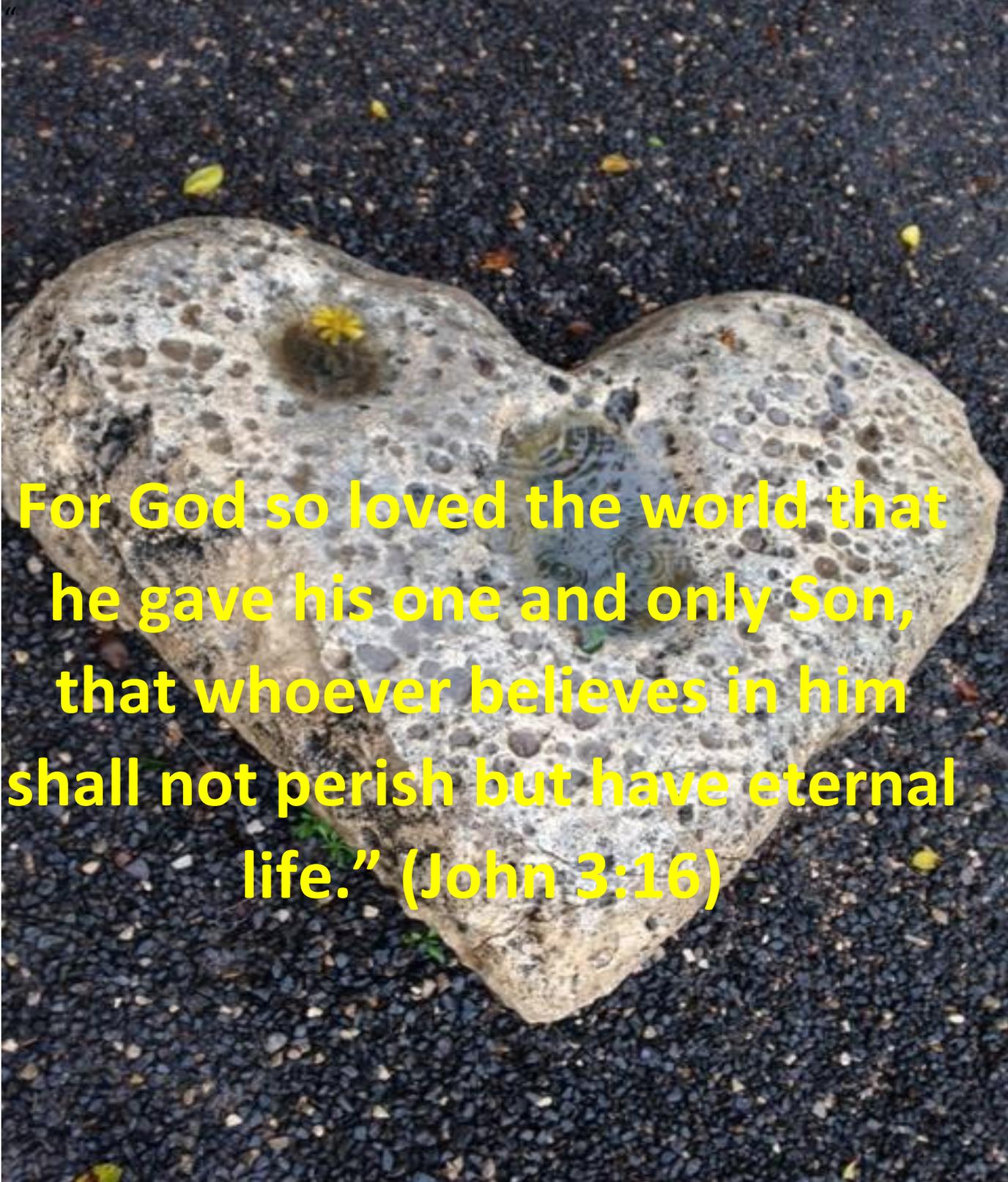


God So Loved the World

[John 3: 16-21](#)

A photograph of a heart-shaped rock resting on a dark asphalt surface. The rock is light-colored and covered in numerous small, dark spots, possibly from lichen or weathering. A small puddle of water is trapped in the center of the rock's heart shape. The background is a dark, textured asphalt with some scattered yellow leaves.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Spend a few minutes resting and reflecting with this verse. It's so familiar to us, but just try repeating it to yourself. Know that God so loves you.

"For God..": without whom nothing would exist. He actively breaks into the cycle of our humanity and its descent to death.

"loved the world": the whole world, not a select few portions of it: he loved the whole lot. God loves his creation, in which he continues to take delight, despite the way in which so many people show no love for him, and do all they can to try to scrub his imprint off his creation.

"so": how intense was his feeling? What was God willing to do?

"that he gave his one and only Son": God the Father gives his only Son, the most perfect and precious thing, to a world that hardly seems to care. He was willing to send his one and only Son to share with humanity, and to die a brutal death – and to rise from the dead.

"that whoever believes in him": we are reminded that God hasn't come to love only the good, the clever, the well-behaved, the well-off or well-favoured. His love reaches to anyone: "whoever". It is an amazing, open-handed, open-hearted invitation. All we have to do is 'believe' – to accept that God loves us and then see where that invitation takes us.

"shall not perish but have eternal life." We won't die? But we know that most people will die, and we are living in a time of a global pandemic when, sadly, very many people will die. That's not quite what it means. Jesus has conquered death. We won't be left lost and alone, but can trust that there is more to come, a life which is not hemmed in by time and death, but is "eternal".

What happens if you re-read this verse, only this time instead of saying "God so loved the world", put your name in place of the words "the world"?

It is a thing most wonderful,
almost too wonderful to be,
that God's own Son should come from heaven,
and die to save a child like me.

(William Walsham How, 1823-1897)

Rev'd Vicky Barrett