

For GOD
SO LOVED
the WORLD

Creative
Communications
Samples



Devotions drawn from
JOHN 3:16

FOR GOD
SO LOVED
THE WORLD,
THAT HE GAVE
HIS ONLY
SON, THAT
WHOEVER
BELIEVES IN
HIM SHOULD
NOT PERISH
BUT HAVE
ETERNAL LIFE.

John 3:16

The Sign

“**F**or God so loved the world.” Why? If we are honest about things, we have to admit that this world is not always a very lovable place. The world displays beauty and majesty, and we enjoy the love of family and friends. Yet this world and its people also show a less-than-lovable side caught up in violence and disaster. The beauty, majesty and love are given by God. He created the world and pronounced “everything that he had made” as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). The violence and disaster are our own creation, the result of sinful human rebellion against our Creator.

God loves the world and the people he created because he is love (1 John 4:8). In an astonishing act of self-sacrificing love, God himself creates anew the people he loves and will, at the right time, restore the world in which we live to the paradise he desires for us. And strangely enough, a sign of violence and disaster has become for us the ultimate sign of God’s beauty and majesty and love for the world.

Refining Fire

He told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." JOHN 2:16

We generally think of Jesus as gentle and kind, and he certainly was. But on this day in the Jerusalem temple, he was anything but gentle. Those who sold animals for sacrifice and money-changers who provided (for a profit) the appropriate coins for offerings had set up shop in the temple courtyard. Jesus fashioned a whip and drove merchants and animals alike from the temple. He poured out coins and tipped over tables. This was his Father's house, not a marketplace!

The prophet foretold, "The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple ... who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?" (Malachi 3:1-2). The promised Lord was here. He came to refine and purify, and so it had begun. And when the time was right, this cleansing, purifying Lord would himself pass through the refining fires of suffering and death to save the world he loved.

**Refining Lord, forgive our sins and purify us
for service in your name. Amen.**

What Sign?

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." JOHN 2:19

The Lord came to refine and purify his people, but the cleansing of the temple did not go unchallenged. Those who watched Jesus that day demanded proof of his authority to behave in this way. "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" They wanted a sign, and Jesus promised them one. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." It had taken forty-six years to build the temple, and now he was going to tear it down and rebuild it in three days? What kind of impossible sign was that?

False witnesses at Jesus' trial would turn his own words against him (Mark 14:58). The temple of his body would be destroyed in death. But on the third day after his death, Jesus was raised to life. A dead, crucified victim raised to life? Impossible! But as the angel Gabriel told Jesus' mother Mary, "Nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

Lord Jesus, you have done the impossible.
By your death and resurrection,
you have saved us. Amen.

He Knows

... he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. JOHN 2:24-25

Jesus said, “The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me” (John 10:25). There was controversy. People wondered, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?” (John 7:31). They saw Jesus’ miracles and watched him cleanse the temple. Perhaps they remembered what the prophets said concerning the Lord who would cleanse and purify, who would make the blind see and the lame walk. People saw the signs and they believed.

Still, Jesus did not entrust himself to them because he “knew what was in man.” Like the people of Jesus’ day, we too can be trusting and confident one moment and fickle and faithless the next. But no one needs to tell Jesus about people. He knows. Yet Jesus’ love is the redeeming, self-sacrificing love of God, and he laid down his life for us, the sinful people that he knows so well.

Jesus, you know us inside and out.

We do not deserve your love, but you gave yourself up into death for us all. Amen.

Convincing Signs

Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. JOHN 3:2

A Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus watched the things Jesus did. The signs convinced him that Jesus, at the very least, was a teacher sent by God. But was he more than that? Nicodemus wanted to know, so one night he met with Jesus. Only someone sent by God could do such signs, Nicodemus said, and he was right. Jesus later said, “The very works that I am doing bear witness about me that the Father has sent me” (John 5:36).

Many people today think as Nicodemus did, believing Jesus to be a wise teacher, a prophet. Jesus is that, but he is much more. He is the Savior who died for the sins of the world. Nicodemus would later speak in Jesus’ favor (John 7:50) and assist with Jesus’ burial (John 19:39). Had Nicodemus come to believe that Jesus was the promised Savior? We don’t know, but Jesus’ empty tomb was surely a convincing sign.

Jesus, we believe that you rose from the dead,
the greatest of all signs. Amen.



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THE FEW WORDS OF JOHN 3:16 ARE SOMETIMES CALLED “THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL.” These devotions explore the verse that so well sums up the unexpected, self-sacrificing love of God for the world he created. The sign of the cross, an instrument of violence and death, has become for us a sign of forgiveness and life. God sent his Son as the Savior of the world, so that all who believe in him will have eternal life. That is how God so loved the world.

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