

**How Much? This Much! By Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 01090607**  
**Romans 8:12-17 and John 3:1-17**  
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We see it so often, it becomes almost trite. We see cards held up in sports arenas. We see it on advertizing signs along the highways. "John 3:16" "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."<sup>1</sup> Jesus said this during a conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus who had come to Jesus in the middle of the night. Nicodemus was that curious about who Jesus was and why he did the things he did.

In the course of the conversation, Jesus said that in order to see the kingdom of God, one must be born anew, or born from above. Folks tend to focus on that "inherit eternal life" part of the dialogue. We look for assurances that the end of this life here on earth is not the end of life. If we simply believe in Jesus, we can live forever. We focus on that to the detriment of understanding what Jesus was trying to tell Nicodemus.

Turn your focus away from the reward you desire, to the love God exhibits and wants us to exhibit. How much did God love the world? God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. God loved the world that much. Much more than we can imagine or conceive.

What would this world be like if those who claim to follow Jesus demonstrated that kind of love? Instead of demanding that rules and doctrines be followed, churches would simply be serving. Instead of judging the quality of others' faith, Christians would be encouraging one another to use their gifts for ministry, whatever they are. Instead of proclaiming Christianity as the only path to God, Christians would be welcoming those of other faiths, seeking understanding and working to bring the fullness of God's kingdom here on earth.

God's kingdom is here. Jesus came proclaiming its presence here on earth. It exists where there is love, caring, and compassion, but we cannot see it unless we are born from above—unless our lives are turned around to see things from God's perspective, unless we can live a life of profound love to the extent that we could give up our own lives for the good of others. Give up our lives!? Give up the life of a son or a daughter for someone else? That is the depth of God's love. That is the meaning of the love Jesus showed us.

Let me focus this for us in this church. I hear people say, "I love my church," and I see church members doing wonderful caring and loving things. I see folks singing in the choir, serving on boards and committees, giving financial gifts, large in proportion to their income, and preparing meals for the homeless shelter. It's great, and it's self-sacrificial.

But, we all have our opinions. Do we have the self-sacrificial love to match our opinions? I see a piano standing here in front of me. It looks beautiful. It sounds beautiful. Some wonder why we need a grand piano. Wouldn't a new upright or even a baby grand do? I suppose either would do, but this is the piano we got a good deal on.

Some wonder why the piano is here when there are so many other needs. Why would this church purchase a piano when we are trying to raise money for fifty vinyl thermopane windows? Why a piano when we should be providing food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless? Why a piano when the economy is in such terrible shape and people are losing jobs?

These are good questions, and those causes are all important. When others ask "Why?" I ask, "Why not?" I don't know the details of how this came about, but it is a marvelous opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup>John 3:16

Someone, some member of this church, wanted to help provide an instrument that would fill this sanctuary with beautiful sound. If this piano is here to glorify ourselves, if it is something to brag about, then I say, take it away. Get it out of here. But, if it is here to glorify God, to help lift our voices in praise, to inspire our young people to perform music to touch souls, then I say, “why not?”

Each of us has been given differing gifts. Our job as members of the body of Christ is to inspire each other to give God glory and to spread God’s love with our gifts. How can we inspire each other to that? When I say, “Why not,” I mean that the generosity that inspires one area can inspire generosity in another area. Thirteen families have provided financial gifts to bring us to within two thousand dollars of the cost of this piano. That accomplishment can inspire others of us to give to provide windows. Last Sunday’s Pentecost picnic proceeds provided one window. Meanwhile, our men provided the dinner at the Allied Churches shelter on Friday night. This church is providing employment to a refugee family. If this piano were not here, would we be doing a better job of feeding the hungry or providing for those who have lost their jobs? Somehow, I think not. I think the generosity that brought this piano can inspire generosity in other areas.

When one person has a new idea, and considers it a gift in the service of God and of fellow humans, I think they ought to be encouraged. The question we should ask ourselves is, “Does it hurt Jesus, or does it hurt others?” If it doesn’t hurt Jesus and doesn’t hurt others, then I say, “why not?”

I don’t think God appreciates grumpiness – that is the attitude that if something doesn’t go my way, I’m going to grumble and complain and perhaps leave this church for another. What kind of love is that? What kind of a commitment to the body of Christ is that? “If you don’t do what I want you to do, I’m leaving!” I heard that comment made when there was the possibility we might invite Elon University to join with us in the building of an Multi-faith Spiritual Life Center. “If they do that, I’m leaving.” That does not reflect God’s love.

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

Let us be born from above. Let us permit God’s spirit to infuse our life together: to provide the steam to empower us to proclaim God’s kingdom here.

How much does God love us? This much!