**‘God so loved the world’** John 3:16June 2024 dkm **Message at funeral of Andrew- 26 June 2024**The verse we are focused on is a well-known summary of the gospel or the good news that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. In the next chapter we read a sinful Samaritan woman, a woman who had had five husbands and was living with a man not her husband. Jesus knew all about this woman but still showed her love, *agape* love, and she believed in him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world. She believed what we read here in John 3:16.

Everything begins with God. ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’. God made us in his image, male and female (Gen 1:1, 1:26); He made us to worship him. But our first parents disobeyed God and sin entered the world. God is holy and cannot look upon sin. Sin cuts us off from God, cuts us of from the source of life. The Bible speaks of being dead in sin. So we can do nothing to save ourselves.

Dear Andrew was most helpless in recent days. He graciously accepted the help of others in getting dressed, in getting about and in getting fed. But more than this, he realized long ago how helpless he was when it comes to be saved from sin and death. We are all more desperately helpless than Andrew was when it comes to saving ourselves from sin and death.

When Jesus went through the towns of Galilee in Israel preaching the gospel, some 2000 years ago, he saw the people as being helpless and hopeless, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9:36). Many, like Andrew, realized their plight and turned to follow Jesus. Still today, people are realizing their plight, their hopelessness and helplessness, and are turning to Jesus. I am sure Andrew prayed for you to turn to Jesus.

Back to God, God the creator of this world. We read that God loved the world, this big, bad world. Because of sin the world became a place of darkness and death, a place of rebellion against God. The Bible tells us not to love the world or the things of this world (1Jn 2:15). But God in his great love, ‘so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son’- his Son Jesus. God sent Jesus into this world to save us from sin and death.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Son of Mary and the Son of God. He came down from heaven to live among us (Jn 1:14). He demonstrated the love and power of God by healing lots of sick people and feeding lots of hungry people in miraculous ways. But still he was hated by the world. What amazes me, and I am sure amazed Andrew, is that Jesus endured the mocking of men and went to the cross like a lamb to the slaughter. He refused to come down from the cross even when taunted to do so.

Jesus stayed on the cross and died because of love for you. He was bearing the sin of all who believe. He gave himself as the sacrifice for our sin. He died in our place. Remember, ‘The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Rom 6:23). God gave his only begotten Son to die on the cross that you, like Andrew, might be saved. This is the only way of salvation. God so loved the world, and this is the only way for anyone to be saved.

So how are we saved from sin and death, eternal death? Note the word ’whosoever’, which means there is no other way, and means that in order to be saved you, whoever you are, must do what God says here in this verse. He does not say you must be good and do good! He says you must ‘believe in Him’, believe in Jesus. You must believe what Jesus says, and believe in Him as the way, the truth, and the life. You must believe the gospel, the truth that Jesus died on the cross, was buried and rose again on the third day. You must believe that he did this for you, believe that on the cross he took the penalty for your sin. God accepted this sacrifice and raised Jesus from the dead.

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. Those who die in Christ will be raised from the dead to be with Jesus when he comes again (1Thess 4:16). I understand that Andrew grew up in a church called the Brethren Assembly. He probably heard the words my father-in-law, also a Brethren, often said: ‘If you are born twice you die once, but if you are born once you die twice’- I leave you to ponder these words in the light of this chapter.

Everyone will be raised from the dead when Jesus comes again. But not all will go to be with Jesus. Our verse has the word ‘perish’. Those who believe will not perish; it follows that those who do not believe will perish. The next verse refers to ‘condemnation’. The Bible speaks of two ways, the way of darkness and the way of light, the way of death and the way of life. Do you know which way you are on? You and you alone must choose.

Referring to what is written here in vs18, the default position for every human being is ‘condemned already’, ‘perishing’, or death and hell. There are only two ways and two destinations from which to choose. By birth and from birth we are on the way that leads to death. But God in his grace and through Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, has opened a new way, the way of believing in Jesus Christ and receiving the gift of life, eternal life and eternity with Jesus.