

## Monday, MARCH 22, 2010

John 3:16 may well be the most talked about verse in the Bible. We see the reference on posters at football games in the end zone and in many other places. Indeed, it is the gospel in a verse, but do we fully understand all that it says?

God loves.

There is God. It is not the point of this verse to prove or disprove that fact. God is. We each know that in the recesses of our hearts. Life is spent dealing with that longing.

Solomon speaks of it in Ecclesiastes 3:11. Paul addresses it in Acts 17:22-31 when he speaks to the men of Athens.

Augustine (around 400 years after Paul) said in his Confessions: *"Lord, you have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you."*

Pascal, in the 1600's wrote this:

*"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."*

All of these have led to the expression we hear today: *There is a "God-shaped hole" in each of us.*

We have been designed by God to be in a relationship with God. Scripture teaches that from front to back. God is reaching to those He created to restore them into a relationship with Him. He reaches with love.

That is quite unexpected. God so loved.

God loves those that reject Him, despise Him, and deny Him. He loves those who take Him for granted, who ignore Him, abuse Him, discount Him, create Him in their own image, dethrone Him, use Him, blame Him, accuse Him of wrong, hate Him, spit on Him, sin against Him, cheat on Him, run from Him, hide from Him, lie to Him. He loves those that join in with His enemy.

God so loved.

We would expect a dramatically different response if we were not so overwhelmed with thinking that in some way we deserve His love and if we were not so busy trying to replace it with something (anything) else.

*Family Discussion Question:*

*What does "God so loved" really mean to me?*

## Tuesday, MARCH 23, 2010

What is it about this world that is so special to God?

You!

God loves the world. The way that John uses this word "world" it applies to people. God loves people, so He loves this world. We can forget how special we are. Part of the enemy's plan is to help you with that. Satan hates you because you are more special to God than he ever was. That was included with the other attitudes that caused his fall from the glory he had been given. He sees that we are being offered salvation he can never have. So, he makes you feel you are less than special. John 3:16 starts with the word "for". That means you have to go back a little to see what the verse is talking about. It is in looking back we see the account of Moses lifting up the snake in the desert. *Just as Moses lifted up the snake, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.* Why was the snake lifted up? To save lives.

Can you please look at Numbers 21:4-9 with me today?

The Israelites are very special to God. They have many times forgotten that as well. This is one of those times.

The Israelites are in the desert and they are complaining - again. Take a look at the complaint in verse five. Especially look at the last sentence. *"We detest this miserable food."*

They are talking about the manna. Would you glance at Psalm 78:23-25 for a moment? What do you see there?

They were eating heavenly bread, the bread of angels. They cursed against it with a venomous statement and so God responded with venomous snakes. The bite of the snake brought the sting of death. The people did not like the snakes. They repented of the sin that they saw caused the death. God made provision for them to be saved from that death. It was a very interesting provision - a bronze snake on a staff.

Snakes were detestable to the Israelites—they viewed them as the embodiment of Satan. Idols were detestable to the Israelites. Moses had brought the commands against them. God determined that looking to a detestable snake idol on a pole was the only way to be saved from the venom of the snake bites.

Actually of course, they were looking beyond the detestable snake idol on a pole to the provision of God's healing touch from heaven. The idol would not heal, God would heal. It was against Him they had sinned.

*Family Discussion Question: How am I special to God?*

## Wednesday, MARCH 24, 2010

The Son of Man must be lifted up-in order for us to be saved. Manna is the Old Testament manifestation of bread from heaven. All the Jews knew this. They had told the story often about how God had provided the manna. Jesus came with a new revelation. The manna they were given in the desert was a type of bread from heaven - He was the true bread from heaven.

Please read John 6:25-59.

Do you see what Jesus says in verses 32-33? He is the true bread from heaven. He is the provision of life. Look at verse 41? See the grumbling? Some things never change.

Verse 48 reveals that Jesus is the bread of life.

Bread sent by the Father from heaven as a provision for life. Have you ever grumbled against the bread of life? What are some ways that we can be tempted to do that? What is it that sustains you? Where do you find your significance? What is the source of your life?

We have each been bitten by the serpent and we have venom in us that is bringing the sting of death into our lives. That venom is sin and that serpent is Satan. Are you aware of the venom in your life? Are you aware of the sin? Are you aware of your grumbings? Does the fact that sin is sure death disturb you?

Remember that you are special to God—very special. So special in fact that He has made provision to keep you from perishing even as you are grumbling. He provides Himself.

We cannot really grasp the horridness of crucifixion. It is a detestable death. We cannot imagine the lover of our souls choosing to be lifted up on a cross in shame and disgrace and humiliation—bearing our sin - as the source of our salvation.

But here is the truth: just as the Israelites needed to look at the detestable raised up by God, so must we look at what we see as detestable raised up by God as the outcome of the venom of our sin.

It is the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). The kindness of the Lord allows Himself to pay the price for our allowing ourselves to be bitten by the serpent of Hell. The venom of sin must be removed or we will perish. The Bread of Heaven provides the possibility for life-eternally.

*Family Discussion Question: What sin is there in my life?*

Thursday, MARCH 25, 2010

Please read John 3:10-21.

What is this thing called eternal life?

Many times when I ask that question, I am met with the response that eternal life is living forever. That is partial truth, but that is not the whole.

You are special to God. He has created you for the purpose of being in a relationship with Him and knowing Him. That is what Jesus says is eternal life in John 17:3. Jesus says that eternal life is knowing the Father and the Son—relationship.

That is why Jesus came and died on the cross. It is not to condemn you (John 3:17), your sin has already done that.

You stand condemned before God because you have chosen to replace Him with yourself as the object of your love.

Could you please reread that last sentence?

Herein is the venom of sin that seals your death sentence. If you are the center of your universe you will not have a healthy relationship with anyone.

Unless your relationship with God is restored through the blood of Jesus, you will remain the center of your universe and you will remain miserable with the venom of sin running through your veins.

Your relationship with God will not be restored until you repent. You must turn from looking in to you and turn your gaze up to God through Jesus hung on the cross.

It is when you see yourself as the rightful object of God's wrath that you see the fullness of the depth of His taking that wrath on Himself.

It is then that you move out of the darkness that sin brings and move into the beauty of the light of His total forgiveness and you move into a relationship of intimate knowledge of Him—eternal life!

You will be free from the condemnation you have brought on your self and you will move into the joy of victorious living. God is passionate for you to experience this and He is calling you to look to Him to escape perishing.

*Family Discussion Question: Have I truly repented?*

Friday, MARCH 26, 2010

It is possible to look to Jesus to be saved and then still stay in the bondage of selfishness and pain.

Sadly, many will choose to live defeated lives. Many will choose to look to the snake that has bitten them to heal them. What do I mean by that?

Once you admit your sin and see it as against God and turn from it (repent) and turn to God through Jesus alone you are saved (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Please turn to Titus 3:4-7.

See the kindness again?

See what else? We have been reborn. We have new life, which is what Easter is all about! Will you live in that new life or in the old?

We can choose to live in the deadness of past failures and sins. We can choose to notice what other people need to change and in so doing, miss the change we are being led to experience.

Luke 7:36-50 tells what can happen then. Here is the account of a person who felt he was pretty good, and another who felt that she had much to be forgiven for. There is a stark contrast in the way each of them approaches a relationship with Jesus.

Could I ask that you consider which one you are more like? Do you see the depth of your sin and how much you have been forgiven or do you tend to notice how much less you have to be forgiven of than other people?

Nancy Leigh DeMoss provides some good questions for searching this out:

Does sin in my life bother me?

Am I willing to call my wrong actions "sin" rather than viewing them as weaknesses, "struggles", or personality traits?

Here is one I ask myself quite often:

Do I have a unpublished list of permissible sins in my life? How are they keeping me from knowing God?

You are special to God. If you have trusted Him, He has saved you from the venomous bite of the serpent of sin. Keep yourself pure—keep looking upward to the bread of life, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, including yours and mine!

*Family Discussion Question:*

*In what ways do I see that I have been forgiven much?*

Pastor Chuck Cervenk

MARCH 22 - 26, 2010



# THE CALL

HIS PASSION FOR ALL

# ETERNAL LIFE

A Disciplemaking Tool  
**DIGGING  
DEEPER**

**Calvary**  
Community Church

*Engaging With God*

Highway 50 & Harris Road  
P.O. Box 1200 • Williams Bay, WI 53191  
(262) 245-6294  
www.calvarycommunity.net