

The Gospel of the 3:16's

1. Warm-up Question: Pastor Tandy began her sermon by telling a story about a poop episode that happened at youth camp. Everyone knew what happened and who did it, but pretended not to know. In your life, what have you pretended did not happen when everyone knew it did? Poop stories are acceptable; maybe even encouraged. ☺
2. Pastor Tandy spoke about having John 3:16 memorized. How many Bible verses do you know from memory? How many songs do you know from memory? Which is easier to memorize? Why? Does memorizing the Bible matter? Why or why not?
3. In the book of Colossians, actually, literally, historically, the Christ followers, the Church, that is growing, was being pressured by philosophers, leaders, teachers, and politicians to live as if the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ did not happen. What would life without the reality of the resurrection look like for you and your family? If there were no resurrection, would that change your daily life – and if so how?
4. Read I Corinthians 15:1-11, as printed on p. 3. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses various social, moral, ecclesiastical, and liturgical questions. Then, in chapter 15, he takes up a doctrinal one, which he has likely kept to the last because of its vital importance. The Greeks had a problem believing in the resurrection. They believed in the immortality of the soul, but they never conceived of a resurrection of the body. The Greek philosophers taught that the body was evil while the soul was good. They held that if a person was to be free from sin, their soul must be free from the body. This philosophy was reflected in the reaction of the people of Athens when Paul preached to them on the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-32). It should come as no surprise that the philosophy of the Greeks began to insinuate itself into the theology of the early church.
 - a. What modern day examples of this do we have? How has the philosophy of the world (or simply America) found its way into the theology of churches today?
 - b. Discuss the belief that the body is evil but the soul is good. Do you buy it? Why or why not? Is there a downside (or upside) to believing that the body is evil?
5. In her sermon, Tandy said, “Our premise today is: ***The message of Christ is that God SO loved the world that whosoever. . .***” If we lived everyday like we really believed this premise, how would life be different for you? How would it be the same?
6. In Donald Miller’s book “Blue Like Jazz,” he has a chapter called “Love: How to Really Love Other People.” There he tells how he was at a lecture by Greg Spencer that talked about the metaphors that we use around relationships and how we talk about how we value people, invest in people, how we say people are priceless, or that a relationship is bankrupt. He noted that all these metaphors are economic ones. Miller goes on to say:

“And that’s when it hit me, the problem with Christian culture is we think of love as a commodity. We use it like money. Professor Spencer was right, and not only was he right, I felt as though he had cured me, as though he had let me out of my cage. I could see it very clearly. If somebody is doing something for us, offering us something, be it gifts, time, popularity, or what have you, we feel they have value, we feel they are worth something to us, and perhaps, we feel they are priceless. I could see it so clearly, and I could feel it in the pages of my life. This was the thing that had smelled so rotten all these years. I used love like money. The church used love like money. With love, we withheld affirmation from the people who did not agree with us, but we lavishly financed the ones who did.”

- a. Discuss the foregoing quote. What are your thoughts?
 - b. What’s the difference between transactional vs. transformational love? How does unconditional love factor into either of those? Or does it? And why?
 - c. Tell us about someone who has loved you transactionally and how that affected you?
 - d. Tell us about someone who has loved you transformationally/unconditionally and how that affected you?
 - e. Our reading in Colossians exhorts us to share the gracious love of Christ with those around us. Tell us about a time recently you’ve been able to do that.
7. Tandy said, “Sometimes I think the message of love is a ‘feel good’ message. And it should make us feel good that we have a God who loves us this much! THAT is the good news!! However, it often feels like we stop short. YES, God loves us unconditionally, God pursues us constantly, God never gives up on us; BUT there is still the issue of sin. And it feels wrong to talk about love, but not mention or be aware of sin.
- a. Why do you think we often don’t like to talk about sin?
 - b. Share your thoughts on what sin is. How would you define it?
 - c. In your view, how big of a problem is sin?
 - d. Tandy said, “When we understand the gravity of our sin, we understand the vastness of grace.” What do you think she meant. Do you agree or disagree – and why?
8. At the end of her sermon, Tandy showed us a video about grace that recreated a conversation between Jesus and Peter described in John 21. The dialogue drives home how gracious it was for Jesus to still want Peter even after Peter denied Jesus three times. What thoughts and feelings arose within you when you saw the video?

I Corinthians 15

1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to [Peter], and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.