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THE MOVING PRINCIPLE

John 3:16-17

I was supposed to have my second immune therapy treatment this past week. It didn’t happen because the first treatment was what my doctor called a small failure. From my perspective that would be a bit like saying the Titanic had a little mishap. If that was a small one I seriously hope to stay far from a big one. So no treatment this week, but a meeting with my doctor to formulate Plan B. That was where things got complicated.

My treatment is taking place at the Moore’s Cancer Center. A cancer center is just not a place anyone wants to be. I noticed a sign in the lobbying extolling the virtues of the place. It proclaimed some of the boasts of the institution. One of them was in one ranking it said they’re #9 in the country. It seemed to me that’s kind of a tough rallying cry. “We’re number 9! We’re number 9!” It made me think, “Huh, should I be going to number 1?”

I reminded myself this is a leading institution with superb doctors. However, I’m pretty sure I know how they could bump up that number 9 rating, and it has nothing to do with their doctors. It has to do with their systems. They are extremely modern. Everything is electronic and digital, and way too labyrinthine for my taste. My treatments involve 3 different appointments that have to happen in a specific order and timing on a given day. The problem is they are scheduled on 2 separate systems. What could possibly go wrong with that? Before I left this week following my appointment, my case manager told me there was a problem with the sequence of my next treatment in 3 weeks. He’s my case manager, so I assumed he would fix it. Well, no, he can’t do that. I have to go talk to people running the scheduling systems. Isn’t that what a case manager is supposed to do? Apparently not. He sent me to a scheduling desk where they would work on it. We stood in line for some time and when we finally got to the desk the employee told us the person who schedules the infusions was out and they couldn’t do it. Ah, there was one person on site who could but he was in another area. I wanted to say, “ Hey, I notice you have a phone right there. What would you think about using it to call that guy and solve the problem?” No, we had to go wandering around offices and desks looking for someone named Chris. Eventually we found him, tucked away in a spot that looked like he was trying to hide. He was able to find a slot on a different day, but now there was another sequencing problem with the doctor’s schedule. Um, could you pick up the phone and fix this? Apparently not, because it’s not his system. He sent us back to our doctor’s area where our case manager was, the place we had started the adventure. Well, now we’re on a merry go round ending up right where we started. I figured we were going to get the same result. I’m never going to get treatment, I’m just going to orbit around theses offices and desks for the remainder of my life. We trudged back to our starting point and once again stood in line for quite a while. Finally a woman listened to my story and said, “l’m going to fix this.” This woman was unbelievable. She worked 45 minutes, calling person after person, running into brick walls but refusing to give up. At one point she told us she was going to have to talk to someone in person, so we should wait until she returned. I got the impression she was going to twist somebody’s arm to get something done. And she finally made it happen. It was a remarkable performance that multiple other people there were unwilling to attempt.

It was frustrating to go through that, but a wonderful thing to encounter someone who saw my problem, one I had no ability to solve, and took it upon herself to help me with a big need. This was a big deal because I’m confronted with a serious health issue. But there is a far more serious, deadly issue we all have, and it is one we can’t fix. We need help desperately. Today we will look at the extraordinary, inconceivable efforts that God has gone to as he has solved our problem. Let’s look at John 3:16-17.

GOD LOVED

John 3:16 is certainly the most familiar and quoted verse in the New Testament. It begins with a profound statement about the character of God. This raises the question, given that we can’t see God, can’t talk to him, how can we know what he is like? How do we know this statement about the character of God is true? It is not difficult to come to the conclusion that there is a Creator of all that exists. It is obvious that we live in a cause and effect universe. Laurie and I were sitting in our living room one evening when we heard a loud pop come from one corner of the room. My immediate reaction was, “What was that, and what caused it?” I still haven’t figured that out and it bothers me, because the pop was clearly an effect, so there had to be something that caused it.

The universe is one massive effect, so what caused it? In our lifetimes science has been faced with overwhelming evidence that the universe had a beginning. It started at some point, and if that’s true, one must ask why. Something or someone caused it. When you consider the inconceivable power and size of the universe you can only conclude that the something or someone that caused it must be unimaginably powerful. Science is also now being forced to admit that the universe is uniquely designed to support life on earth. It is designed, in fact, with a large number of factors that must fit within tiny tolerances for life to exist. It clearly is not accidental. This evidence of design, combined with another astounding fact, that the universe has information coded into it, implies intelligence. So this means the Great Cause of all that exists is an intelligence, a being.

By studying the universe we arrive at the conclusion that there is an incredibly powerful, vastly intelligent being that caused the universe to exist. But that’s as far as we can get. Is this being benevolent, or is this being with such enormous power a terrible threat to us? A being so far superior to us puny humans in its might and intelligence could be terrifying. Should we fear this being with unlimited power and ability?

Some people say we should look at all the beauty and all the wonderful things this being has given us in creation and recognize them as indications that this is a good being that has good intentions toward us. But the obvious rebuttal to that is, you mean all the wonderful things like tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, cancer, killer viruses and so many more? Yes, there are beautiful things in this world, but there’s also Bakersfield. Have you noticed how life is in nature? There are a couple of cute bunny rabbits that occasionally show up in our back yard. They have to be always on the alert, because there are some hawks that also visit our area, not to mention coyotes and other predators. This is a dog eat dog, fish eat fish world. It is often harsh and cold and cruel. Could you not make the case that it reflects the character of its Creator? An inconceivably powerful being that is harsh, cold, and cruel is terrifying.

John has told us that this awesome Creator has not left us to try to figure out what he’s like on our own. He has revealed truth about himself. John said he personally had encountered this Creator, this God, when he unveiled himself in human form in the person of Jesus Christ. We can only know details of the character of God if he chooses to communicate them to us, and fortunately he has done so. This verse has incredibly good news for us. It is that this powerful God loves the world. John learned this not through philosophical musings or speculation, but through personal encounter with the Creator.

But what is love? What does it mean to say God loves the world? We mean a lot of different things with the word “love.” I tell Laurie every day multiple times that I love her. Sometimes when I say that, I mean, “I enjoy you, I delight in you.” That is a good thing. I certainly want her to enjoy me and delight in me. The problem with that is that it can change. A few weeks back one morning Laurie was in a hurry to get ready and get out of the house because she was going to take care of one of our grandchildren. She got a big cup of coffee and rushed upstairs with it to finish getting ready. On the way she stumbled, and when she did she dumped the entire big cup of coffee on the carpet on the landing of our stairs. The resulting stain is big, ugly and stubborn. Our kids know Laurie as the queen of stains because she has been able to get rid of seemingly impossible stains. This has been huge for me, because I am a prolific provider of stains. However, she has been working for weeks trying to conquer this big, ugly coffee stain, and so far has been defeated. This is the mother of all stains. I didn’t delight in what she did. Although, at least it has provided me with a certain satisfaction because I can now say, “Well, at least I’ve never done *that*.”

As wonderful as it is to delight in someone and enjoy them, that can change in the blink of an eye. Compare that with what we see of God’s love in Romans 8:39. “Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There is absolutely nothing that can stop God from loving us. Nothing will ever change his love for us. His love is unconditional and constant.

This love is an undying, unchangeable, unlimited commitment to a flawed person to always seek that person’s good, whatever it takes. This is the kind of love we need badly. It means we do not have to perform, prove ourselves worthy, somehow try to maintain our standing with God. We are free, secure, able to come near to God without fear of rejection or punishment. This is love that we need.

God’s love is unchanging because it is grounded in his immutable character. God doesn’t love people because of who they are, but because of who he is. It is his nature to love. Do you ever get annoyed by your computer? It is frustrating that every now and then my computer will do something I don’t want it to do. I’ll be working on a Word document and suddenly it will change, putting an empty column on the right side with space to put in editing comments. But I don’t want that column. Or it will suddenly shift the formatting of the document or even suddenly switch to a new document when I don’t want it to do any of that. Usually I talk to the infernal machine. “What are you doing? Why are you doing that? I don’t want that.” There is a truth that I don’t like to admit, but I know it is true nonetheless. Every time that happens it is because of something I have done. Most of the time when those things happen I don’t even know how it happened. I just know it is my fault. I know that because the computer has an unvarying aspect to its character. It always does what I tell it to do. That is always true. It can do nothing else. It’s structure is to only do what it is told to do, and it does that without fail. God is infinitely more consistent than a computer. A part of his programming, if you will pardon me for calling it that, is to love. He loves no matter what a person is or does, because it is his character to love. He doesn’t love us because of what we are or what we do, nor does he stop loving us because of what we are or do. In his book, *God As He Longs For You To See Him*, Chip Ingram wrote, “We don’t provoke, trick, convince, earn or win God’s love. He doesn’t love us because of who we are, but because of who he is.”

Love is the motive behind everything God does. That is not always obvious, for at times things happen in our lives that feel like the farthest thing from loving. But look at what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1. “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.” He goes on to say that if we have faith that can move mountains, but we don’t love, we are nothing.

No matter what we do, Paul says, if we do it without love as the motive it is an irritating noise. Have you ever been at the airport, waiting in a terminal for a flight, and someone opens a door that is reserved for airport personnel? This screeching alarm goes off. It is ear piercing, and it keeps going until someone gets around to turning it off. You just want it to stop. Paul says no matter how wonderful seeming something a person does might be, if they do it without love, they’re like that intolerable alarm. Do you think God is like that alarm? No, he is not. That’s because whatever he does, it is driven by love. Everything he does is motivated by love.

GOD LOVED THE WORLD

This verse tells us that God loved the world. He loves the entire world, not just a few special people in it. God loves all of us. His love is not restricted to those who are deserving somehow. It is not just the best of us that he loves. It is all of us. This was an astounding truth for an ancient Jewish man like John. He was one of God’s chosen people. They were the people he loved. John is telling us that what he learned from Jesus is that God loves everyone, Jew, Gentile, rich, poor, man, woman, young, old, beautiful, homely, powerful, powerless, black, white, brown, yellow, red, Asian, European, American, African, God loves them all.

John had begun to learn this by watching Jesus. He was scandalized at times by what Jesus did. In Samaria he struck up a conversation with a woman he’d never met before, something you just didn’t do in their culture. To make it worse, this woman was a hated Samaritan and a woman with a notorious reputation. Yet Jesus cared for this woman and brought her hope. Then Jesus invited Matthew, an unscrupulous, traitorous low life who worked for the hated Romans, to be part of his inner circle. He hung out at times with absolute outcasts. He answered the pleas of a Gentile woman who asked Jesus to help her child. Jesus cared for them all.

That’s very different than how we humans typically operate. We tend to love people who are appealing or attractive to us, who treat us well or who love us, who seem deserving of our love. God is able to love all people because of what we just saw. His love is not based upon the merit of the people he loves, it is based in his own character. This makes him able to love anyone and everyone. I sometimes think of God’s love being like the sun’s light. It shines down on everyone on the planet. No matter what people are like, the sun shines its light on all, because it is the nature of the sun to emit light. It is the nature of God to emit love, and so he does, regardless of what people are like.

That statement that God loves the entire world is quite remarkable, because frankly, the world isn’t all that appealing. Thursday night Michael was piloting a flight from Denver to LAX. During their approach he was hit with a flash from a brilliant laser and momentarily blinded. He’s fine. He got checked out at an ER. But think about that incident. This was not someone fooling around. It was not some little laser pointer. They were at 6,000 feet when this happened, going 200 miles per hour. To get an angle on a plane at that altitude a person had to be several miles down range. To be miles away and hit the cockpit window of an aircraft more than a mile up in the air going 200 would require considerable effort and sophisticated equipment. And why would someone go to the trouble of doing something like that? It was purely to try to cause harm. Something like that is just plain evil. Well yes, but we all know there are a few evil people out there. The problem is, last year there were close to 10,000 incidents like that reported by pilots. People can be awful, but God loves them. You want to see the glory of humanity? Put them in a doctor’s waiting room and make them wait for an hour or 2 because things get backed up. What do you think you will see? It won’t be pretty. But God still loves the world.

It might feel like God’s love is kind of impersonal. Hey, he loves the whole world, but doesn’t that kind of mean he loves the human race en masse? Laurie and I have been exercising by following some interval training routines done by a couple on the Internet. The husband of this couple seems to me to be a frustrated preacher. As far as I know they aren’t even believers, but he wants to preach. And he gets emotional. He will start his preaching and then say things like, “I’m so proud of everybody.” He doesn’t even know the large numbers of people who are watching on line, but he’s proud of everybody. Right. Is that like God? He loves everybody, even though he doesn’t know them?

It has no effect on me that Daniel on the Internet is supposedly so proud of me, because he doesn’t even know who I am. If God doesn’t really know me individually then his supposed love isn’t going to affect me either. But that is not how God’s love is. In Luke 12:7 Jesus said that God knows each of us so well that he even knows the number of hairs on our heads. Other than the fact that there aren’t enough of them, I don’t even know that number, which means God knows me better than I know myself.

In Psalm 139:2-4 David wrote to the Lord, “You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely.” God even knows our thoughts. He is familiar with all our ways. That’s amazing to me. He knows how weird I am. I will watch a football game between teams I don’t care about. A few weeks ago I watched a game between Toledo and Ball State. Um, what now? Yeah, it’s pitiful. You could ask Laurie about all my peculiarities. I’ve got a lot. God knows about them all, and he loves me anyway. Verse 4 says God knows me so well he knows what I’m going to say before I even say it.

My point here is that God doesn’t just love a nameless, faceless mass of human beings who might as well be a colony of ants. He loves individual, quirky human beings. He loves us, as we are. He actually loves me and he loves you.

GOD LOVED SO MUCH HE GAVE

All this talk of God’s love is nice, but all of us have had the experience of being told by someone that they love us, but when we have a big need somehow they can’t do anything about it. That is not true of God. We had a big need. Really it is the biggest. We need to be forgiven. We need to be loved. We need to be able to actually connect with God and be loved by him. We need to be declared righteous, to be declared valuable and acceptable. We need to enter into God’s kingdom. That was the issue that was at heart in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus that was the context of these verses.

Many people tend to think of God as frowning and eager to condemn all these annoying people who just don’t measure up to his standards. Verse 17 says, “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” God does not want to condemn. He wants to save. God looked on the human race and saw their problems, their huge needs. He didn’t say, “Hey, I love you, and I feel bad about your issues, but I’m sorry, there’s nothing I can do about it.” He acted. He sent his Son into the world to meet those needs. He sent him to save us. He sent him to bring us forgiveness, to love us, to bring us into relationship with him, to declare us righteous and valuable in his sight, to bring us into his eternal kingdom.

The typical human way of dealing with it when someone we love has a problem is to say, “Maybe I can help. Here’s what I think you need to do.” So we might expect God to draw up a plan. Here are the steps you need to take, the things you need to do to get better. But he knew that wouldn’t work. He had actually given his people a covenant to show them that approach doesn’t work. He sent his Son to do the work for us and then gave us the one thing to do that we can actually do. He said, “Just believe and receive what I offer you as a gift.”

Well I don’t have that much faith. Yes you do. We live our entire lives operating on faith. I recently started immune therapy treatments that they claim hold potential for curing the melanoma I have. The nurse put an IV in my arm, then they hung up a bag of fluid that began dripping into my arm. The fluid looked to me just like water. After I was done I felt exactly nothing whatsoever. I had to live by faith that there was actually something other than water in that bag. I had to live by faith that what they say about this supposed medicine is actually true. For the first week after the infusion there was no effect whatsoever. I had to trust that it was actually doing something. Then the meds did do something. They made me sick, even to a point where I could get seriously sick. Hey this is great medicine! We aren’t going to mess around with this dangerous disease. We are going to solve it by killing you with these meds. They were able to reverse the effects of the meds. Now the plan is change it up and try again. I have to live by faith that they’re not trying to make me sick, and that this can actually work. I am living by faith. We do it all the time in a myriad of ways.

Believing and receiving a gift is something we can all do. That’s part of why God made it the key component of having our greatest needs met. Believing is one thing we can do. So God tells us believe in who Jesus is and that what he has done for you is enough.

How do you know how much a person loves you? You can measure that by what they are willing to sacrifice for you. I think of that as the moving principle. Lots of people tell you they love you. But what happens if you have to move and need help? Many years ago when our daughter, Carissa, was single, at one point she was going into move into a different apartment in San Diego. She was working downtown and she was moving into a place not far from her work. She needed help, so the family was all hands on deck to help. There was one extended family member who had a pickup truck and said he really cared about Carissa so he was excited about helping out with her move. We were all counting on this guy’s help, but he never showed up. We found out afterward that he had just decided he didn’t feel like helping move that day, and since it was a very warm summer day he had decided to go surfing instead. He also didn’t bother to tell anyone that he wasn’t coming. How big do you think his love was?

Compare that with a memorable moving experience we had a couple of years ago when Toby and Anna and their girls moved back here from San Clemente. They had begun working months before they moved to get rid of furniture and other items. Much of what they had they didn’t want to keep, so Toby assured me this move wouldn’t be too bad because they didn’t have all that much stuff left. They rented a Uhaul truck that he was sure would have plenty of room. So Laurie and I and a crew of guys including my brother Jerry and Bill Dastyck trekked up to San Clemente on moving day. What happened was reminiscent of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Stuff just kept coming out of that house. Even when we were sure it was empty, still stuff kept coming. We filled up that Uhaul truck, a van, a pickup truck and our car with stuff. It took all day and into the evening, and still we weren’t done. Toby and I had to go back the next day, rent another truck and spend the entire next day moving the stuff out of what seemed like an empty house. It was miserable. But we did it, because we love Toby and Anna. You could measure that love by what we were willing to do to care for them.

The measure of God’s love is what he was willing to do to meet our deepest needs. He was willing to send his own Son to suffer and die in order to save us. It was an inconceivable act of love, one that is beyond human ability to measure. Have you ever watched someone you love suffer? It is unbearable, isn’t it? God the Father had to watch his beloved Son, whom he loves infinitely more than you or I can even imagine, suffer. Yes, suffer unimaginably on the cross, but for the Father, Jesus’ whole life was terrible to witness. He saw what his Son went through the entire time and it was excruciating. He did that because he loved us so much he was willing to pay even that high cost to rescue us and to have us as his children. That is the measure of his love.

IMPLICATIONS

GOD IS FOR US

Looking back on it, when I started seminary I was a little cocky. I thought I knew more than I did. My first semester there was an elective class I wanted to take because it interested me and it was taught by a prof with a great reputation. But it was an upper level class that had several pre-requisites that I had not met. The only way I could register for the class was to meet with the prof and get his permission. I somehow convinced him that I was ready for the class and he gave his permission, thus in my mind confirming my cockiness. The first part of the semester I did just fine. But a large part of the grade in the class would come from one project we had to do. We actually had to take a topic in the field of theology the class covered, and do a presentation, essentially teach the class on it. We were to do a presentation that lasted 20-30 minutes, then have a time of 15 minutes or so answering questions about our topic. When my turn came my presentation went all right, then the questions started. It went way more than 15 minutes. It felt like it lasted several years, but it actually was more than an hour. It caused the whole class schedule to be delayed. The other students were firing questions out that I had no answers for. I felt completely exposed and realized I was not really prepared for what happened. When the prof finally called a halt to the proceedings I felt like a total failure. I felt like the chicken on a spit being roasted over a fire. I was humiliated. I thought the prof was pretty unhappy with me after I talked my way into the class and then bombed like that. I kind of avoided as much contact with him as I could. It’s hard to be excited about being around someone that you think has formed a negative opinion of you. Several weeks went by. We had to hand in a written copy of our presentation when we gave it. After a few weeks the prof returned my paper, which he had graded. When I saw it I was totally stunned. He gave me an A, and he had written, “That was a difficult situation, but you handled it beautifully.” He wasn’t thinking ill of me at all. Just the opposite. Suddenly I was happy to see that prof. He turned about to be my favorite professor and became a good friend.

It is very common to feel like God has a frowny face, that he is kind of annoyed at our failure, our selfishness, our faithlessness and inconsistency. People often think of God as condemning. As long as one does that, one will prefer to avoid him if at all possible. But Hebrews 10:22 tells us that God wants us to draw near to him with a sincere heart and full assurance. He wants us to come openly, freely and joyfully into his presence. What will enable us to do that is knowing that God so loved the world. God so loved us. God so loved me, that he gave his one and only Son, for me. In Galatians 2:20 Paul wrote, “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” He loved me, he gave himself for me. He does not condemn me, he loves me and rescued me. This is why we love him back and delight in being with him.

We must always remember that God has sacrificed inconceivably for us that we might have eternal life. This is what God wants for us. He wants us to believe in Jesus, because in so doing we will gain eternal life.

DO NOT DOUBT GOD’S LOVE

Remember the story of all the plagues God sent against Egypt to convince Pharaoh to finally let Israel go? There was the fouling of the river Nile causing the water to become undrinkable and the fish to die, then there were the frogs, then gnats, then flies. There as an epidemic of boils, and terrible hail and locusts. Finally there was the Passover, when many children died. At last Pharaoh couldn’t take it any more and relented. Israel got to leave. Exodus 13:21 says, “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so they could travel day or night.” They had seen God do all that to set them free. Then they came up against the Red Sea, with the Egyptian army heading their way. Look at their reaction in Exodus 14:11. “They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us out into the desert to die?” Cute. Thanks for bringing us into the desert where there’s lots of land for graves. After all that God had done for them, the first time they got in a tight spot they accused Moses, and ultimately God, of abandoning them, of not caring enough about them to keep them safe. Well, we know how that turned out, don’t we? After that miracle they sang God’s praises. Exodus 15:2-4 says they sang, “The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea.” Yay God. He's great. We love him.

They got further out into the desert and ran out of water. But God did a miracle and solved that problem for them. But in Exodus 16:2-3 we find that 6 weeks after they escaped Egypt when food ran low in the desert the song changed. “The whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.’” At least there we wouldn’t die hungry. Um, what happened to the Lord is my strength and my defense? Where is yay, God. We love him? It didn’t last 2 months.

That pattern would repeat itself throughout Israel’s history. It is a pattern we tend to repeat. Yay, God so loved the world that he gave us his Son. But wait, how could he let this happen to me? How am I supposed to believe he really does love me when this happens? I’m supposed to believe it because he has proven it, just like he proved to Israel that he was taking care of them in astounding ways. Just like they should have trusted him when things got hard and scary because he had proven his love for them, so should we.

REMEMBER GOD’S LOVE IS FULLNESS

In Ephesians 3:18 Paul prayed that believers would grasp how vast God’s love is, and in verse 19 said, “and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” That last clause is a result clause. Paul wanted us to know the reality of God’s love for us because he wanted us to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

How big is that? Notice Paul specifically said to *all* the fullness of God. Not just some of it. The whole thing. In his book, *The Unsearchable Riches Of Christ*, Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote, “There is no more staggering statement in the whole range of Scripture than this. We are here face to face with the ultimate in experience, with the highest doctrine of all.” What is the fullness of God?

Let’s think briefly about how God exists. Is he worried about how things are going in his universe? Does he fret over what is going to happen? No, he knows the end from the beginning and he is sovereign, so he is at peace because he is certain how everything is going to turn out and it is according to his plan. He is truly the God of peace. Is God frustrated by the fact that things aren’t going very well? Hey, in England they’ve declared they’re no longer a Christian nation. Church attendance is declining in our country. Honestly, I look at the level of morality in our country and realize 30 years ago I would never have even imagined things would get to this place. But God isn’t frustrated by that. This is no surprise to him.

Is God furious with people, so mad at them that he would like to vaporize them? No, that would be too good for them, he wants them to suffer for what they’re doing, right? Wrong, God so loves the world. He is filled with love for them. What they are and what they do grieves him, but he loves them. Do you think God is sad, regretting his plan because it’s just not working very well, feeling rejected because people are rebelling against him at worst or indifferent to him and ignoring him? No, he is not sad. He is filled with joy over every person who knows him. He is happy because his plan is going exactly where he wants it to go.

Do you think God is feeling lonely and discouraged because not enough people want to be with him? No, God is filled with love within his own being, and filled with love for his people and rejoicing in his children. Are you beginning to get a feel for what the fullness of God is? It is fullness of life itself. It is fullness of love, and joy and peace and satisfaction.

This does not mean we will be all that God is. We are not talking about being omniscient, or omnipotent, or sovereign, or perfectly holy. But we are talking about the kind of full life that God has. My right big toe has my life in it. My blood, my DNA, my life is flowing in it fully. But all that I am is not in my big toe. God’s life can flow in us, the fullness of his life, but that does not mean all that God is will be in us.

It also does not mean we will all be the same. Imagine pouring some water from the Pacific Ocean into a glass. The life, the water of the ocean is in that glass. Its substance is in there. It’s not all the ocean is, but it is its substance. But now imagine pouring some of that water into a gallon jug. It is the same substance, but there will be a lot more of it in the jug than in the glass. Some of us might have more of that fullness than others, but we can all experience the fullness of God.

Here’s the truth that Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:19. The way we are filled to all the fullness of God, is by knowing his love, being rooted and grounded in his life. This is where fullness of life, the fullness of the life of God begins. It is living every moment in the reality, the conviction, and the power of God’s love.