

The Heart of Missions

by A.B. Simpson

The world needs to know the God of love, the Gospel of Christ, and the love of God in us, so that we can show God's love to others by sacrificing for them.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, John 3:16

Topics: "God's Love", "Missions"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the heart of missions through the lens of John 3:16, illustrating that the world needs to know the true God, hear the Gospel, and see the love of Christ. He argues that the God of love, the Gospel of salvation, and the love we show to others are foundational to effective missions. Simpson highlights the stark contrast between the true God and the false gods of various religions, and he calls for believers to embody God's love in their actions. He urges that our love must be genuine and sacrificial, reflecting the love God has for humanity, as this is what the world desperately needs to witness. Ultimately, he challenges the church to actively share this love and message with those who are lost.

Transcript

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only be-gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16).

This is the greatest text in the Bible, and one shrinks from trying to breach from it, it is so transcendently greater than the highest human thought. To many it has been a message of salvation. Today let it speak to us as a missionary message. There are three thoughts in it, that are very plain and emphatic.

1. This is the God the world needs to know.
2. This is the Gospel the world needs to hear.
3. This is the Love the world needs to see.

Here we have the platform of missions in the God of love, the gospel of Christ, and in your love and mine, His love in us sacrificing, serving, sending, going, praying. God give us that love today, and make this morning meeting an illustration of it that will crown the feeble efforts which we shall take to make it plain.

I. THIS IS THE GOD THE WORLD NEEDS TO KNOW

The world has no such God. The world has had many gods. The devil has taken pains to provide mankind with abundant religious privileges. He loves to play God himself, and to be the counterfeit of our heavenly Father, and he has his priesthood and rites in every land and in every tribe.

From the very beginning we find worship among all peoples. Going back no earlier than the Egyptians, their deities were of the most gross, absurd and revolting type; bugs, beetles, serpents and crawling repulsive things were the images to them of the great omnipotent and loving Father that we know. Their mythology teems with pictures of the future world at once ridiculous, revolting and terrible. They knew something of justice in the heavenly world and the awards of the future life; but nothing of love and grace.

The deities of the Phoenicians and the Sidonians were worshipped by the vilest representations, Baal and Ashteroth. These stood for the male and female principles of life, and their worship was an orgy of abominable sensuality.

Nothing more hideous could be produced than the god of the Moabites and the Ammonites, that frightful Molok, worshiped by the human sacrifices of helpless little children; a great brazen furnace of fire filled with burning coals, heated red hot, opening his arms and taking the children into that fiery bosom, while bands of music played to drown their fearful cries. That was the god they worshipped, and for whom even Solomon set up a shrine on one of the heights that looked upon Jerusalem.

What shall we say of the mythology of the Greeks and the Romans? Their religion was but the reproduction of human passions and vices on a higher scale. What was Venus but the impersonation of lust? What was Jupiter, but a type of the same despotic power which Nero and Domitian exhibited in their own despotic lives?

As we come down the ages we find our Druid forefathers offering human sacrifices. Going to Africa we find a fetish worship in which the lowest and most senseless things are set apart as deities for the worship of their votaries. Go through China and look at their images, and you will find the same revolting phase of image worship, and the most cruel traditions in connection with the future punishments of the dead. They have no name for love. They have no name for sin. To them God is just the representation of the human heart, "and they that make them are like unto them."

When we turn to the picture that Jesus gives us of God, how simple, how holy, how attractive!

1. The unity of God--one God.
2. The purity and holiness of God, but along with this the infinite mercy, gentleness, love and compassion of the Father's heart.
3. The presence of God, the immanence of God, the nearness of God, the God of every one of His suffering children, the God that comes near and meets our need and speaks to our heart and becomes our Comforter, our Friend and our everlasting portion. There is not the faintest approximation to this sublime picture of God to be found in any human religion. We find some shadows of the unity of God in Mohammedanism, some suggestion of the omnipresence of God in Pantheism, but how cold and hard and comfortless. It was Jesus who gave to us the God who is at once just and merciful, holy and beneficent, majestic, and yet "our Father who art in heaven." The world has no such God. And it is our business to tell them of our God, our Father, our King of love. Their hearts are feeling after Him, trying to find Him.

And this is the first message that the Father has for us to tell; tell them of your God--they have no such God. The best they have is the unknown God. Terrific things are their idols, and their most fearful sufferings are from their religions. Shall we go to them and tell them of our God? Shall we give them our God and the love that will make Him as real to them as He has been to us?

II. THIS IS THE GOSPEL THE WORLD NEEDS TO HEAR

This Gospel of John 3:16; this Gospel of "whosoever will"; this Gospel of everlasting love; this Gospel of full and free salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord is what the world needs to know. The word Gospel means "good news," "glad tidings." Turn to the joyless faces of heathenism and you have an object lesson of the devil's religions. The most profound impression a traveler brings back with him is the down look of their faces, the dead, passive misery that is stamped upon those myriads that tramp, tramp in monotonous despair from the cradle to the grave. There are no glad tidings. There is no happy girlhood. There is no joyful, radiant beauty, but darkness and despair. But God brings us glad tidings.

Some one has said there are ten false religions. They can be classified under ten different heads. They are all alike in their failure.

Idolatry, the worship of images has innumerable phases. India has 300,000,000 of them, one for every one of her subjects. How degrading, how unsatisfying, how repulsive, those foul things with a splash of red upon them.

Then we have Brahmanism, with the system of Indian caste which it has produced, the greatest curse of the world, which condemns men and women to hopeless despair and consigns them to their grade and plans from which they can never rise. There is no hope for them here, and in the world to come the only prospect is a progressive incarnation from bug to insect, insect to beast, etc., until ages hence there is a faint hope they may be born a man. That is woman's hope.

Buddhism is a dream; comfort your hearts and ignore your misery, cease to recognize it and you will not find the evil there. That is all right when things are going nicely, quite comfortably for a dirty fat priest who has everything he wants, but there is no lift for a crushed and brokenhearted world.

Confucianism is a system of morals, of culture. It teaches obedience to parents, but it knows nothing of God. It will help man as long as he does right, but when he falls it has no arm reached out to help him. These religions can talk, but they cannot give power.

Mohammedanism is consecrated lust and lies, and its fearful shadow which has fallen on one-sixth of the world lets us know what its spirit and nature is.

Judaism is a scaffolding, God's scaffolding, that is all. It is not the temple and Israel has gone off with the planks and left the building, and she has nothing. Judaism leads up to Christianity. Without Christianity it is the builders' platform. It tells you what you ought to do, but does not enable you to do it.

Oriental religions, Dr. Baedeker tells us, are dead and more corrupt than Romanism. He tells of the people taking a drunken priest from the roadside, stripping him of his robes and beating him nearly to death. Then they put his priestly robes on again and worship him.

What of Romanism? that anti-Christ that has usurped the place of Jesus Christ and which today has left so large a part of the world in a bondage perhaps worse than heathenism itself. Let our missionaries from

South America and Mexico tell us of the sweet and virtuous women that have had to fly from the confessional of unholy priests for selfprotection; of men and women going insane in their endeavor to find Christ; they were seeking for bread and found only a stone.

What shall we say of Theosophy and Spiritualism, which is counterfeiting the Holy Ghost and misleading a lot of silly Americans to the worship of the devil pure and simple! And Materialism. We need no better evidence of the materialism of the day than the last

testimony of Herbert Spencer, the great leader of modern philosophy, given just before he died. "It is all dark and uncertain to me," and taking back a good many of the things he had said, wrote to a friend: "I may not see another springtime. All that I can say is that I have this conviction left after all my researches that somewhere in this universe there is a force of some kind that is moving things, but it is all blind and dark to me, and my philosophy gives me no consolation as I look into my own grave." That is what agnosticism can do for man.

What about the latest religion imported to this benighted land, Christian Science? It is the silly ostrich hiding its foolish head behind a leaf and saying, "There is no hunter there because I don't see him." Christian Science hides its head behind a lie and says: "There is no sickness, hell or sin. Just make up your mind there isn't anything, not even you, and you will be in the Buddhist's heaven."

The religions of the world have no ideals of morals, no high standards of goodness and righteousness and spirituality and unpolluted conduct and character and no pattern to lift us. Read the mythology of Vishnu, the popular god of India; just a vile, sensual wretch that could not compare with a common tramp. Our missionaries meet Hinduism by telling the story of Vishnu till they laugh and sneak away. There is no power to lift them up if they had an ideal. The worst thing about sin is that the sinner cannot be good. Some ask, will not God be merciful to these people if they do the best they know how? They have no power to obey their conscience. What the Gospel does for us is to give us power to be good, a holy power to rise above sin. That is salvation. The heathen have no power, no Holy Ghost, no living Christ, no love.

Then, there is no remedy for the guilty conscience. There is no provision for this deep sense of sin. Every heart knows that sense of sin, and they have no answer for a guilty conscience, but they go down to death with their sins upon their head in eternal despair, and they know their sins and they know they are lost. There is no hope of the future, no bright heaven, no waiting loved ones to greet them there, but darkness, uncertainty, or transmigration of souls, dark as eternal despair.

Someone has well said: "The difference between Christian and heathen lands is this: that men do wrong here in spite of their religion; men do wrong there in the name of their religion. Their religion sanctions wrong. If you are a wicked man it is in spite of what your mother taught. If a man is wicked in India it is apt to be because his mother, his priest and his religion taught him to be wicked.

Beloved, that is the gospel the world has. This is the Gospel you have, "whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," a salvation that meets your eternal need, opens the gates of heaven, a salvation that answers to your conscience, answers to the claims of God, answers to the demands of the law and tells you that you have satisfied God and that He satisfies you; a religion that makes it natural for you to be good as once it was natural for you to be bad; a religion that brings the omnipotence of God into a man's heart and life, puts in him a causing power for right. "I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them." It is a religion that opens to us the gates of heaven as by a mighty telephone, and we can walk in the light of the city, and talk to the Father,

and know where our departed ones have gone, and look forward to a happiness of which no human poetry or imagination ever dreamed; a religion that remedies the wrongs of society by making not society good, but individual men good, which takes them up one by one and then reforms society by reforming the individual; a religion that is not going to stop until all evils are banished from this globe and

"He shall make this blighted earth

His own fair world again."

III. THE LOVE WHICH THE WORLD NEEDS TO SEE

"God so loved that He gave." "He gave His only begotten Son." He gave His best. He gave His all. He gave it to worthless men and women. He gave it to the world because He so loved. And if we are to give it to the world it is because we so love. It needs our love. The American advertiser can write the names of his wares on the rocks of the Himalayan Mountains, and I have seen them all blazing there. But God does not write His Gospel on the rocks or on the sky. He wants a sympathetic medium. He wants a heart that has been touched by it and that can communicate and reveal His own heart and His own love. The burning glass may be made of ice and may converge the solar rays to a flame. God does not kindle hearts that way. The medium must itself be on fire and we must love our fallen brother as God loved us before this gospel can go forth as He meant it should. He waits. He might send a thousand angels. He might write it on the stars; but He waits for us to so love and to so go. Our missionaries go to China, and one of them told me a few years ago that he had been five years in his station before the Chinese would look at him. As we walked down the streets of one of the cities one day I saw a man nod to him. "This," he said, "is the first year they ever bowed to me. They thought I came here for some selfish purpose. We have lived here now for five years. They see we love them. They believe in our unselfish purpose. They now speak to us. They now begin to take our gospel."

They tell about a little fellow who was in a hospital, and some good people were calling and leaving flowers and saying nice things. The little fellow had a boy's heart and he wanted something else. "They talk a lot about it, but I would like to see a little of their love." The next day some one gave him some fruit and then he could understand their love. The world needs to see our love and then it will understand the love of our God. So He wants to put His own love in us and make it a passion and a delight and a necessity of our nature to bless others. When Christ comes into our heart this always comes to pass and it should become the first business of our life.

One of the brightest Christian women in this country, the head of a great school which has sent out many missionaries, said not long ago in speaking to young people: "I sat down one evening in my room to ponder a text. I determined to devote the evening to it until it took hold of me. The text I took was John 3:16. I sat three for two hours and I got no further than these three words: 'God so loved.' It grew so big and glorious that it just filled my soul and I could not get any further. I wrote the three words in my diary. 'God so loved,' and underlined them and covered them with my tears. It was three months before I could go back to that text. I took up my Bible then and I got three words farther on, 'that He gave.' I spent the whole evening over those three words, until I had to take my pen and write:

"God so loved that He gave.

I so love that I give."

"And there I left a blank, and God talked to me. He said: 'Gave what?' I thought, God gave His best, His all, His only begotten Son. Then I wrote in that blank, 'I so love that I give my best, my all.'"

Beloved, this is what this text means. It comes back to you and me. Oh, will you take that blank and fill the blank. I so love that I give--something real, something definite.

Oh, it is so easy to give when we love!

One Christmastide in the Soudan the missionary asked the native girls to bring an offering for Jesus. They each brought some little thing. With some it was a little flower or some toy that had been given them by the passing traders. One dark-skinned girl, with deep-set eyes, and a face transfigured, handed the missionary a little bundle, which when he opened it he found to contain eighty-five cents. That for a poor girl in the Sudan was as much as for you to give \$85,000. It was a fortune for a poor heathen girl to give. He called her to him and said, "My child, how could you do this?" "Jesus gave Himself for me and I thought I would give myself for Him. I went and sold myself for the rest of my life to a planter. I gave him the right to use me in his field at the hardest toil, and he gave me eighty-five cents and he let me have this one day, so I could bring the money to you." The missionary was overwhelmed with what this sacrifice might mean--sixty years of drudgery, unrequited toil in the burning fields of Africa, with no freedom, she might never love anybody for herself, or have anything of her own, her whole life mortgaged to a man that she might have eighty-five cents to give to Jesus Christ. That is what God's love can do. Let it speak to you. Let it control your heart. Let it become a passion in your soul, and God will see the travail of His Son's soul and be satisfied.

May God give us the love that sacrifices till nothing can hurt. That is the way He loved and that is what He is asking of us, too.

How can we thus love people that we don't like?

I. We can love them because they are dear to Him; because He cares for them. Do you remember the story of the boy who called at a farmer's door in Illinois. The farmer's wife turned him away and the farmer said he had no place for tramps. With trembling hands the man pulled out a scraggly looking piece of paper. The farmer read it. "Dear Father and Mother, this was my friend, and when I laid down to die he loved me, waited on me, closed my eyes. Love him for my sake.--Tom." Oh, I tell you, that mother's arms flew open, that father's tears began to flow. That tramp became a son for Tom's sake.

Oh, Jesus today presents these sad-faced, brokenhearted, hopeless people. "I loved them," He says, "well enough to die for them. They are dear to me. I died for you when you were no better. Love them for my sake."

The poet Montgomery tells of meeting a stranger who asked help, and as he gave it, it seemed as if he himself were restored and all his own wounds were healed and his heart was made glad. He wondered who the stranger could be.

"Then in a moment to my view,

The stranger turned from his disguise.

The tokens in His hands I knew,

My Saviour stood before my eyes.

He spoke, and my poor name He named,

Of Me thou hast not been ashamed;

These deeds shall thy memorial be,

Fear not, thou didst it unto Me."

2. Then, again, you can love them because they can be so noble and so good. When they become Christians they become such glorious Christians.

Two Africans stood by David Livingstone till he died, and then they carried his body in their arms through the swamps of Africa, wrapped in cotton, through perils of wild beasts and wicked men; took it to the coast to be buried in Westminster Abbey. That is the way the African can love and sacrifice.

When Polhill Turner was sentenced to be beaten in China because he tried to go into Tibet, two natives instead bared their backs to the rods--and the scars remained ten years afterwards. Mr. Stephenson told how those men went showing the scars, counting it a great privilege to suffer something for Jesus Christ. That is the kind of Christians they can be.

3. We can love them with the love of pity. We can love them because they need the compassion of Jesus Christ.

Take a piece of paper and put a dot down every second, keep on for an hour and there will be 3,600 dots, and in that hour 3,600 souls died without Christ in the dark lost world. With every breath a soul is perishing without Christ. Oh, how sad and dark the life!

A Chinaman was found on a mountain where pilgrims go to worship. "What are you seeking?" he was asked. "I am trying to find the door of heaven, and I feel and feel and feel, but I cannot find it." "Feeling after God, if haply they might find Him."

A missionary gave this picture that flashed and remained. Once she heard a little lamb in the dark night bleating, bleating, bleating so pitifully, and she wanted to go to it, for she heard the jackals away back in the jungle, and it bleated and bleated till her heart was ready to break. Suddenly, she said she heard the shepherd's answering call. He had heard it, and he seemed to be saying, "I am coming, coming, coming," and the poor little lamb got still, because the shepherd had heard its cry. Oh, they are crying in the night. We will hear it some day perhaps too late. He heard it and came. Beloved, who will go?

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