

God SO Loved – John 3:16 Lent 2A

Slide: SO WHAT

Words. Words are very powerful. Lawyers, politicians, religious leaders, English teachers, and all sorts of professions use words to convey the meaning of something or attempt to persuade someone. Even the very power of one word alone can pack a punch when trying to communicate something.

Take the word “**so**” spelled **S...O**. Not the word spelled S.E.W, but S...O...**so**. I have been thinking about this word all week. The word “**so**” can be used in a variety of ways. You can use the word in a sentence this way: “Are you going to a movie? **So** am I.”

Or, you can say, “**So** there you are!” Or “**So** what!” thereby using it as an exclamation. In another way, you can use the word “**so**” as a pronoun by saying, “I read a page or **so** in the book.”

Just the use of the tiny word “**so**” can be used in many ways. Yet, today, I am going to emphasize one way that the

word is used. I won’t emphasize its use as a conjunction; nor as an exclamation, but instead I want us to pay attention to its use as an adverb.

Now, you might be thinking, “Is this a grammar lesson instead of a sermon,” but hang with me on this. The use of the word “**so**” as an adverb does have to do with something important about the bible, specifically in using certain words to convey meaning. For, if we use the word “**so**” as an adverb, suddenly we convey strong feeling and emotion:

“Those cookies are SO yummy!” “I am SO in love!” “I feel SO happy!” “I am SO mad!”

By using the word “**so**” as an adverb, you convey a sort of inner feeling. Such a little word reveals the inner thoughts of a person.

And, this little word can convey both positive and negative feelings about something or someone.

For instance, you can be “**so** much in love” showing positive emotion, or “**so** angry at those children” showing negative feeling. It is a word that portrays an intense feeling. It is

with this in mind, that we hear the most famous, if not the most beloved bible verse in the bible:

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“For God SO loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

God **SO** loved the world. God **so** loved the world, and this word “**so**” describes the intensity of God’s love for the world. God **so** loved.

In Greek, the word “so” is “houtos”. The Greek word for “so” is “houtos”. And, like it is used in English, “houtos” can be used in a variety of ways, but unlike English, hardly ever...hardly ever is the word used to describe deep feelings by God.

Only rarely would a Greek person from the days of Jesus say, “I **so** love you.” Or “I am **so** happy to see you.” Indeed, “houtos” was not often used in this way as an adverb, unlike in our own modern language. Therefore, it loses some of its strength in a language where “so” is overused.

Therefore, when “houtos” is used to describe feeling, it is a very serious use...and we had better be listening. For, there are only TWO places in the New Testament where “houtos” is used as an adverb: John 3:16, which is the verse we heard today and 1 John 4:11 which says:

“God sent his son to die on the cross for us. My friends, if God loved us SO much, ought we not also love one another?”

“houtos”...so...the power of one word conveys a staggering reality for us, that God doesn’t just simply love the world. God **so** loves the world. It is not merely God **so** loved me. It is not merely God **so** loved you. God **so** loved the world...the world!

That means that God **so** loves people who don’t love God. People who could care less about God; People who reject God; People who snub God; People who say, “I don’t need God”. This Gospel message says that God so loved the world but that ultimately, the world does not so love God.

What is so amazing is that God’s intensity of emotion is not

simply directed towards Christians. God's love is not just directed towards church people. God's intensity of love is not just directed to your life or my life. God's intensity of emotion is for the whole world. It's for a community of people. It includes all living beings. It includes creation. It includes the wild living things and the atmosphere. It includes the Eau Claire River, oak trees, rain and dirt. It includes people in China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. It includes Democrats and Republicans and any other political reality.

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Sure, the walk of faith encompasses more than this one little sentence in the Bible. We know our faith includes commandments, trust, following, belief and dedication. But, there are also some simple realities about God that we can see right here in this one phrase. God loved it all so much – a God that is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Isn't that simple thing just today in a world that is so complex, a blessing to hear? If you needed to hear it today, I'm thankful you are.

With the intensity of emotion that we find in this simple word, **so**, comes the action of God. God **so** loved the world that God risked becoming human, endured the fear of death, the torture, the shame, the cross, and ultimately hell because God **so** loved.

This word that packs a punch is **so** small. It's **so** short. It's **so** seemingly insignificant at first glance. There is **so** much locked up in this little word, found in what seems like such a simple sentence:

**For God SO loved the world,
that he gave his only begotten
Son, that those who believe in
him should not perish...but
have eternal life.**

Thank you God...**so** much.
Amen.