

Lent 2 Year A

We have all heard the expression that there are only two things we can be sure of: death and taxes. And we try our best to get out of both of them, perhaps. But these is a third thing we cannot change. No matter what we do, or how hard we try, whether we believe it or not, whether we *like* it or not, God loves us. We are beloved children of God. God loved us into being. We cannot change that, but it seems one of the hardest things for us to accept.

We keep trying to *earn* it somehow. We set up rules and hoops to jump through. If we do this, or say that, then we will be worthy. And *then* God will let us in to be with God in heaven. What it is that we must do, of course, or what the magic words are that we must say, are different, depending on to which religion or denomination or tradition you listen. Even those traditions that *say* you cannot earn your way into heaven still have a “membership test” – something *you must do* to show that you belong, that you will be saved.

Today’s gospel passage from John contains one of the most popular verses from the New Testament ever: John 3:16. You can see it on billboards, on signs held up at football games. “For God so loved the world...” But then comes the caveat, the question designed to see if you really belong to the group

Let us wrestle with what it means to be the Beloved of God, wrestle with how we are to live that out. And let us resist the temptation to be less than we are.

Amen.

- [Genesis 12:1-4a](#)
- [Romans 4:1-5, 13-17](#)
- [John 3:1-17](#)
- [Psalm 121](#)