

## **John Three Sixteen**

September 13, 2015

Maybe you've been watching a baseball game on TV and the camera is sweeping the stands and suddenly shows some fans have draped a banner over the railing. The banner looks something like this: John 3:16. For years, people at sporting events have been bringing home-made banners to display at football and baseball games. They do it to give a message to others at the game, and to those watching on TV, if the cameras come their way.

Banners with this message are intended to be a reminder to those who know what it means. It is meant to encourage some, and rebuke others. But I believe that most people today, who see that message, don't know what it stands for or even that it is a religious message. Some of you may be among them. So this morning I will explain it because it is a very important message.

This message is pronounced as John, 3, 16. John 3:16 is a reference from the Bible. The Bible is actually made up of 66 documents, which, together, we call the Bible. They are of different types of literature, but we call them books for convenience. Some books of the Bible are actually letters and not very long, so they may only have one chapter. One of the books in the Bible is named, John, after the man who authored it. His book is about Jesus, what Jesus did and taught, who Jesus was, and the significance of Jesus' life.

Now let me explain the numbers after the name John. These are not part of the original Bible. For centuries it was kind of hard to get around in the Bible, because it is so large, and some of the individual books are large. So different individuals added chapters and verses to make it easier to find something in the Bible.

We write Bible references like this: John 3:16. Again, the name of the Bible book comes first. The 3 in our example is the chapter. The chapter and verse, or verses, are divided usually by a colon, but today a semi-colon or even a period are used. I often use a period because it is quicker to type. The 16 is one of the verses in chapter 3. There are any number of verses in a chapter. The 119<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Psalms has 176 verses. The 10th chapter of the book of Esther has only 3 verses.

There are two parts to the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

**Bible = 2 parts, Old Testament and New Testament**

**39 books in O.T. and 27 books in N.T.**

**"testament" = covenant**

There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 Books in New Testament.

The word testament means covenant.

**Old Testament/Covenant = relationship of God, the creator, with the Israelites.**

**New Testament/Covenant = relationship of God, the Savior, with all who put their faith in Jesus.**

The Old Testament records the covenant relationship God had with the Israelites and how it came about. The New Testament tells of the new covenant relationship that God

forms today with all people who put their faith in Jesus. The NT also tells how this covenant came about and why it is superior to the old covenant.

Most modern copies of the Bible put a reference at the top or bottom of each page. The reference on the left hand page is the first reference on that page, and the one on the right hand page is the last reference on that page. This aids us in flipping quickly through the Bible as we look for a specific passage. The reference may show a verse or just list chapter numbers. I am used to finding these at the top of the page, like a dictionary. The last Bible I bought had the references at the bottom of each page and it took me awhile to get used to looking there as I am paging through, trying to look up a passage.

I realize that all of what I have said so far is review for many of you. But it is new to some. Now let's turn to the importance of today's passage.

**John 3:16 (NIV) For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but inherit eternal life.**

**The What: God gave. "...He gave His one and only Son..."**

The key to this sentence is the fact that God gave His Son. Jesus was a gift, a gift to mankind. He is a savior, a rescuer, a hero, greater than any superhero. Jesus came to save us from something, to rescue us from something. Jesus came to save us from our sins.

Every person on this planet needs this rescued from the penalty of their sins. The state of your sins determines where you go when you die. If, through Jesus, your sins are forgiven, you inherit eternal life. Therefore, Jesus was the best gift anyone on earth has ever, or could ever, receive.

John 3:16 also says that Jesus is the one and only Son of God. There is only one Jesus. Jesus is not the first of a string of others like him. There is no one like Him. We celebrate His difference all year, but especially at Easter and Christmas. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the God/Man, God's gift to us. Jesus was fully God and yet fully man. God had not done this before, nor will He again. Jesus was conceived in a young woman named Mary by the power of God.

So Jesus got here, as a man, a little differently than everyone else. He was not a direct descendant of Adam and Eve, like the rest of us are. Therefore, He did not inherit the shame, disgrace, guilt, or habit of their sin like the rest of us have. This enabled Jesus to start off fresh, without any sin, when He was born. And He continued to live His life without sin. This is a very important characteristic of Jesus. It plays an important part in our salvation. If He was not perfect, His death would offer us nothing.

At Easter we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus, because of who He was and how He came to be the God/Man, was able to live a perfect life. Because of that Jesus was an acceptable substitute for our sins. As proof of this, God raised Him from the dead to live a new life, an eternal life.

Now let us look at why God sent Jesus. Look at the first part of this sentence.

## **The Why: God loves us.**

## **"God so loved the world..."**

This is the reason God gave us Jesus. The Bible speaks of the world in three ways. There is the planet, there is the culture, and there is the people. It is this third spoken of here. God's love for the all people is great. God's love for you and me is the reason God gave us Jesus. You could write your name in that sentence in place of the word "world". The sentence would still be true, because God's love for you is part of His love for the world.

But you might ask, what kind of love does God have for us? Let me start by describing what God's love is not.

> **God's love is NOT a feeling only.** The word "love" is used too much in our world today for a feeling. We speak of falling in love. "I saw her face, and fell head over heels in love." He means it was involuntary. He did not choose to love. It swept over him like a shiver. It was an emotion, a feeling. He had no choice in the matter.

Unfortunately this kind of love often sweeps on by. It doesn't stay long. And so we speak of falling out of love, like falling out of bed. We never choose to fall out of bed. It just happens. We are asleep and roll over too far, and bam! Falling out of love is like that. This love is just a feeling. We didn't choose to fall into love, and we don't choose to fall out of love. We are not in control of it. It is just a feeling. Just like we don't choose to feel sad. It just comes over us at times.

This is not the kind of love God has for us. God's love for us is not a feeling that swept over Him and will disappear later.

> **God's love is NOT a selfish desire.** The word "love" is often used as a desire. I love you. I need you. I must have you. You are the light in my eye, the desire of my heart. YOU will make MY LIFE complete. It makes the person that is loved sound like a possession. And indeed, that is often how it plays out. "Well, I've grown tired of you. I want someone new. I want to experience life with someone more exciting." This is a self-focused love, a self-centered love, a self-serving love. God's love is nothing like this.

Fortunately for us, God will not tire of us. His love is not a love of desire like we desire a new possession or a new model.

> **God's love is an action love.** God expresses His love in action, because of our need. You parents act out your love for your children because of their need. You can't help yourselves. You see the needs of your children and you act to meet them.

You know they need food, good food, nutritious food, and you act to provide that for them. You know they need clothing, warm clothing, and so you dress them in hats and coats and mittens. They would run out the door without any of that if you were not making sure they had them. They are, at times, oblivious to the cold. They are too busy having fun to notice that they are turning blue. But you love them and act to protect them, to do what is best for them, to provide what they need.

This is the love God has for us. God saw us in need, and loved us by meeting our need.

*"One can give without loving, but one cannot love without giving." -- Amy Carmichael*

> **God's love is a sacrificial love.** It cost God to love us. God gave His Son. It cost Jesus to love us. Jesus gave His life. Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for us.

Others have died to bring blessings to our lives. Others have died to win us freedom. Others have died to preserve our freedom. This freedom is temporary. It ends at your death.

Jesus died to free us forever from our sins and make possible eternal life. He came to do what no one else COULD do for us.

Again, you parents know what this is about. You sacrifice what you want all the time for the good of your children. If you only cared about yourself you would do what is easier for you, not best for them. You would let them eat whatever they want. You would let them stay up as late as they want. You would let them skip school. You would let them watch whatever they want, whenever they want. You would let them do whatever they want. This would be easier for you. But it would not be best for them. In the long run it would not meet their needs. So you feed them the right food, limit what they watch, make them go to bed. You do what is best for them even if it is not easiest for you. You sacrifice some of what you want in order to meet their need. This is the kind of love God has for us.

**The How: Make a choice.      "...whosoever believes in Him..."**

God gave us Jesus and expects us to respond by believing. He expects us to believe in Jesus, who Jesus is, what Jesus did, and what it means for us. We are to put our faith in Jesus. Faith is trust. God wants us to trust in Jesus.

It is easy to choose to believe something if it doesn't cost you much. But the more it costs you the harder it is to believe. Let me give you an example.

I can choose to believe that men have walked on the moon and returned safely to earth. I can't prove it. But it doesn't really matter. It doesn't cost me anything to believe it or not believe it.

But what if it did cost me something. What if the government said they wanted to build a base on the moon and would have to raise my taxes \$100 a year to pay for it. To go along with that, it would matter that I believe that men really have walked on the moon and returned safely. It matters some that I believe.

It would matter more if the government said they were going to raise my taxes \$1000 per year to pay for the moon base. To go along with that, I would have to have a lot of belief that men have walked on the moon, AND that it was important to have a moon base on the moon. Belief would cost me a lot more.

And if the government came and said the benefits to America would be so great by having a base on the moon, but only if I personally go to the moon and help build the base, then it would matter tremendously that I believe that men have walked on the moon and returned safely.

If you are going to trust your life to something, it matters a great deal that you believe it is true. And that is what you are doing with Jesus. You are trusting Jesus for eternal life. You are trusting Jesus for your life now and what happens after you die. It costs a lot to believe in Jesus. And it matters a great deal.

If Jesus is the one and only Son of God, then what you believe about Him matters a great deal. In fact, you are betting your life on what you believe.

Let's finish the sentence.

**The Outcome: Heaven. "...that whoever believes on Him will not perish, but inherit eternal life."**

This perish refers to perish from a blessed life. Have you ever heard someone say, "Well, all my friends will be in hell. We'll hang out together."?

Hell is not going to be a place of friendship. There is no joy in hell. There is no peace in hell. There is no fun in hell. There is no satisfaction in hell. There is no love in hell. there is nothing good or beautiful or joyful in hell. There is no life as we know it in hell. God says you do NOT want to go there. But He will let you if you refuse to receive the Savior He sent you. Heaven is ruled by Jesus. Heaven is for Jesus' followers, for those who receive Him as the Savior they need and turn their lives over to Him as Lord. He is the Lord of the earth. He won that title by living a perfect life and dying in our place.

Will you receive Jesus today? One came today to be baptized, a public statement and demonstration of her love for Jesus. Will you be the next to be baptized?