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Issue

ELEVEN

Ebenezer Baptist Church,  
6858 Fraser Street,  
Vancouver, B.C.,  
V5X 3V1

Tel: 604-324-7674  
www.rockofhelp.com

Friday, June 5, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

# EBC Update



## News Brief

1. **Online:** Our services are available [here](#) on YouTube. They can also be accessed through our Facebook page and website. The next will be held on June 7 at 10:30 a.m. Pastor John will be speaking on "Communion with God" and this will be a Communion service.
2. **Communion:** If you are able to watch Sunday's service, we encourage you to join in a personal act of devotion. You may choose to do so in prayer. You may also wish to take a piece of bread and a small glass of juice to consume with us at home.
3. **Reopening:** As the COVID-19 outbreak continues and the BC "Restart" plan unfolds, our leadership is working on a plan to reopen Sunday services in a manner that complies with B.C. Government health regulations and guidelines. We would welcome your prayers. Please watch this space!
4. **Prayer Chain:** Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).

## "The Great God"

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

(John 3:16—NIV)

If you asked people to name the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16 would probably rank at or near the top. It's certainly one of the most familiar.

In England, where I used to live, one would find John 3:16 all over the place. Evangelistic organizations would pay to put Bible verses on billboards at railroad stations.

Along with Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death," which I never thought the most encouraging message for hard-pressed travellers, John 3:16 would always figure prominently. You even used to see it at sporting events, as you often still do in the U.S.

Sometimes —so famous was the verse itself— the Bible reference would be all that people would show. And there is very good reason for that, because John 3:16 contains, in effect, the gospel in a nutshell.

When I was editor of a Christian magazine, a reader once sent me a card entitled "The Great God" which tries to explain how. So as many ponder and even debate the most important message the church has to share right now, I'd like to share a few thoughts from it.

### The Greatest Lover

First then, "For God so loved the world." This not only tells us the motivation for the Christian gospel, but the extent of its application.

Our God, whose very nature is love, and who is therefore, by definition, "the greatest lover," acted out of love to save us from sin and evil. And God did this for the benefit of all humanity, which was and is of divine creation.

And how did God intervene to save us? God sent "the greatest gift of all, the "one and only Son," Jesus Christ, to become one of us, to live and suffer and die and rise again for our benefit. There could be no greater act of generosity or self-giving than this. And as a result, we have all been given "the greatest opportunity" to be rescued from the problems of our past.

### The Greatest Opportunity

For in sending Jesus, God extended a marvellous free offer to us all: "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." The "whoever" again reminds us of the universality of God's grace.

The emphasis on believing confirms that salvation is God's gift, never our achievement. It is by grace through faith, when we recognize Jesus as the Son of God and our Lord and Saviour, when we turn away from our sins, and when we accept Christ and his sacrifice on our behalf, that God saves us.

And what God ultimately saves us from, of course, is from "perishing," from facing the permanent consequences of our mistakes. None of us likes to dwell on the topic of hell, but we cannot escape the fact that it is held out as a very real prospect in the New Testament, especially by Jesus.

### The Greatest Promise

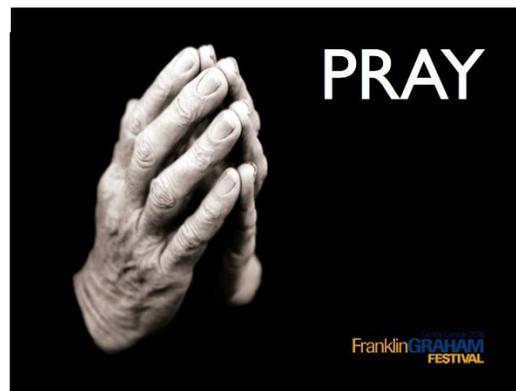
Yet the marvellous truth of John 3:16 is that through faith in Jesus Christ, God offers something totally different: "that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." And what is eternal life?

It is nothing short of everlasting enjoyment of God's presence and blessing, beginning in this life and extending for all eternity. It is nothing less than spiritual immortality and the glorious promise of heaven.

It can be easy to hear—or sometimes even preach—the gospel so often that we almost become jaded about it. But John 3:16 reminds us that we sell everyone woefully short when we do.

### The Great God

As the card which I was sent all those years ago puts it so powerfully in the



words of the old King James Version of the Bible: "For God [the greatest lover] so loved the world [the greatest company] that he gave [in the greatest act] his only begotten Son [the greatest gift] that whosoever [the greatest opportunity] believeth [the greatest simplicity] in him [the greatest attraction] should not perish [the greatest promise] but [the greatest difference] have [with the greatest certainty] everlasting life [the greatest possession]."

What a great God and what a great gospel to share with others! And there is such a great need to do so in a sinful and suffering world!

**Pastor John Oakes**

## Prayer Needs

1. Our sick & shut-ins
2. Government leaders
3. Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
4. Our online services and Zoom outreach
5. All who are anxious, depressed or lonely
6. The complete defeat of COVID-19

*N.B.: A much more detailed prayer list will be attached to the next issue of "EBC Update."*

## Zoom Meetings and Games Night



1. Pastor John and Kirsten invite Ebenezer youth and young adults to the weekly Zoom online fun night on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. The evening will include games and quizzes. For access, go to this link and enter Meeting ID: 851 704 4556.
2. The Friday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting is studying Paul's letter to the Galatians. Tonight's passage is Gal. 4:1–20. To participate, please go to this link on your computer. The meeting ID is: 851 704 4556. You can also call in by phone to 778-907-2071, using the same meeting ID when requested. The study will take a week's break on June 12, resuming June 19.
3. The Zoom Women's Prayer Meeting, hosted by Rhea Ravanera, meets Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. To join, please go to this link and use meeting ID 349 890 420, or call 778 907 2071.