

# Sermon

## Sunday, October 28, 2018

Charleston, SC

8:00 am & 10:30 am Sermon ~ 1 John 3:16-20, Matthew 6:19-21

*Living a So-That Life in a Selfie World*

The Rev. Al Zadig, Jr.

God...so-loved...that. Let me tell you about a dear friend of mine and many of yours, Marge Palmer.

Marge is a long-time member of St. Michael's and normally sits at the back during the 8am service. I absolutely love my after-worship conversations with Marge. Pretty brief, but in a quiet way I see Jesus radiating out of her. In fact, Marge so loves her Lord that she did something wonderful. She simply invited her neighbor, Lane Middleton, to church. Lane is now an absolute pillar in pew 44. Why did Marge invite another? I submit to you a two-word answer: So-That. Marge, receiving God's love in and through St. Michael's, so-that it moved her to share by inviting another. It's the So-That-Principle. This works in every part of your life and mine! You go to college SO THAT you get that dream job! You tell your child to make their bed SO THAT they stay married when the time comes! You send your kids to college SO THAT they get a dream job to finance the rest of your life! Christian and I stayed up until 3:30 am on Saturday morning. SO THAT we would see the Red Sox win. Didn't happen! SO-THAT is how life works.

This principle is also the very essence of Christianity! The SO-THATs dominate Scripture! Mark 16:

After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to them SO-THAT they would go into the world to preach the Good news to all creation! John 16:33: Jesus said, I have told you all these things about prayer, SO-THAT you may have peace! Acts 3:19: Luke says: Repent, turn back to God SO-THAT your sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come for you! But The ultimate SO-THAT is John 3:16: God loved the world SO THAT He gave His Only Son Jesus Christ, that all who believe in Him, will live forever.

We hear all the time, God is love, but that's half of it. The proof of God's love led Him to the ultimate SO-THAT. GOD so loved THAT He gave his most precious treasure away, His Only Son. Does your faith have a SO-THAT attached?

Let me take to that little known book in the way back of the Bible. 1 John, yes part of the 1-2-3 John series near Revelation. Yet, these tiny little books, contain the highest percentage of the mention of the word Love than anywhere else in the Bible. Why? John writes his letters about 80 years after the death of Christ.

Over this time a group emerged who practiced Docetism. Docetism claimed that Jesus was yes, divine, but, only a spirit. They claimed that Jesus was never actually a human being. They refused to believe that Jesus had fully entered our human situation. He never fully entered into our sufferings, which meant that, as a spirit, he couldn't have died for us. Therefore, there was no conception that God could love us SO much THAT He gave His only son, His only in the flesh son. So John devotes much of his writings to say that yes, Jesus is the very Flesh of God!

Have you ever met a person, who when you tried to love them you get this response? "You couldn't possibly love me. I'm used to goods, you don't know the bad I've done." These ancients could not fathom a God who had such unconditional love, THAT would lead to Jesus in the flesh. Which is why John writes in his Gospel Chapter one, "In the Beginning was the Word, Word here meaning Jesus. The Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us!" For God Loved the world with such intensity, THAT he gave His Only Son SO THAT all who believe in Jesus will live forever. John

3:16. But there are two John 3:16's in the Bible. The Gospel of John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16. *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us," SO-THAT we lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*

So, Christianity is essentially two parts: receiving the Love Jesus suffered, and died to give us SO THAT we would give that love to others in thought, word and deed. Again back to John our poster child of Love who quotes Jesus saying, "As I have loved you, love on another SO THAT the world will know you are my Disciples!" We just can't have one without the other. The So-That moment in faith is the final proof for you and me that we have passed from death to life. Our faith isn't real until we begin living this theme of John. Without this lifestyle conviction, our insides die. Churches die. It all comes down to this. Grace is the Action of what Jesus did for us; The Giving of ourselves to others is the reaction! Grace is the Action of Jesus. Giving the faith away is our Reaction. It was Winston Churchill who said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life but what we give."

So, my friends, this love of Jesus that we receive is capable of breaking every chain of bondage in our lives, yet, don't we want to see these chains break in the lives of those around us? So That they would be free? My beloved friends, you are here this morning because you know that love of Jesus. But I want to challenge us all on the So-That. There are so many ways we can live the SO-THAT Life. Forgiven by Christ SO THAT we can forgive. Loved by Christ SO THAT we can love. Invited to Christ SO THAT we invite others. Given resources from Christ SO THAT we can give them away.

Let me focus on the last two. Jesus out of Love laid down His life for us, SO THAT we

do the same. How? We can lay down our life, yes, risking rejection, fear, and ridicule by inviting another to church. Look in the corners and there you find some empty pews. They should be full of folks! Living the SO-THAT life means living a life of constant invitation to share the love we've been given, to lay down our lives for others! Thank God for the person who first invited you! Have we done the same in return? In the spirit of Marge, inviting that neighbor, work colleague, family member, waiter, doctor, nurse, or shopkeeper? You do the ask, Let God do the heavy lifting. I don't care if you're 90, 50 or 15, the power of invitation saves lives. In my own life, maybe one in ten ever say yes, but wow, the life change for the one!

Invitation. The second is this. Malachi says, Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, SO THAT there will be food in my house! Bring the full tithe into the church SO THAT there will be resources in the church! Tithing is one of the ways we return love to God and enable the family of the church to make the highest impact we possibly can to transform our City. Tithing 10% of what we've been given is a critical So-That Moment. Why? Tithing not only reminds us we are God's beloved children who have been created and redeemed by Him, but when we give Jesus that first part of our income, we acknowledge Him as Lord of all! Even Lord of our pocketbook!

If we had a church where everyone tithed, we could literally double our collective impact here in Charleston. That South African Pastor Andrew Murray said it like this, "You know; the World asks what do you own. Jesus asks, How do you use it?"

Before he died, Billy Graham said there is one human that has influenced me more than any other. His name? Steven Olford. Olford was a pastor to pastors and wrote countless books. But it was Olford who said, Tithing does three things. It satisfies our souls, builds up the Church, and magnifies the Lord. Living the SO-THAT conviction is the only proof we have passed from Death to Life.

Yet, let me give you a glimpse into what life looks like when we ignore the So-Thats. The Message Bible translates 1 John 3 this way, verse 16, "God out of love gave his only son so that we then lay our lives down for others." All good. Verse 17: "If you see some

brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it, but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears.

And you made it disappear." Verse 18: My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love through action. This is the only way we'll know we're truly living in God's reality." Verse 19: "Until we live the So-That's, our hearts will never be at rest, our hearts will be in a place of discontent and anxiety." This is John's language, not mine. But we know it's true. Why? Hoarding worship for ourselves only, never inviting, prevents us from being the channels through which God works! Hoarding money and not tithing prevents us from being the channels through which God works! What is hoarded in that storage unit be it worship, money, love, forgiveness, or joy will be lost. It's true. If you're forgiven but never forgive, you die inside. If we worship and never invite another, we die inside. Life in the Love of God brings eternal life. Life without the Love of God brings eternal death. If we don't believe that what we do here is a life and death matter, inviting and tithing will never make sense to you. But, what happens when through the Holy Spirit we do live the SO-THAT LIFE? Like the early Rabbis, let me answer that question with a question. Have you ever met an unhappy generous person? Rich or poor, unhappy generous people really don't exist!

The love of God is the Action. Giving is the reaction! The love of god is the action. Giving, inviting, and tithing is the reaction! In just a minute we will be commissioning our mission team to India and I'm reminded of a young man, a native of India who came to faith in Christ. Someone invited Him to worship, and he gave his heart to Jesus. He relentlessly began inviting others, yet it meant his own parents disowned him, and all that he had was taken from him. Over and over, other Christians would say, "How on earth can you bear all your losses?" The new convert replies, "You know, so many people ask me that question. Yet none of you have asked, How on earth can I bear all my joys!"

Inviting is Joy! Tithing is Joy! Every Sunday I give thanks to God for Marge Palmer, why? Because I see Lane in her pew every Sunday, and I see the quiet Joy in her Spirit. And now I see Lane in Alpha and how she has inspired Bruce Bahlav. Let's fill these pews. Let's give

from the depths of God's Love! All in response to the Grace poured down on us! Wow!

Finally this morning, my friends, here is my promise. When we live the So-That life, God Rains down. His love rains down. His power rains down. His provision rains down. I have proof. Last week, to prepare for the upcoming mission to India, our team gathered on retreat. One of the things we practiced was giving our testimonies, something we will share when we get there next month. Tom Acker gave his, but I realized as he was giving it, he was only giving his testimony at a surface level. How do I know this? I had been with Tom in a men's group the week before when he shared his entire story. I mean the joys and terrific sorrows.

So, at the retreat, when Tom was done I said, "Tom, please start over and give from the deepest place of your heart, SO-THAT people would know the real you and, in knowing the real you, they would love Jesus even more for what He's done in your life." I barely get those words out when two things happen. Tom immediately began giving us the real story of his life, and instantly, at that moment, it started to pour rain outside. Not just a gentle rain, but the kind of rain on a roof so loud you can barely hear another! God was pouring out his love! We have nine witnesses! God overwhelms us when we share what we he has given us from the deepest place of our souls. God loved, So That He sent His Only Son. Jesus lay down His life for us, SO THAT we lay our lives down and share with another. Amen Let us pray: Heavenly Father, it isn't what we give that you count, it's what we keep that you count. Help us be all in.