

# The Greatest Destinies

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**John 3:16(d)**  
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A couple unexpected things happened to me recently. Last night I was getting ready for the four o'clock service, I was putting my shoes on and I discovered that I correctly brought two gray shoes, which was great, only they were two left shoes. That didn't help, so I preached in flip flops last night and had numerous people say, "Hey, we like preaching in flip flops. The flip flop preacher." I don't want to be known as that, so as you can see, I'm not wearing flip flops right now.

Second unexpected thing happened, when I originally thought about preaching John 3:16, I was thinking, all right, I'll do a three-point sermon. John 3:14 will be point one. John 3:15 will be point two, and John 3:16 will be point three. Kept thinking and praying about that and thought, "You know, maybe it would be best if I did a standalone sermon on John 3:16 only. And then as you know, this thing has grown into a four-part series today being the fourth and final message on John 3:16.

And what I didn't expect is the impact that this text would have on me. I mean, I already know this verse. It's the Bible in miniature, had it memorized for only for a few decades now. There's the first verse, one of the first verses we had our kids memorize, but it struck me in ways I was not expecting. When I first started to study this text, I can say coming out of this, coming to the end of this series, I love God, the Father more because of this text, I love the Son more. Jesus. I love him more because of this text. And the whole plan of salvation, this whole thing that God did to save sinners, blown away, completely blown away by what I learned in this text.

Thinking and praying, studying and preaching this text for a month has deeply impacted me in ways I wasn't expecting. I've been impacted by the fact that God's love is not some sappy, sentimental kind of love that is easily trivialized, easily emotionalized, and frankly, easily feminized. No God's love is bold and courageous because He did the unthinkable. He sacrificed what meant most to him when He crushed His Son on the cross as a penalty for sin. His love for humanity is not based on our worth, it's based on His will, His desire to save sinners, to love sinners, to love those who rebel against him. And frankly love to rebel against him. In other words, He love sinners by giving up His Son on the cross. He didn't love them by His feelings. He loved sinners by His choice to send and sacrifice His Son.

If you want to know if God loves you're not asking, "How does He feel about me?" No, no. What you should ask is, "Did He crush His Son instead of me for my sins?" If He did, then He loves you infinitely. That's been blowing my mind. His love is strong and compassionate. His love is tender and tough. His love is selfless. And at the same time brings Him immense glory. All because God loves humanity at our worst, humanity in our rebellion against Him, clarity on the love of God deeply impacted me. And so did drilling down into the fact that when God gave up His Son to death for the world, God was giving His very best.

I knew that. I could get that right on a test, but to meditate on that for weeks now, deeply impacting. Jesus the Son, the word, He has unlimited worth to the father, nothing.

And no one is more wonderful, more satisfying to the father than the Son. And yet it was His very Son, this holy, this precious one to Him is this Son that He crushed on the cross to save a sinful world. It's that line in Spurgeon that I've been saying for a couple weeks now it's as if God loves sinners more than He loves His Son. He did not spare His Son so that He could spare us. That's deeply impacting to me. And that was unexpected. That understanding that phrasing, that insight into God's word, that's impacting. That was unexpected. Why? Again, I know this stuff, but I didn't really know this stuff.

The last unexpected impact came last weekend, Saturday night, third service, coming to the end, middle of preaching the sermon. And as I'm coming to the end of the message it's hitting me like, wait a minute. The greatest love gives the greatest gift there could possibly ever be. How could you not believe? How? Like how is that even possible? How could you not see this? How could you walk away from this? How could you come just once and twice a year, maybe give like a tip of the hat. Like, "Hey God, how's it going? I'm going to go live my life now. Hope you're good." How could somebody hear this and go, "What's for lunch?"

As I'm preaching it's hitting me, the greatest gift comes from the heart of the greatest love for great sinners to rescue us forever from our sins. How could you not believe. I left in the daze that night, came back Sunday in that same days, how can people hear these truths and think, "No, thanks." Oh no, I got something better. The baseball scores. That's better. I got something better. I'll get to this later. My sin, that's better than Jesus. I mean, if nothing is better to the God of the universe than Jesus, then anything you put in the place of Jesus is infinitely worthless compared to Jesus. But worse than that, it is infinitely offensive to God to consider anything as better than His Son. Right?

I would say things like "Jesus is better." Why? Because of all that He is and all that He did. Amazing. Wonderful. But now added to that as Jesus is better because nothing is better to the Father than the Son. And what's best for God is what's best for you. Jesus is best for the Father. So He is best for you. He is best for me. And if Jesus is not that for me, then something is wrong with me. If Jesus is not best, if Jesus is best for the Father, but he's not best for you, then something is wrong with you. To the Father, nothing is better than Jesus, but you say, "You know what's more important than that? The opinions of others more important than Jesus. I mean, what would people think if I became a Christian?" I'll take their opinion instead out of Jesus.

Actually, you know what? My sin, my independence, me being my own man, that's better than Jesus. So I'll take that instead of him. You know what? I'll take my fun. I'll take my good times. I'll take that instead of Jesus. That's more valuable to me than Jesus, over Jesus. See the offense of that is against God who gives His very best. And we treat it like it's worthless. That's been impacting me deeply. And that brings us to the last phrase in John 3:16, which explains the greatest destinies. The greatest destinies. This verse explains two destinies, really two destinations, where every single person in the world, which is every person who's ever lived, which is where they will spend eternity. To think of this life correctly is to think of it as an airport. It's not the destination. It's the airport. It's not where you're from. It's not where you're going. You're just passing through on your way from Phoenix to Hawaii. Got to be in the airport for a little while.

The airport might be nice, but it's temporary. Right? I don't live there. I don't love to be there. I don't wish I could stay there forever. Nobody gets to the airport, it's like, "Yeah, I know I'm

going to Hawaii. But man, I want to be at the airport. I'm so excited to be at Sky Harbor. That place is awesome. Yeah. Hawaii's... I mean, that's fine, but give me the airport." Nobody says that. "Just there for a bit. And then I'm gone." See death is the destiny. It's the guaranteed future of every man Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, "And it ushers each one of us into a conscious existence that never ends." Somehow, we got the idea that death means disappearance, extinction, turning off the lights, whatever, but that's not what the Bible means by death. Death in the Bible means separation.

So separating your soul from your body, that's physical death. Separating physical life from spiritual life, that's spiritual death. And the separation of a person from God, that's eternal death, eternal death and eternal life is what the last phrase in John 3:16 is all about. So in a series about how to go to Heaven when you die, it's about time we got to this part, right?

We've been moving towards this all along. So let's start point number one, with the greatest destination, the greatest destination, which is Heaven. John 3:16 says, whoever believes in Jesus quote, "Will have eternal life." The result, the goal of the purpose of giving Jesus to sinners so that they will believe in him so that sinners will not perish but have eternal life. That's why God gave His Son. So sinners will have eternal life. Eternal life speaks of life that fits, that matches that's at home and the age to come it's life. That fits Heaven. It's life that fits the kingdom and beyond. It's God's life. It's divine, supernatural, spiritual life. It's God's own life as your life. The life of God is in your soul. It's unlike physical life in this life. God's life is eternal life because God's life is the kind of life that cannot ever be destroyed. It last forever.

When people object and say, "I don't want to live forever." They don't get it. We are all going to exist forever. The issue is what will that existence be like? Will you be living as you exist? Or will you be perishing as you exist? It is a life that still thrives when your body is dead in the grave. It is a life that gives life to your body. When you're resurrected from the dead, it is a life that a billion years from now is still alive, just as alive. And notice verse 16, eternal life isn't something believers have in the future, right? It doesn't say this is something believers will have. It's what? It's something they have now. A settled, constant, continuous reality of God's life and your soul.

Christian eternal life started when you believe. It doesn't start. When you die, meaning you have that life right now if you're trusting in Christ, our loved ones, you died in Christ had eternal life when they died, meaning that they never really died. They're soul separated from their body, but that's soul all kept going. They died physically, but that was it. Jesus said John 11:25, "He who lives and believes in me shall never die."

It's not just that. They still exist. Everyone exists after death. They are all right now in Heaven, more alive there than they were ever alive here. The life they now live there is so much better than anything that we experience here that they wouldn't trade it to come back here for even a second. This phrase, eternal life, you follow it throughout the book of John. What you find is that this eternal life is considered a gift from Jesus. It comes to those who know God, according to chapter 17:3. And it comes for those who believe in Jesus. And for those who have eternal life, John 6:40 and John 6:54, both say that this eternal life is the guarantee of your future resurrection.

So between physical death and being resurrected, those who die believe, and Jesus are taken to Heaven. Second Timothy 4:18 says, "Jesus brings them there." So at the moment, one of His people dies. I think Jesus arrives and takes them to Heaven. They've stayed their time at the

airport. They have boarded plane, Jesus takes them home to Heaven, where they belong. Eternal life is life fit for that place for Heaven because Heaven is where that life is at home.

John 6:38 says that Heaven is where Jesus was from. So He brings Heaven's life to earth. Heaven is where God lives. Heaven is called God's holy habitation, Deuteronomy 26:15. And it's called God's dwelling place. Second Chronicle 6:21. Heaven is not sitting on a cloud, strumming a harp all day. That's hell. That's what that is. When we get glimpses into Heaven in the Bible, which is pretty rare. It seems the primary activity in Heaven is worship. Heaven is a place, in other words of unbelievable awe. What will capture your attention there will not be the angels. It won't be the other people. It won't be the music or all the sight and sounds. What will capture your attention will be God Himself.

We will stand in the most profound awe of all that He is and will stand in the most profound awe that we get to be where He is after how much we have sinned against Him. It is a place where God has served where His will is done perfectly. It is a place that no eye's seen or ear heard nor is even entered our imaginations what it is truly like. Anything I'm going to say right now about it is just the fraction of the edge of what it's really like there. This place, Heaven, is a world of love as well. Why? Because the God of love is there. And Christians experience God's love and this place as a never-ending fountain, gushing forth rivers that turn into lakes that turn into oceans of God's love that you live in and splash it and enjoy for all of eternity.

As a place of love, there is no envy. There is no selfishness there. This is just part of the vast inheritance kept for you who believe. It is a place where you will live in God's presence, where you will rest from your trials, where we will be released from the hardships of this life, where the best is all that we will know because this life right now is the worst that it's ever going to be for you. It is a place of no corruption where nothing gets worse, where nobody loses, where nothing runs down or gets old, where decays or decline, nothing deteriorates, nothing even dwindles. It is the life of true happiness and true satisfaction, which means things like crying, mourning, pain, anxiety, despair, they've all passed away because Heaven is also a world of joy unending. Every second, better than the last kind of joy.

Today, we say things like, "The best is yet to come." We say things like, "All good things must end." Not there. Every second, better than the last for all of eternity. The best you've ever been, the best you've ever done pales in comparison. It's a fraction of a nothing compared to what it will be there and what you will be there. He will always be the very best because Heaven is also a world of victory. Heaven is a world of victory. Death does not ever beat a Christian, death loses every time because the moment death catches up to the Christian, they enter eternal life in a place of perfection. It's a place where there will be no more sin, no pride, no conflict, no greed, no suffering, no lies. And you will finally be where you belong.

You'll be in the place that you were made for. If you've ever had trouble fitting in, family doesn't accept you, friends don't accept you. You just live in this world. And you're like, I just don't fit here. No one will ever say that. There it will be where you're at home. Heaven is the true home for you, Christian, and it's home because you have this divine, eternal life of Heaven in your soul from the moment you were saved. That's why the moments you believed you suddenly felt like you didn't belong here. You ever realize that? That's because you don't belong here anymore. Why? Because this eternal life inside of you belongs in a different world and that world is now your home. And that sense that I don't belong here. That is the evidence that you don't belong here. And it's evidence that world is real, nobody longs for something, yearns for it, doesn't exist. If you put all this together, the location is Heaven. People get there when Jesus takes them at

death. The state, the experience, the feel of Heaven is life. The activity there is worship where God is adored and served and recognized in His and thanks for His mercy. The duration is eternal. And the standard, the entrance John 3:16 says is belief in Jesus.

In other words, it is the greatest destination because of the greatness of the being that lives there, the greatness of the person that takes you there, the greatness of the price that was so that you could be there. The greatness of everything that happens there, the greatness of the duration, that the length of time that we will be there. And yet many say, "I don't know if I really want that. You know what's more important? Online gambling. That's more important. I'll take that. That's more important. My independence." No, it's not.

But let me ask. Does all the greatness, all this, does this excite you or does it bore you? Does the prospect of worshiping God, serving God, recognizing His greatness, thanking Him for His goodness in a place dominated by life. Does that it make you yawn? What does that make you yearn to be there? Now describing the glories of Heaven, reminding you of the loved ones that are there. Now I have to say this, okay? It's not your time to be there. It's not your time. God is not done with you. So don't be tempted to take things into your own hands and say, "Man, what's, you're describing. I really want, and things are really bad here. I'd much rather be there." Don't take things into your own hand and speed up your time at the airport. We go like, He takes us on His schedule, not ours. Okay? Be patient, keep serving him. But listen, only a blind man or an idiot thinks the airport is better than Hawaii.

And if Heaven is the greatest destination, infinitely better than Hawaii, infinitely better than anywhere you could go here, infinitely better than any experience you could possibly have here. All for believing in Jesus. Why wouldn't you believe in him? What could you possibly say that's better than all of that? "Well, nothing if it's true, but I don't think it's true." Okay. So you're right, and Jesus is wrong. That's arrogance. He talked about all of this, but but you know better than him, right? No. Believe in Jesus. Believe what He said. Believe in what He did. Believe in Jesus in Heaven. The greatest destination is yours. It's yours because the thing that keeps you out of Heaven, your sin was paid for when Jesus was given, when He was lifted up, when He was crushed on the cross for your sins.

Now John 3:16 contrasts eternal life with its opposite, which is perishing. Notice, whoever believes in him should not perish. We'll call this point number two, the greatest desolation, the greatest desolation, which is Hell. In other words, desolation can refer to places like a desert for instance. But it can also refer to intense anguish and intense misery. And that's what Hell is. The reason God gave His Son and why people should believe in His Son is so that they will not perish and notice the text, perish is the opposite of eternal life in this verse, meaning perishing is eternal death. That's what will not happen if you believe, that's what will not happen, you will not perish eternally. Notice there's no middle ground in the text. There's no third way. There's no additional. There's no alternative. Either a person has eternal life or he perishes. Those who believe, notice they're rescued from perishing. They're rescued from eternal death. They're rescued from God's final judgment. They're rescued from the complete condemnation for sin.

Well we looked at Heaven just now. What's Hell like? Those who say, "I'd rather party with sinners in Hell than pray with saints in Heaven." Have not even the slightest clue what they're talking about. Hell is no party. The location of this desolation is Hell. Every resident in Hell, one day will be resurrected, judged, found guilty, and cast into the lake of fire. Read Revelation 20 later today. Numerous times the Bible uses the language of throwing or casting to describe how

people get there. When it comes to Heaven, we saw people are taken there. When it comes to Hell, people are cast there. They are thrown there. Why? Because they don't want to be there. They're holding on. "I don't want to go." They realize "Uh oh I was wrong this whole time." And in that moment, they know, "I don't want to go." But they're cast there. That realization came too late. They're cast there because these people are condemned. Look again, John 3:18, "Whoever does not believe," is what? Condemned already. It is a place for those that the wrath of God remains on forever for refusing to follow Jesus. Everyone who does not believe in Jesus lives their life dancing on the edge of a cliff, completely blindfolded, oblivious to the danger that they're in, oblivious that any second they could die, fall in and perish forever. And they live like that doesn't exist.

It's a place where the state, the experience, the feel of this place is death, dying, dying without a moment of relief, without without going extinct, without ever ceasing to exist. And this place is eternal. Listen to Jesus, Matthew 25:41. He says to those that He judges quote "Depart from me, you cursed into the eternal fire." Eternal fire. Second Thessalonians 1:9 puts it this way, calls it eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord. Being eternal means you are no closer to escaping hell after 10 billion years of being there than you were the moment you were cast in. The standard for entrance is simply the lives that we lived. Matthew 16:27 says, "Jesus will repay each person according to what he is done." First Peter 1:17, God will judge "impartially, according to each one's deeds."

People do not go to hell for rejecting Jesus. They go to hell for their sins. One of which the worst of which the unpardonable one is rejecting Jesus. And finally, and horribly, the activity going on there is what makes this place so incredibly desolate. So incredibly miserable, not only is God's grace, not there, only His justice, but it is a place marked by unending torment. Luke 16. It is called a place of torment. It's full of flames, which suggests the maximum of intensity of suffering. And what is it that you will see there, is darkness, pitch darkness. What people hear there forever is their own weeping and the weeping of others mixed with the gnashing, the grinding of teeth, their own and others grinding because of rage, regret, and shame all rolled into one.

As the opposite of Heaven, it is constant decay, constant decomposing, constant corrosion without ever actually disappearing. It is despair mixed with rage mixed with regret that only gets worse and worse as time goes by and then is only compounded by the fact that it can never ever get any better. Anguish and agony describe one's experience in this place, a place where there is no mercy, a place where there is no relief, no rest, and no hope of ever escaping. People in Hell are paying for their sins. They are experiencing for all of eternity, what Jesus experienced for three hours on the cross, when darkness covered the earth and God's wrath was unleashed on him.

Now you might be thinking, "Eternal punishment, pretty harsh, man, come on seriously?" You'd be right. You'd be right. It is harsh. If God wasn't infinite, didn't have infinite worth infinite greatness, infinite holiness, infinite goodness. If He didn't have any of that, then Hell probably wouldn't be infinite and eternal. But he's all of that. Which means that our sins are far worse than we think they are. "There's just a couple sins. I mean, what is, what's a big deal? Why does He even care?" Our offenses against Him are against an infinite God who gives you life and breath and everything else, including every good thing you've ever had. And on top of that, He gave His Son so that you would not perish.

We owe Him perfect obedience for all of that. Everything He's done for us. And we give Him the act opposite and not sometimes, or just a couple of big times, but all the time, if we're honest. Which means each one of our sins is an infinite offense against the only one of infinite worth, which is why eternal justice is right and good and very real. And listen, that's just one object to Hell. It's too harsh. But if I answered a hundred of your objections to your satisfaction, would you believe at that point? Would you say, "Whoa, wow, you answered all hundred of my objections. I have no excuse now. I have no more arguments. All my justifications have crumbled under the weight of your brilliant answers to my questions. Where do I sign?" Is that what would happen? No, it won't. Because this really has nothing to do with your intelligence. This is everything to do with your independence.

"This God's not going to rule over me." When it is this God who loves sinners like you by sacrificing His Son for you, so that when you believe you will live forever under His happy rule, which is what you made him for, which is what He made you for. God has never done an anything. God has never sinned against you. He has only allowed you to hear this message of His love because of His love for you.

If there is any sense of sin on your mind, if there is even a slightest hint of tear in your soul, if there is any love for your own life, if there's even a trace of a fraction of concern, do not slight the gift being offered in John 3:16, do not consider it of little value. Do not be careless about this. Do not treat as nothing. The riches of God's kindness that He would give His Son so that you could escape this desolation.

The greatness of His love of demands that you respond. The greatness of this gift demands that you respond. The greatness of these destinies demands that you respond and respond by believing, by trusting, by giving your life to Jesus. It is the height of sin to take what God considers most precious, His Son and treat Him like He and His Cross doesn't matter. God sacrifices His best, His most valuable. And you treat it as worthless. He gives the one of infinite worth to Him and you treat it as cheap. You know, it's more important what's going on my phone right now. That's what's more important.

You may think of Jesus that way now, but one second after you die in your sins, you will live a never-ending regret, as this moment right now, replays in your mind, over and over and over. And you remember, "I had a chance, but I didn't really think it was all that important. So I walked away." In that moment you would give 10 billion lives for Christ. In that moment, you would give 10 billion worlds for Christ, but it'll be too late. Now is the time. Today is the day. Go home and read Luke 16 as well. Read Luke 16 tonight. See what it is like for those who are in Hell right now, this message, this text, this Jesus exists to rescue you, just believe.

All the damned right now would give anything. They would give everything for one drop, one moment, one second of relief. And here you are. Infinite relief. Eternal rest is before you. And you don't know if you'd believe in him. I mean, you may be God's enemy, but don't be your own worst enemy too. Jesus put it this way. Luke 9, "Keep your life. You'll lose it forever." In other words, don't hold on to this world and lose your soul. Your soul is more, has more value than the entire world. Give your life to Jesus and save your soul. Why would you hate yourself so much to hold on your sin and to straight arm Jesus.

The greatest decision you can make for yourself for your good is to believe in Jesus. Then you will avoid perishing. Then you will have eternal life. There is not one thing in this universe that is better, that is worth more than that. Don't let sin intoxicate you deceive you and blind you

from doing what is best for you, which is not perishing forever in a place of utter desolation, but believing in Jesus, turning away from everything that would keep you from him and you will have eternal life. What's it going to be?

Shortly after the end of the American Civil War, a man in farm clothes was seen kneeling at the gravestone of a soldier at a cemetery in Nashville. An observer came to him and asked, "Is that the grave of your Son?" The farmer replied, "No, I have seven children, all of them young and a wife on my poor farm in Illinois. When the war started, I was drafted and despite the great hardship it would cause to my family, I was still required to join the Army. But on the morning I was to depart this man, my neighbor's older Son came over and offered to take my place in the war."

The observer obviously moved by the story asked, "What is it that you're writing on His grave?" And the farmer replied, "I'm writing, he died for me." Jesus died so that you would live, so that you would not perish so that you would have eternal life. And as I prayed last week, after every Easter sermon, all of this is true because Jesus said it's true. And all of this is true. He proves to be true by rising from the dead. That is the seal on everything He said. That is the proof that everything He said is true, which means these two destinations are real because He said so. They are factual. They are actual. Everybody will go to one of them, either thrown into one or taken to the other.

And one is where you will be. It is not an accident that you are here right now, that your car turned into this parking lot that you sat in this seat or you tuned in right now, it is no accident that you were hearing this message today. So what is it going to be? What more could God possibly say? "I so loved the world," which includes you, "I so loved the world that I gave my only Son that whoever, whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Where will you be one second after you die, Heaven or Hell? Believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, these truths are so important. It makes total sense that this verse may be the greatest verse in the entire Bible. It is no accident that you have used this verse to save millions of people from perishing eternally. The truths here are so profound and so important they define reality, they define our ourselves what we are. This verse define the future. So Father, some of us here listening to this, these are wonderful reminders, wonderful reminders of the kindness that you've shown us. We believe in your Son. We trust in him and our future is certain, it's sure, because of that.

And so this is a time of worship. It's a time of gratitude. It's a time maybe of even equipping for how to talk to people who need Christ. So thank you for these truths, but for others hearing these things, they may think, "I know this stuff. I grew up in church. I'm good. I believe in Jesus." But Jesus, you were clear that many would say to you, "Lord, Lord, didn't we do all of this great stuff for you?" "And you'll say depart for me. I never knew you. I didn't have a relationship with you. You really didn't believe in me. You didn't really trust in me."

I pray that would use this text to peel the scales off their eyes and help them to see their need for a savior. And for others listening to this, their hearts are hard. Maybe they think that you've wronged them somehow. Maybe they're so dominated by the world, the flesh and the devil that they can barely even hear this, it makes them angry. Or maybe they're sitting there very kindly, but inside they're raging. They hate this stuff.



God, I pray that your love and the greatness of your gift, your love for sinners, that you would crush your Son as a substitute for the sins of the world, that you would do that, may that love, melt their hard heart so that they can see the truth that we've been looking at in John 3:16, please, Father, it would be evidence of your grace for all of us, your kindness, to all of us hear and watching, that you would do this. So please do these things for the good of everybody that hears this. And do these things please for the glory of your beautiful name. Amen.