with men are possible for those who believe. Do not be like the demons who believe in God and tremble (James 2:19). Let your belief be a saving faith that acknowledges your sins, repents and turns toward God as your only hope for forgiveness, regeneration and a new birth through the entrance of the Holy Spirit of God in your life. (John 5:24; 6:35; 7:38; 12:46)
- 8) *In Him*** – The greatest attraction - So many things attract people through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, but

these are not of the Father ,but are of the world (I John 2:15-16). Preach Christ as the most attractive deliverer, Savior and Sustainer amidst life's most perplexing troubles. (John 12:32)

9) Shall not perish – The greatest promise – Only Jesus Christ can offer assurance of salvation for those who place their faith in Him and ask Him to come into their life as Savior and Lord. When Christ assures you of deliverance from hell and misery He always delivers regardless of your background or problems. (John 11:25-26)

10) But – The greatest difference, **IN** contrast to those who will perish those who trust Christ for their eternal deliverance will live in eternity in heaven where all tears and sorrow will be wiped away and gladness and joy and praise of God will fill us with everlasting joy. (Revelation 7:16-17; 21:3-5)

11) Have – The greatest certainty – When God gives you a gift there is no way you can lose it or have it taken away. You can be sure that whoever has the Son has eternal life and even though you may walk through the valleys of the shadow of death you will never have to fear evil because He is with you - comforting, protecting and guiding you all the way to heaven. (Romans 8:34-36)

12) Eternal Life – The greatest possession – What a joy to know that the Christ lets you start your eternal life at the moment you invite Him to come into your life as Savior and Lord. He will never leave you or forsake you so that you can confidently say, *“The Lord is my helper, what can man do to me.”* Thank Him and sing a song of jubilation: *“Thank You Lord for saving my soul. Thank you Lord for making me whole. Thank you Lord, for giving to me. Your great salvation so rich and free.”* (Ephesians 2:8,9)

Happy Valentine's Day everybody – Remember, **NO ONE** will ever love you as

much yesterday, today and forever the way that Jesus will!

Be Strong, Be Courageous, Be Fearless – and remember...

Christ **IS** All!
Pastor Mark

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G.O. PRAYER LETTER:

Eikosts in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

1. Please pray for us as we reach out to “Faith” and “Johnny” (names changed). We would love to be used by God in their healing and restoration process. They may have been hurt in a past experience with the Evangelical Church in Bosnia and Faith experiences physical pain in her back. Pray that their children would develop an interest in spiritual things. Thank you for your prayers! They are vital to the work here.

2. The Sarajevo Evangelical Church’s latest worship CD has just been released. Please pray that the CDs would help our brothers and sisters here to worship God in their homes and cars, not just when they come to church.

3. The church has been able to open a second-hand clothing store. It is already a great blessing to families who need affordable options for clothes. It is also blessing the two church ladies who are employed there. Please pray for God's protection over the store and for open doors to share God's love with the people who come in.

4. We are starting a new round of home groups in Ilidza. Pray for those who are still considering whether they can commit to coming on a regular basis.

5. We are exploring the possibility of a Christian outreach center here in Sarajevo. Discussions are going well and we are making good progress. Relationships are the cement in any foundation here in Bosnia. Pray for us as we talk and dream and pray with our local Bosnian partners about what God wants to do in this city.

Kathy will be visiting NLF on Tuesday, February 24th. Please pray for both her Mark’s safety as she travels from Bosnia and around the Mid-Atlantic District.

Laos in Poipet, Cambodia

Please Pray:

1. For wisdom and discernment as we search for honest construction workers or a company who will be putting up fencing around the land that will be the community center for the Poipet churches.
2. For a clear directions for the future of the Poipet church.
3. For unity among church families and for a good working relationship between church leaders, as well as continued spiritual maturation of our young church leaders.
4. For balance times with ministries and family.
5. For safety traveling as we go about each week to the villages around Poipet.
6. For transition time, yet again, as Justin (our oldest son) will soon go back to boarding school.
7. For the people of Poipet and the surrounding areas, who have suffered economically due to border tensions and unusually flooding in October and November, which resulted in major loss of crops.