March 13, 2021 Lenten Devotional
John 3:14-21 - "God So Loved the World”
By: Sarah McPherson, Our Savioiur, Christiansburg



And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

-John 3:14-21

Reflection
Yall I have been putting off writing this for two weeks now. Getting a passage that includes John 3:16 feels a little overwhelming because it’s like **the** verse people know. You see it on signs at football games and on the cups at Cookout. A lot of people say it’s their favorite verse, and if you asked someone on the street to name a Bible verse, I feel like they’ll tell you this one. *But no pressure.*

A brief overview: God loved the world and because of that love, God gave his only son in order that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Giving his son to the world is the way God showed his love. That’s verse 16. My pastor growing up would always say you can’t have John 3:16 without John 3:17. He would say “the sign at the football game SHOULD say John 3:17.” That next verse tells us God didn’t send his son to punish us but instead to save us. The passage goes on to talk about how challenging this process of being saved is. If you’re accustomed to darkness, a bright light is going to hurt your eyes (remember walking into the bright afternoon sun after leaving a movie theater?) Similarly, once you’re used to living your life making poor decisions, you don’t always want to own up to those decisions. Shinning light on those situations can be just as painful as a bright light in the darkness. The nice thing is that Jesus finds us where we are and gives us a path forward, through all the messy bits, because

GOD LOVES US.

This passage tends to leave me feeling icky. Ironic since the all-encompassing message is of God's love. To me it's so overused and manufactured it ends up feeling totally fake. For me, the context provided around verse 16 feels more substantial. Yes, God loves the world. Yes, God loves us. Yes, this is an easy place to point people who want to know what the deal is with Christianity. But where do I fit? And if this is the message we're sending people (without any context) on their to-go cups at Cookout, are they getting the full picture of God's love? I guess the beauty of a devotional is that I don't have to have the answers. This passage challenges me and presents me with more questions than answers, but that's okay, because even in the struggle, God loves me.