

Eternal Life

Series: The Eternals
John 3:16; 1 John 1:1-2
February 28, 2021

Welcome again to worship. I invite you to grab your journal if you are at home or turn to page 4 in your bulletin.

What lasts in our lives today? Your printer? Nope. Television? Hardly. Freedom from calls about your car's extended warranty? You wish.

Institutions that seemed part of the fabric of life at one time are long gone. Blockbuster. K-Mart. Toys-R-Us.

How about Christian colleges? I personally know of three in the last two years. So much is changing today. What can we hold onto?

During Lent, we are looking at what we are calling "The Eternals." We are looking at the words and concepts that are eternal in a relationship between God and us and the understanding of our faith.

Last week, we talked about the Eternal Word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.¹

One of our Scripture passages today is **the** most famous of all passages: John 3:16:

For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.²

The children in a Sunday School class in a country church were assigned to memorize John 3:16. However, one of the boys was struggling with remembering the words. He was asked, "Can't you remember John 3:16?"

The boy struggled to get words to come out of his mouth. "For God so loved....for God so loved." That is all he could remember.

"Who did he love?" he was asked by the teacher.

He tried again. "For God so loved THE WORLD that He.....gave His only.....His only.....His only." He couldn't go any further.

The teacher tried to help again by asking, "What did give? Who did He give?"

The little boy thought deeply and said, "For God so loved the world.....that He gave.....HIS ONLY COTTON PICKIN' SON!"

I also want to look at 1 John 1:1-2:

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us.³

Today's Eternal is this: **Eternal Life.**

¹ John 1:1,14 (NIV)

² John 3:16 (NLT2)

³ 1 John 1:1-2 (NLT2)

Despite their diversity of beliefs, the major religions are in accord in one great teaching: Human beings are immortal, their spirit comes from a divine world, and, depending on its teachings, may eventually return there. Since the earliest forms of spiritual expression, this is the great promise and hope that religions have offered to their followers, whether it is Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism or Buddhism. It is the believer's eternal answer to the cynicism of the materialist who shouts that there is no afterlife, that death is the end.

The vast majority of those religions believe that what we do during our lifetime affects the destination. If we are evil, we go to evil. If we are good, we go towards good. Only one, however, states that the opportunity to experience the good comes not from the individual, but from another source, and that religion is Christianity.

Let's look at what the Bible says about eternal life. I want to share seven points, so I will be quick.

First, Eternal life comes from God.

Paul opened his letter to Titus, his friend and coworker in Christ:

...I have been sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives. This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God—who does not lie—promised them before the world began.⁴

If you study Titus as my Sunday School class did in 2019, you discover that Titus had been sent to Crete, and Crete was known throughout the Roman Empire as liars. In contrast, Paul made it clear at the start that God does not lie. The foundation of our faith is trust in God's character. Because God is truth, He is the source of all truth, and he cannot lie. Believing in Him leads to living a God-honoring lifestyle. The eternal life that God has promised will be ours because He keeps his promises.⁵

Eternal life comes from God.

Second, Eternal life can be now.

We tend to think of eternal life as only in heaven, and how great and marvelous that will be when we will rest from our labors.⁶

But the Greek word for eternal is *ahee-o'-nee-os*⁷, which refers to past time, present and future as well.⁸ We can experience eternal life right now, even in the midst of a pandemic, if we know the Lord reigns in power and glory, and His love and faithfulness is forever.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said that eternal life "always was, and afterward appeared to us... it is the same eternal life, which we shall always enjoy."⁹

I know I'm experiencing eternal life right now, and not just because we live in Germantown with all of you. God has given us eternal life for us to enjoy now.

Third, Eternal life cannot be earned.

One of the great passages of the New Testament, one you should have memorized, is Ephesians 2:8-9:

⁴ Titus 1:1-2 (NLT2)

⁵ Life Application Study Bible, Titus 1:2

⁶ See Revelation 14:13

⁷ αἰώνιος

⁸ Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary #166

⁹ Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, 1 John 1:2

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.*¹⁰

Unlike the other world religions, Christianity states that you don't deserve eternal life, can't earn eternal life, won't experience eternal life, except through faith. It is grace given by God.

Fourth, The righteous will receive eternal life.

Now, this is not a contradiction to the last point. The only way we can be righteous is through faith in Christ.

Jesus said, "...*the righteous will go into eternal life.*"¹¹

Eternal life is only for those who do God's will. I'm currently working on a chapter in my next book that examines Matthew 7:21:

*"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter."*¹²

Here is the sharp contrast between the talker and the doer, the person who says they are a Christian and the one who really is. Those who are righteous will experience eternal life.

Fifth, Eternal life gives us hope.

Listen once again to words of Paul to Titus:

*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, **we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.***¹³

I've written a chapter in this next book about what it may have been like when my dad passed away and went to heaven. I believe you will be encouraged when you read it.

I have absolute confidence that my dad and mom and my first wife are in heaven, and that I will see them some day. More confidence in that than the government, my car, or the airplane I flying on Tuesday.

Eternal life gives us hope.

Sixth, Jesus came to give life.

So many people wonder what their purpose here on earth is. What is the purpose of your life?

In John 10:10, Jesus told the people what His purpose on earth was:

*I came [this was His purpose¹⁴] that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*¹⁵

Jesus gives eternal life.

When His close friends Mary and Martha lost their brother, Jesus told them:

*I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.*¹⁶

That is why He came: to give us eternal life.

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

¹¹ Matthew 25:46b (NLT2)

¹² Matthew 7:21 (NLT2)

¹³ Titus 3:4-7 (NIV)

¹⁴ See NLT

¹⁵ John 10:10 (NRSV)

¹⁶ John 11:25 (NLT2)

Finally, Belief in Jesus is required for eternal life.

Jesus told Nicodemus that night in the garden:

*And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*¹⁷

Belief in Jesus is required for eternal life, for Jesus is the eternal life. John 14:6 says that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through [Him].”¹⁸

What kind of life are you experiencing right now? Is it a full, abundant life? Is there purpose in it? Is there meaning to your days? Do you believe what Jesus says about Himself, about eternal life?

The options as to who Jesus is and what Jesus did can basically be reduced to four.

1. He could have been a liar—someone who simply was not who he claimed to be and knew it.
2. He could have been a lunatic—someone who thought he was somebody, but in fact he was not.
3. He could have been a legend—someone who was not who others later imagined him to be.
4. Or He could be the Lord—He is who He said He is, and His birth, life, death, and resurrection prove it to be true.¹⁹

Decide today who Jesus is.

¹⁷ John 3:14-16 (NLT2)

¹⁸ John 14:6 (NLT2)

¹⁹ Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in 1 John 1:1-2