

Hi Laurel, One word in the 4th chapter I couldn't make out.

God So Loves, God Gave, We Believe, We Live

John 3:16

April 27, 2008 - Pastor Draeger 830AM

This morning we're going to continue our discussion of the numbers 3:16, especially as we find them in the gospel of St. John. And those words are again; let's do them from memory if we can, and if you need help look on the screen. God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. And we've broken that into four parts - we said a few weeks ago that God loves, then we focused on God gave, and last week we looked at we believe or trust, and today we're going to look at the last one; we live, and we're going to live eternally and that's a good thing. So I'd like to talk about that.

But as we think about living eternally, we need to tease that out just a skosh. Jesus made an amazing statement to Mary and Martha, especially Martha when she came out and wondered what in the world was going to happen to her brother; it was just not good news, her brother Lazarus had died. She was kind of disturbed because Jesus had been talking about eternal life and about heaven. So she was disturbed that Jesus, when Lazarus was very sick, didn't come and heal him like He had healed a lot of other people. And Jesus, Mary, Martha and Lazarus were like buds; these were best friends kind of folk; they were in tight with each other. So Martha was very disturbed that Jesus didn't come to heal her brother and he died. That kind of sounds like that's not very caring, that's not very loving,

So Jesus says to her, "Whoever, everyone who believes in Me, though he dies, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" He asked her. And she said yes Lord, I believe. That's an interesting statement - that though we die, yet shall we live. If you've ever been to a funeral you'd kind of have some difficulty with that, wouldn't you? Because there's a body and the body is now dead, and dead doesn't look like living. The coroner's office investigates all kinds of deaths and death doesn't look like living. And sometimes death looks pretty ugly when you're called out to some of those things, or your staff is called out from the coroner's office. Death does not look pretty, and it's a very, very sad thing.

Well, Jesus says that though we die, yet we shall live. What He's trying to say is that living is more to do with something other than oxygen flowing through our blood system. It has to do with a relationship with God, and that's kind of a little spin that Jesus puts on it, He saying there's more to life than living the way we do in this world. Which is kind of hard to believe because I know nothing else, do you? I mean have any of you checked out heaven yet? Do you know what that looks like? Have you been there and back? I don't even know that when Lazarus came back from the dead he had much to say about what heaven was like, because there is nothing recorded in the bible about this guy that Jesus ultimately raised from the dead, or any other people that were raised from the dead. They don't talk about in the bible about what it was like to be dead! They talk about what

it's like to be alive and to be living forever; whatever that means, and however _____ that's going to take.

So we're going to talk about that just a little bit this morning, and as we talk about living and death, we need to just kind of check out one of the words in the bible - it says those will not perish but have everlasting life. Perish has to do with what? Dying, passing, spoiling, how about hell? How many people like to talk about hell? Well sure you do, some of you saw the place, 'you had a hell of a game, right?!' 'That was a hell of a steak!' 'That was a hell of a hit!' I mean we talk about hell all the time. We talk about, 'man that traffic was hell today! Work was hell today!' We use hell like an adjective. This sermon is hellacious! We minimize things that we don't want to deal with. So we kind of make hell softer and easier to deal with because we use it as an adjective. It's like we are such a death denying culture, how many of you have your trusts or wills already prepared? That's less than half the group. How many of you have your burial spot picked out? That's less than a quarter of the group. How many have the hymns and songs for your funeral service picked out? You see how many hands that is, we are a death denying culture, we put that stuff off because we don't want to deal with it. Things that we don't want to deal with we put off and off and off. And people want to put off discussing this option called hell.

God doesn't like hell either, the bible says God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He doesn't like it. That's why it says in the bible that we shall not perish but have everlasting life, and the method toward that is what? God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that *no one* would perish, but *everyone* might have eternal life. God hates hell too, but He wouldn't deny its reality, He would deal with it in some positive way. He would confront it head on; in fact Jesus would experience hell for everyone who would ever live. Those words on the cross, "***My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?***" What was that all about on Good Friday? Hell! He suffered hell so that people would never have to get caught up in something that was not intended for them in the first place. God created people to have life with Him and to have life with Him forever. And so when people get caught up in spiritual deadness, that's not the way God wants it for us but we're born that way. And so He's given us something that's brand new, it's called life; spiritual life, a life that we can live forever. And that's what John 3:16 is also about, we will not perish.

Perishing is something we don't want to think about and yet God does. Faith and baptism is God's mechanism, His vehicle for helping us receive and experience the benefits of what Jesus did on Good Friday, those three hours of darkness on the face of the planet. Those three hours where's He's experiencing hell in our place. Faith and baptism bring to us the eternal option, one that you can't even imagine how good it is. We're going to sing a song about that in a little bit, but right now I want to say heaven is something we can't even begin to understand. The bible gives us some medifore for it. In the book of Revelation for example when John was speaking on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He was talking about heaven as streets lined with gold. Do you suppose Hudson and Harrison and James and Jefferson and all those streets, do you suppose heavens going to be gold lined streets like that instead of asphalt? Not, not going to happen, he's using a

medifore saying how many people would line the street with gold. You wouldn't, that's too expensive, yet he's saying this is the image that he wants us to have. Heaven is a good experience, it's not something to be afraid of; it's just a good option.

I've heard people say for example, how are you? Well, I'm fine considering the options - i.e. considering being dead, as though dead is a bad thing. Dead is a good thing for those who live through faith in Christ Jesus. So we don't have to be afraid of that option. That doesn't mean you're going to stand out in front of a semi and say, alright, nail me. God says we don't test Him and tempt Him like that. We honor life; we live our life to His glory; that would not be glorifying Him. But, we're not afraid should death come, because it says we will not perish. You see with the resurrection Jesus has put a great big 'DO NOT ENTER' sign at hell's gate; that we can't get there because He has blocked the way.

He has paid the price; He's given us the option of life that is eternal. And what's that going to look like? I don't really know except for the things that the bible talks about that are very clear for us. It says in heaven that there will be no more tears. How many of you have had tears over something in the last couple of weeks? Either your own physical condition or a sadness that you've experienced. If you've had tears, He says there won't be any tears like that. How many of you have had pain? He says, no more pain, wouldn't that be cool? I could go for a bike ride like yesterday, put on 27 miles and I would have slept better; my legs were sore. Kept me from sleeping a 100% last night because I haven't been doing enough cycling. No pain, no more back surgeries in heaven, it's great. For those of you who live with pain, there's no pain in heaven. There's no murder, there are no thieves, there's no heartbreak, no financial uncertainty. There's no more divorce, in fact there's no more boredom. Wouldn't that be cool? ***Just unhindered joy!*** That's what awaits us! Tireless muscles, heaven is the perfect place with only perfect people serving a perfect Lord.

That's our God, and that's what He holds out. And I can only imagine what that will be like. But before that, before that, He says I want to give you a little bit of heaven on earth. And so Jesus would say to His disciples in John's gospel, "He who believes in Me, has eternal life." Now let's just pause on that; a little English grammar. The tense of the verb for 'He who believes,' anybody know the present tense of the verb? How about the word has, has eternal life? Tense of the verb, present tense. What does that mean therefore? You've got a noun. Eternal life is not what you get when you die, eternal life is what you get when you're baptized. When you come to faith in Jesus, you've got eternal life now. That's why Jesus would say in John chapter 10, "I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly." Its' not that you have abundant life *then*, but you have abundant life now; it's only going to get better *then*. It's going to be perfect *then*.

And one of the ways He talks about that is in Romans He says, "All things," how many, "all things work together for our good." "All things work together for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose." And at the end of that section he says, "No one can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." So what that says is, we always have God with us. What's heaven about? Being in the presence of God. What's

living now about? For Jesus' people it's being in the presence of God. God living with us and in us. Paul says, "For me to live is Christ." It's not I who live, but Christ who lives in me. That's a whole lot of God in our lives. That ought to be a good thing.

And so if you get down this week, I want you to be thinking about life eternal, and the promise of God that you don't have to wait for heaven to have good things, you've got Him now. You've got Him now; you've got good things now.

And so this week, one of the teams might lose. That would be a bummer wouldn't it? Especially if we have two teams from Redeemer playing each other, one of them is going to lose. And yet the losing team can say praise God, because God is with us. And we have the joy of the Lord as our strength. Not victory on the ball field, not the boss liking us, not financial things turning around, but the joy of the Lord is our strength; that's a little bit of heaven on earth.

I'd like to have you listen for a moment to a couple of bible verses along these lines. From 1st Peter these words, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in His great mercy He has given us new birth into a *living* hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed the last time." So he's saying heaven is guaranteed for you and is being kept, and the word there is like Fort Knox is being guarded today. That's the strength of that word. You've got something that's in heaven that's already secured for you, and the cross and open tomb are the security. And then Paul also writes this way in Ephesians the 1st chapter, "When you believed you were marked by Him with a seal," and by the way Paul talks about that marking with a seal as being baptism. He says, "When you believe you are marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who our God's possession, to the praise of His glory."

So what he's saying to you is this is like the earnest money, and that what the word means - the deposit. Today we would call that the down payment. The 10 or 20% down is the earnest money. It's the promise that the rest is sure to come. And he's saying I'm giving you the Holy Spirit today in the waters of baptism, so that you have the guarantee that the rest is sure to come; that heaven on earth is yours in a little version right now, and you're going to get the big version later. Does that make sense? So regardless of what the economy does, regardless of what your job does, regardless of what your kids do, regardless of what your spouse does, regardless of what your past has been; He's saying I've come that you might have life and have it abundantly. That's built into these words for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting or eternal life. That's God's pledge to you and me. And I can only imagine what that would be like, first if we took that very seriously day by day and walk with God with that awareness everyday. And I can only imagine what that might look like one day when we stand before the Lord in heaven. Gathered around the throne with countless myriads of Christians of every nation, together focusing

our attention in one place; on Jesus the Lamb of God whose blood has cleansed us and set us free. I can only imagine. Amen.