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Series: God's Love in Action!

Sermon: 4 of 5

Date: May 24, 2009

ONLY ONE SON

Hello again! God's love is still in action! Here is probably the most famous verse in all the world, John 3:16: *"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."* Jesus shared these words. Jesus was emphasizing God's great love is still in action.

I read a story recently that is a good parallel of this verse. I think this is a great story that fits well with this verse. Let me share it with you.

There was a big, fancy house in another country. There were rolling hills with many trees. Pretty flowers lined the driveway. There was a beautiful gate leading to the house. A father and his son lived there. The father was very, very wealthy. He was a famous businessman who traveled the world. He was well known for buying and selling art by famous artists such as Picasso, Monet, Gauguin and Renoir. He had been to Europe, Japan, Africa, South America and Australia. He had been everywhere in the world. He would buy and sell. He even had a gallery in his own home.

He loved his son. He taught his son and encouraged him to become a successful businessman, too. The father wanted his son to work with him and travel with him. His son was fine with that. The son learned different tricks of his father's trade.

One day, the son told his father he had been drafted. The father told his son he did not need to go to war, but instead he needed to stay and work with him. The son said, "I want to serve my country because of the wonderful things our country has done for us. I appreciate my country, and I want to fight in the war."

The father relented and told his son to go. The son left and went to war in another country. The father continued working hard in his business. His business continued to make money and grow. For a while, he had heard nothing from his son. He lost contact with him. He wondered where his son was. He wondered whether his son was dead or alive. He continued on.

One night, the father was tired. He sat down and looked at the fire in his fireplace. He looked up at the different paintings he had on the wall around him. He thought about all the places in the world where he had purchased the paintings and how much he had paid for

each one.

Someone knocked on his door. He wondered who it might be this late at night. He opened the door and gazed at a tall man with broad shoulders, wearing a hat and a blue uniform. The uniform had gold buttons and bars on the sleeves, on the chest and on the arms. He was well dressed, wearing a white belt with a gold buckle. His pants were crisp with red, white and blue stripes. His shoes were shiny. He was also wearing white gloves. He was holding a white box with a flag on it. His hat was white with an eagle crest on it. The man was from the army.

The father quickly assumed that his son had died. He was heartbroken, as he asked the man what he could do for him. The soldier told the father, "I've come to tell you how much I loved your son. He was my best friend and roommate. He was a lot of fun. We trained together in the army. We had a wonderful time together."

The soldier went on to explain that he had been hurt in the war. He lay wounded and helpless.

"Your son pulled me out of harm's way," he said. "While your son did that, he was shot and killed. But he saved my life. I want to thank your son for saving my life. This is my gift to you."

The father accepted the gift, as he choked back the tears. He opened the gift and saw a painted portrait of his son, his own son, in it. His son looked so perfect, showing his personality and his character. He knew a talented artist had drawn it.

He asked, "Who painted this picture?"

The soldier answered, "I painted it because I know your son. I loved your son."

The father offered to pay the man for doing this. The man told him not to pay him. It was a free gift because the son had sacrificed his life for him. He saluted the father, turned around and left.

The father took down one of his paintings and put the portrait of his son in its place. He was so proud of his son. Whenever people came over to look at his gallery, the father always told them about the portrait of his son. They were more interested in the other portraits done by other famous artists. The father emphasized the portrait of his son, yet they still didn't care as much. The father grieved.

Years later, the father died. It was announced there was going to be an auction, and all his paintings would be sold. People flew in from all over the world. They came from France, Germany and Italy. The crowds were excited to bid on all the expensive paintings.

The auctioneer walked to the stage to begin the auction. He pounded his gavel and said, "Good morning." And then he opened the bidding on the first painting. He pointed toward a

picture that was covered. The covering was removed, and it was the portrait of the son. The people shouted, "We don't want this one. Let's move on to the more expensive paintings by the famous artists."

The auctioneer quieted the crowd and said, "This portrait must be sold first."

The crowd protested and wondered who would buy this painting. "We don't have time for this," the crowd jeered. "Let's get on with it. We want to see the other things. Come on! Come on!"

There was confusion. The auctioneer hit his gavel and told everyone to calm down. He then asked, "Is there any one interested in buying this painting?"

The gentle voice of an old man was heard in the back. He had a cane and a beard. His grandson was sitting with him. He bid \$50. People around him laughed because he was willing to buy what they considered a bad portrait. The auctioneer asked if anyone wanted to make a higher bid. He said, "Going once..." The crowd said, "Hurry up! Get on with it!" The auctioneer said, "Going twice..." No one wanted to bid. The auctioneer said, "Sold," and hit his gavel. He announced the portrait was sold for \$50.

The auctioneer asked the old man if he was ready to pay for the portrait. The old man said he was. He announced that he knew the son and loved him very much. He knew the son had a wonderful relationship with his father. The old man had enjoyed working as a gardener at the father's house before. He was happy to buy the portrait to remember the son. He walked up to the judge and paid \$50 for the portrait.

The auctioneer banged his gavel and announced the auction was officially over. People were upset and didn't understand why the auction was over, for there were other portraits yet to be sold.

The auctioneer explained to everyone that when the father died, he had a will. His will stipulated that whoever bought the portrait of his son would be given everything he owned, including his house, land and all of the other paintings. The auctioneer once again announced the auction was over. The crowd was shocked.

God has given you His Son. You have a choice now. You may accept the Son or reject Him. If you have the Son in your heart, you will have everything. You will receive the treasures of heaven. You will have a multitude of blessings from God the Father.

As you look to the Father, you have a choice. The world may discourage you from a relationship with Jesus. They may challenge you to enjoy the pleasures of this world. But remember God's love. God's love is in action through His Son, Jesus Christ. There is no other way except through Jesus.

In the story, the father's will said that whoever bought the portrait of his son would be

given everything. Accept Jesus, and you will have everything. Remember the Bible verse, "For God so loved the world." Who is the world? You. You and I are sinners. God still loves us. You and I have a choice. Whoever believes will have eternal life in heaven. Whoever does not will receive punishment.

I challenge you to say, "Yes," and accept Jesus as your Savior. When you do, God will pour His Holy Spirit upon you. He will pour His love upon you. He will lead you to grow. His Spirit will help you, as you face the challenges of this world. He will give you His rich, abundant blessings. The world might think you are crazy, but that is how God works. The world might think you are stupid, but God treasures you.

Praise God! I'm excited we can experience this love. Remember, God loved you first. You can love others, too. Praise God! He is so good! Hallelujah! Let's pray together for many, many people in the world to know Jesus. We can challenge others to accept God's only Son. Tell them God is ready to give them overflowing blessings from heaven. Let's go ahead and pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you Jesus for Your love and Your abundant blessings. Thank You, Jesus, for dying on a cross for us. We love You. We want to live forever with You. We want to experience Your blessings. Give us Your healing, power, wisdom and understanding through the Holy Spirit. We thank You for Your love. Thank You for leading us and teaching us new things every day. We know all things happen because of Your love. We love You. Thank You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Jesus' precious name I pray.

Jesus loves you. Amen.



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