

Sermon

Lanier Christian Church August 8, 2010

Sermon Series for August: Treasured Verses of the Bible

WHAT MATTERS TO GOD

John 3:16-17

John 3.16

I don't need to say more.

We nod our heads.

We know that the heart of the gospel lies in these few words.

Preschoolers can recite it.

Football fans and players display it boldly.

It's brief enough to write on a napkin or memorize in a moment, yet solid enough to withstand 2000 years of storms and questions.

It begins with God, ends with life, and urges us to do the same!

Listen to the impact this verse has had on people's lives:

Mac Powell, Contemporary Music Group, Third Day:

"I love John 3:16 because it is the gospel in a nutshell. It shares God's great love for us, and our great need for him."

Ernie Johnson, TNT Sportscaster

"John 3:16 is the foundation of my faith. A picture of undeserved, unconditional, and unwavering love from a Father to his kids."

Anne Graham Lotz (Billy Graham's daughter)

"John 3:16 is the North Star of the Bible. If you align your life with it, you can find The Way home."

Jeff Foxworthy

"This is the promise that bears hope for the hopeless. When we finally realize 'I can't do this on my own' this is the Father responding, 'I know, so I've done it for you.'"

Here it is in the NIV, with verse 17 following...

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Note first...that what clearly matters to God is...

1. LOVE

“For God so loved...”

God is love.

And you know what?

He can't help it!

He loves because it is His nature to do so.

He can't do it any other way.

He is a passionate God.

And this passion motivates Him to act.

You see...He also loves because He chooses to do so.

It is not a self-centered love, but a love that chooses to love and reaches out. He reaches out and draws us in, even when we are bound and determined on resisting His love.

There is a story in the Old Testament that describes this kind of love that God has for us. It is found in the prophetic writing of Hosea.

God commanded Hosea to marry Gomer, a woman who was a harlot. Now I don't know what you think about that, but I imagine that Hosea was not all that excited to be marrying a prostitute.

He does follow the command of God and marries her. But it is going to be a test. Gomer knows nothing about faithfulness. In fact, she didn't know the meaning of being faithful as she went from man to man. She ruined her life and shattered Hosea's heart.

Gomer comes to the day that she is penniless, and was placed for

sale in a slave market. And can you guess who stepped forward to buy her?

Hosea, the man of God, who had never removed his wedding band. The way he treated her you would have thought she'd never loved another man.

And that folks, is the way God loves us. Always faithful. Ever patient. There. Always there. Even when we wander astray after false loves.

Why? Because what matters to God is...

2. PEOPLE

Because people matter to God.
"For God so loved the world..."

We matter!

You matter. I matter.

And there is no favoritism.

God does not offer salvation to only the people He likes.

There are no requirements.

You don't have to be white, black, pro-life, liberal, democratic, republican, young, old, single, poor or rich.

Jesus is for all people that are missing from being participants in His kingdom.

You see...He does not want anyone to perish!

As long as a person has breath, God waits patiently for the person to turn around and come home. He does not give up on us.

He possesses a patient love.

But here is the reality. There is...another issue that matters to God...

3. DANGER

God is very serious about sin.

Do you notice that word "perish" in that verse?
It shows us that...God means what He says. He is a just God. Sin must be dealt with.

It does not go away.
This is why Jesus came.
Sin deserves death.

We live in a time where sin is out of fashion and hell is considered a myth.
But John 3:16 makes no sense if sin is not a real problem and hell is not a real destination.
We may try to dilute them.
We may try to delete them.
But not Jesus.
He came because of them.

Max Lucado:

He pounds "Do Not Enter" signs on every square inch of Satan's gate and tells those hell-bent on entering to do so over his dead body.
Even so, some souls insist.

What is the solution?
It is something that goes against our instincts.
It is "whoever believes..."
It's so simple.
We expect a more complicated cure, a more sophisticated salvation.
After all, doesn't the Bible say, "God helps those who help themselves"?
No!
It's not there.
It's not in the Bible.
You can't help yourself.

And that is what makes true Christianity so unique.
No other religion offers what Jesus promises.
Judaism sees salvation as a Judgment Day decision based on

morality...how good or bad you were.

Buddhism grades your life according to the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

Muslims earn their way to Allah by performing the duties of the Five Pillars of Faith.

But not Christianity.

Jesus calls us to do one thing: believe!

Believe in order to receive...something that matters a whole lot to God and to us...

4. LIFE

"...whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

We all have lived with some false impressions of what eternal life, heaven is going to be like.

But note this...it will be what living is supposed to be like.

We talk about being in a state of relaxation and enjoyment and saying, "Now this is the life." Or, "This is really living."

But, for sure, heaven will be life as God intended it.

He has your best in mind!

And here is what I think...Heaven will be a glorious place...this earth reborn to be what the Garden of Eden originally was.

We'll have some kind of new body – an eternal body. No more pain. no more tears. No more death. Forgiveness will reign supreme.

Selfishness will be no more. Peace will rule the day. Relationships with each other will be treasured and enhanced every day.

We will say: "I wish this day will never end"...and it won't!

There will be no more sin, no more crime, no more heartache, no more boredom. Everything will have meaning.

One thing is for sure...

You will love it!

And our appreciation for God will grow.

Max Lucado wrote:

Endless attributes await us. His grace will increasingly stun, wisdom progressively astound, and perfection will ever more sharpen into focus.

Conclusion:

So what do we do with John 3:16?
What are you going to do with John 3:16?

Here is what I want you to note right now.
Your mission is in John 3.16, so I want you to...

Know your mission.

We have a mission.
It is simply this...
Love people like Jesus does.
He came to us.
He did not expect us to come to Him.
He sacrificed for us.
He did not expect us to become something we are not.

We need to have the same forward push that Jesus had.
We need to love people like Jesus does.

This is good news.

When you have good news, what do you do with it?
Most people are happy to tell you about their children and grandchildren born into this world – Why? It's good news.

Most people will gladly tell you about their favorite restaurant. Why?
Because it's good news.

Most people will talk about their favorite sports team, especially when they win. Why? Because it's good news.

Isn't the news about Jesus so much better?
So tell it!

It is loving people like Jesus does. It's giving good news about why your life has purpose and meaning. It's telling people they can have a savior because...(v.17) - "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

What a great treasure this verse is. Memorize it. Share it. Live it!

Resources:
Lucado, Max. 3:16: The Numbers of Hope.
Paul Decker