I. INTRO:
A. Prayer: May we be lost on wonder, love, & praise.
B. The Continental Divide of the Americas, or merely the Continental Divide or Great Divide, is the name given to the principal, and largely mountainous, hydrological divide of the Americas that separates the watersheds that drain into the Pacific Ocean from those river systems which drain into the Atlantic Ocean. [Starting in Alaska; running through Canada; through the center of the U.S.; through Mexico; then through South America]

1. They say a house situated on top of this Great Divide determines whether a drop of rain fall will end up in the Pacific or Atlantic...determined by a fraction of an inch, on where it hits the peak of the roof. Δ

2. In this portion of Scripture we are shown the Scriptures Great Divide.
   a) Those condemned/those saved; Those who believe/those who don’t believe; Those who love the light/those who love darkness; Those who will perish/those who will inherit eternal life.

C. We have in this section the most familiar verse in all of scripture, and for good reason - Jn.3:16 presents the clearest, simplest statement of the good news of Jesus Christ.

D. Outline: The Persons: The Father gave His Son; The Son will give His life.
   The Purpose: Is not to Condemn Sinners; Is to Convert Sinners.
   The People: Condemnation for those who Reject Christ; Salvation for those who Receive Christ

II. THE FATHERS LOVE!
A. THE PERSONS! (16)
B. The Father gave His Son! (16a)
C. For God - The initiation in all salvation lies w/God the Father!
   1. Bad theology that says, “the Father is mean, the Son is nice”.
   2. Listen to Paul in Eph.1:5,6 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself(Father), according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
   3. It was with God the Father that this all started!
      a) God is Love! 1 Jn.4:8
D. So loved - Love is the mainspring of God’s being.
   1. Not God so...manipulated the world; or so finally broke the world; or
      disciplined; or punished, or scourged the world...until they came to Him!
   2. No, it wasn’t a power-move acting for His sake, but a love-move acting for
      our sake!
      a) And that love will not be satisfied till every last sheep is brought into His fold!

E. The world - not just a nation.
   1. Not just the elite, rich, powerful(by man’s standards) that He reached out to, but
      to unlovables(Lepers); the one’s that detest him(Manaseh); to the ones that are
      too busy for God(like Matthew the tax collector); to those too rich for God(Zachias);
      to those working against God(Saul).
   2. For God so loved a sinful world. Every race; rich & poor; powerful &
      powerless; male & female; those who stayed home from church to watch the
      Daytona 500 today, & those who didn’t :-0

F. Mirror Story: Fort Hancock is on the farthest tip of Sandy Hook, which reaches out into
   the Atlantic on the New Jersey coast. During World War II it was a military training
   center. A civilian of the area was eager to bring the good news of Christ to the thousands
   of young men stationed there. The military authorities would not permit him to enter in
   person. Not to be denied, he asked a firm that specialized in novelties to make several
   thousand mirrors about 3” in diameter. On the back of each mirror he had printed the
   words of John 3:16. Beneath these words he had this direction, “If you want to see who
   it is that God loves, look on the other side.”
   1. Charles Wesley Hymn: Amazing love! How can it be That thou, my God,
      shouldest die for me?

G. He gave - The measure of love is always its willingness to give; its capacity for sacrifice.
   1. If we would measure the love of God, we must measure it by Calvary.
   2. Someone wrote: Love ever gives, forgives, outlives; And ever stands with
      open hands; And while it lives it gives; For while it gives it lives;
      And this is Love’s prerogative - To give - and give - and give.
   3. We can never know the costliness of Calvary to God, nor can we ever
      measure the love that lay behind it.
      a) All we can do is fall back on that elastic particle “so”, God so loved!
      b) It’s not simply that God is love...because what if He never gave it away?
         (1) The good news is that He didn’t keep it, He gives it away!
H. **Only begotten** = unique, only one of His kind.
   1. Some translate it then, **He gave His one & only Son.**
   2. Some say, **repent & believe** seems so cheap. No! It was a **costly** rescue!
      a) (It cost pain, separation, blood, death)

I. **The Son will give His life!** (16b)

J. **Whoever believes** - **Belief** means far more than **intellectual assent** to the claims of Christ. It means **placing** one’s **life & trust** in complete surrender to the One in whom we believe.
   1. **Popular story** is told of a missionary having a difficult time finding the right word for “**belief**” in the native dialect. Finally one native ran into his hut, completely exhausted, after running for a long way, threw himself upon a nearby hammock, breathed a sigh, & uttered a word in his dialect. He asked the native what he said. He said, it is a word that means “**I am resting all my weight here**”. “This is just the word I need,” & finished his translation.
      a) Many today are trying to come up with the **right feeling**, or the **right type of faith**. They fail to realize that it is not **faith** but Christ who saves!
      b) The Devil makes them concentrate on their **poor, weak faith**, rather than on the **object** of that faith.
      c) Look at the native again. At the end of himself, he does nothing but just **rests his all** upon the hammock.
         (1) **So, too, believing is just casting one’s self unreservedly** into the open arms of the Lord Jesus & saying, “**Lord, I believe, help my unbelief**”. On You I rest my soul for all eternity!

K. **Not perish** - If we believe on Him we’ll **never perish**.

L. **But have eternal life** - When we believe we gain eternal life as our **present possession** have
   1. Not just quantity **later**, but quality **now**!

M. **THE PURPOSE!** (17)

N. **It is not to Condemn sinners!** (17a)

O. **Q:** Why do we as Christians often think this was His, or is our mission?
   1. Jesus didn’t come into the world to **Kill** the world, but to **Cure** the world!

P. **It is to Convert sinners!** (17b)

Q. **More than 100,000 people die in the U.S. every year from preventable diseases.**
   1. There are cures but for one reason or another people **refuse to take** the vaccines or medicines for their particular disease.
2. More tragic are the 100’s & 1000’s who die uncured every year, of the worse disease of all...the spiritual disease of sin!
   a) We’ve been snake-bitten by sin & only Jesus provides the snake-bite kit!
   b) Read Jer. 30:12-17 - The incurable become curable.

R. THE PEOPLE! (18-21)
S. Here we have a theological postscript, explaining why some believe & others don’t.

T. There are only 2 possible responses to Jesus: belief or unbelief. And, There are only 2 possible destinies to which those responses lead: eternal life or eternal death.

U. Condemnation for those who Reject Christ! (18b-20)
V. (19) Sinners not only live in darkness but love it, & refuse to come to the light where their sins will be exposed & can be forgiven.

W. This is the condemnation- Here is the process of condemning, not the sentence of it.

X. Men loved darkness rather than light -
   1. Why do men hate the light? It exposes(20) where we are & what we are!
   2. Loves darkness, What does he mean? - You know it well…
      a) It’s every lustful/desirous thought or picture, memory pulls up to dance with.
      b) It’s that adulterous affair you’ve carefully tucked away in the dungeon of your mind
      c) It’s the lies you’ve carefully hidden away in a dark dank corner.
      d) It’s those seething anger filed away in a black file cabinet, ready to be pulled up at will.

   3. Darkness has always been a “slow, subtle, brainwashing process” that gradually desensitizes all to evil.
      a) Like the Irishman who came over here, then his wife joined him a year later.
         She said, “they sure talk funny over here,” to which he responded, “you should of heard them a year ago!”

   4. Q: Are you more interested in how to live in the dark rather than how to walk in the light?

Y. Salvation for those who Receive Christ! (18a, 21)
Z. Comes to the light(21) - is allowing the H.S. to shine His Mag-light upon those dark crevices in our life. [Watch those rats & cockroaches run!]
AA. End: He gave His only begotten Son - Jesus is a GIFT!

1. What is our normal response to a gift? Do we pay for it? Do we work for it? Do we beg for it? Do we work for it? [No. We just take it; & it is ours]

2. Yesterday many asked Will you be mine? Today Jesus asks Will you be Mine?

3. In 1983 I proposed to Kelly. It wasn’t much of a proposal. We pulled up in her parents driveway. I went & opened her door. I got down on my knee & asked, will you marry me? (God out did me!)
   a) Gods proposal to us...hanging on a cross; a bloody, beaten, body; asking, “Will you be mine?” - Will you accept God’s proposal today?

BB. God...The greatest Lover; So loved...The greatest degree;
   The world...The greatest number; That He gave...The greatest act;
   His only begotten Son...The greatest gift; That whoever...The greatest invitation;
   Believes...The greatest simplicity; In Him...The greatest Person;
   Should not perish...The greatest deliverance; But...The greatest difference;
   Have...The greatest certainty; Everlasting Life...The greatest possession;

CC. Spurgeon said, If we never had another gleam of love from God’s face again, we could live on this one text!

1. Henry Morehouse said(after preaching for a week on Jn.3:16 in Moody’s pulpit), “I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you. Suppose I could borrow Jacob’s ladder. Suppose I could ascend that shining stairway until my feet stood on the sapphire pavements of the city of God. Suppose I could find Gabriel, the herald angel who stands in the presence of God. Suppose I could say, ‘tell me, Gabriel, how much does God love the world?’ I know what he would say. He would say, “Henry Morehouse, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Thats how much God loves the world.”

DD. Analogy, “The Electric Chair”: You’ve lived a life of sin. You’ve been tried, convicted, found guilty! The judge has pronounced the sentence...Death! Now you await execution. Knowing you’re deserving of this punishment, though repentant now, you know this is your consequence. Your strapped in the chair, & the switch is about to be thrown. Then, you hear footsteps…it’s the judge? He sets you free – you can’t believe it. As you’re walking away down the corridor you pass a man who is heading for the same chair. Who is that? you yell back out of curiosity. What did he do to deserve execution? Nothing at all! He’s a good man, the best I’ve known. I know this because He’s my Son!

1. “For God so so Loved….“