

**Would You Send Your Child There? By Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. L4060326**  
**Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 3:14-21**  
**Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 26 March, 2006**

Tell me honestly, now, if you were God and had all the power of the universe, and saw a race of people living on earth who murdered, kept denying your existence, built monuments to their achievements, and felt little desire to love, and you had one son who was very dear, and close to you, would you send your son to that earth? If you had any sense, any self respect, and intelligence at all, you probably wouldn't. But, the difference is, we are not God. We can not understand God and God's ways.

The evidence is there, though, that God did send a son. Without debating the trinity or the divinity of Jesus, I can state outrightly that the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a direct gift from God to us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son."<sup>1</sup> The people of Jesus' time alleged this was God's son. They suspected that there was something unusual about him. That did not make any difference. He was hated anyway, just like the other prophets, religious leaders, public figures, and persons in whom too much selfish hope is placed.

Jesus was spat upon, poked in the side with a pointed stick, stuck in the head with thorns, had nails driven through his hands and feet into the cross, and left there to die. He was left for flies to buzz around, birds to pick at, and the sun to beat down upon. They must have been barbaric murderers.

It is too easy to sit here and point with fingers to that generation so long ago as a generation of barbaric murderers. Our generation today is just as murderous. It is too easy to sit here and point our fingers at others who do murderous things: insurgent fundamentalist Muslims, prisoners, Sudanese Janjaweed fighters, and soldiers.

When we point with one finger, three are pointed back at ourselves. The first finger says, "I don't love myself." I don't accept myself. I don't live up to my standards, I am guilty, ugly, and unloved. Or, I am a bragging ego-inflated big shot, only overcompensating for the same inadequate feelings. But the message of the gospel is that I too, am loved. The person who is out only for him- or herself is only proving the fact that he/she doesn't love him/herself. True love means a healthy self-respect that does not allow itself to be easily threatened. Pointing the finger at others takes attention away from the fact that we don't love ourselves.

The second finger says, "I don't love others." In the parable of the last judgment Jesus says, "As you did it to one of the least of these, who are members of my family, you did it to me."<sup>2</sup> The message is crystal clear. Christ is present in our neighbors, our enemies, and in everyone. That's not just a neighbor we are angry at, we are angry at Christ. That is not just a child in Darfur starving, that is Christ starving. That is not just a psychotic killer we are executing, it is Christ we're executing. It is not just a pimply-faced girl we don't want to ask out, that is Christ we don't want to ask out. To believe we are Christian is to demand that we treat each person as though it were Christ himself.

The third finger says, "I don't love God." I would rather curse God for making life as rough as it is. I would rather curse God for the death of a close loved one. I have not accepted the fact that God loves me, and that demands a response. Or, perhaps I would rather keep God to myself, believing it to be far easier to have my own personal benefits than to realize this God is active in all the affairs of humans, that this God also has an interest in corporations, housing, governments, and all the affairs of this world.

The person who can't love himself or others or God is dead. The author of Ephesians described them that way.<sup>3</sup> These are not the dead in graveyards, but the walking dead. They have no real goals, never look at how they live, and seem to have no hope. The walking dead follow only their own desires. "Doing

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

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 25:40

<sup>3</sup>Ephesians 2:1-5

my own thing” sounds good, until it begins to affect the way another person can do his or her own thing. Doing one’s own thing implies that we exist independently, as islands. Doing one’s own thing implies living to satisfy only one’s own pleasures and desires. We are, however, all interrelated in an extremely delicate balance of influences and counter-influences. The walking dead produce other walking dead. The author of Ephesians also refers to people who are alive.<sup>4</sup> These are people who, because of their acceptance of God’s love, are raised up into a better regard for self, love for others, and can in return, give praise to God. To be made alive is to have hope.

This may not be the best possible world, but it is the only world we have. To be alive is to make this world alive— alive in interactions between people, alive in relation to the environment, and live in relation to knowing that this is God’s expression of his love.

God sent an only son because God loved the world. This wasn’t just a one-time event, but Christ is always being sent. Every time a child is born, every time a flower pokes through the soil, every time we interact with another person, Christ is being sent: Christ: savior, salvation, new life, is being sent. This is a gift from God.

The Covenant Players have a skit which is powerful, portraying the love God has for this world and reiterates John 3:16: “For God so loved the world.”<sup>5</sup> All the actors stand as though they are out in space, looking at our blue and white planet and pointing at it.

“That is a very special planet, even though it looks insignificant. That is the visited planet.”

The others gasp in disbelief. “Surely, there must have been some terrible emergency for *him* to visit it.”

“No, not really.”

“Surely, he must have lived in splendor as a king.”

“No, he lived as a carpenter.”

“Why?”

“Because he wanted to teach its inhabitants about humility.”

“They learned that, of course.”

“No, they still strut themselves around with self-importance.

“That’s terrible.”

“He wanted to teach about his love for the entire universe”

“They learned that, of course.”

“No, they killed him.”

“I can’t believe it. They must be a race of monsters.”

“He doesn’t think so. He loves them.”

“That’s incredible, and they hate him?”

“Not all of them. Some have open hearts and minds and try to do his will.”

“What are his plans for the planet?”

“That’s only for him to know. They’re always in some terrible trouble, killing and fighting.”

“Do you think they’ll ever change?”

“I don’t know. A lot is up to them. He loves them. I don’t know what will happen to that planet and its inhabitants. We’ll just have to wait and see.”

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<sup>4</sup>Ephesians 2:5

<sup>5</sup>Covenant Players, PO Box 2900, Oxnard, CA 93034-2900