



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – December 23, 2023

The Lord be with you.

It was during the Great Depression that John Niles was searching the back countries and hills of Appalachia. He was looking for original folk music, and one day he comes to this little white spot on the road, known as Murphy, North Carolina, and happens on a band of rather ragged itinerant evangelist, and just before a preacher Morgan is to get up on the back side of his car and preach, his little daughter, Annie starts to sing these words, "I wonder as I wander out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come forward to die for poor, ornery people like you, and like I." And from that little Annie Morgan through John Niles, one of the great songs of Christmas has passed down from Appalachia to us. "I wonder, as I wander out under the sky how Jesus the Savior did come for to die." And that's something I am wondering a lot about this Christmas, that the son of God did come to die for you for I... And for the next few my month, I want to wonder with you, to wonder at Jesus coming for poor ornery people, you know twice in the gospel of Luke, that the Virgin Mary, she wondered at all that had happened. It's a good thing for us to do this Christmas.

And today I'm reading and wondering at the little letter of 1 John Chapter 4, Verses 9 and 10, "God's love was revealed among us in this way. God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." I've heard it said that if our greatest need was more information, God would have sent us an IT specialist. If our greatest need was for more money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been more technology, God would have sent us a scientist. But since yours and my greatest need is salvation, God sent us a savior who would die for us. This 1 John scripture says that God's love was revealed, and that He sent His only son so that we might live through him. So in case you ever wonder if God really does love you, well, well, here is the grand proof of God's love for you, that he sent his only son, that you might live through him. There are many people that I know, and you probably know them to people who are really they're only existing. They're not really living. When Jesus came that we might live, that we might have abundant life and the life of this verse is talking about, it's not just future life one day in heaven, but it's real life abundant the life today. God's love was revealed in that he sent his only son that we might really live.

And then our scripture goes on to say that, in this is love, not that we love God, you see, the love was all on God's side, not ours. We've not shown any act of love to God, we had ignored God and run from God, rebelled against God, and God revealed his love for us in this, in sending his only Son to die for us in our place that we might share his life. The Apostle Paul puts it like this, in Romans chapter 5 verse 8, "God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." So, don't ever waste a moment wondering if God loves you. Look at the cross, look at a newborn baby lying in a manger and see that God loves you, He loves you just as you are before you ever thought about loving him. In this is love, not that we love God, but He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Now, the one Greek word



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translated here as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, that one Greek word is hilasmos, that's H-I-L-A-S-M-O-S, and it's variously translated as sin offering, propitiation, expiation. And here it is, the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And there are various translations of this Greek word because it is such a big and important word, it's hard for us to get our arms around it to try to grasp what God did for us on the cross. But it is the atoning sacrifice, the hilasmos, that that means that on the cross, God took care of the sin problem. That he took care of your sin. Problem, my sin problem. God cleared away all the damages that our sin had ever done in our relationship with God. He cleared it away. So that Jesus on the cross cried out his words, it is finished. God took care of the sin problem, and God shows us His love for us in this, that we ornery people might really live and forever live with him.

This Christmas, I'm with that little anti-Morgan wondering, as I wonder, why did Jesus come for to die? I never really understand His love. As Jesus, the great physician, he takes care of our sin problem, Jesus the great physician, takes care of our sin disease. Now, when we get sick, most of us are blessed to be able to go and see a doctor... And what does the doctor do? But your doctor examines us, diagnosis our problem, writes out of prescription, does some procedure, but Jesus, the great physician, he heals the sin disease in a very different way. That is Jesus, Jesus becomes the patient. Jesus takes our sin disease to himself; Jesus goes down into death with our sin disease, that he might heal us by the very power of his life.

So, don't be worried this Christmas if God loves you. And this is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And let's live in that love, knowing that nothing will be able to ever separate you and me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.