

YOU HAVE SOMEONE WHO LOVES YOU!

Funeral Message For Richard 'Dick' W. Douglas

John 3: 16 -- Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Rock Springs Evangelical Free Church, Tuesday, August 14, 2012

Life is short. It is important that we leave no important words unsaid. Important words don't have to be long. Brief words are usually the most important. The three words, "I love you," mean more than all the world to us, when we hear them from our family and our dear friends. If the Word of God could be summarized in three words, it would be God telling us, "I love you." I hope many of you had the chance to tell Dick, "I love you," before the Lord took him Home to heaven. The right brief words are life-changing and are rarely forgotten.

On March 11th of 1942, President Roosevelt ordered General Douglas MacArthur to leave the Philippines and proceed to Australia on a historic mission. By night, a navy torpedo boat took General MacArthur and his wife and son away from the fortress at Corregidor. The General reached safety in the southern Philippines and then flew to Australia. There in Australia, General MacArthur spoke of his profound reluctance to leave his men in the Philippines. There he made his famous promise, "I shall return." In the autumn of 1944, General MacArthur made good on his promise to return to the Philippines. On October 20, 1944, he went ashore with his troops on Leyte Island. The General kept his brief promise.

Did you know that our Lord Jesus, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, made a similar promise when He ascended to heaven. He said, "I will come again." Perhaps the most well-known words our Lord Jesus ever spoke are found in John 3: 16. These words have become so familiar to us all that they may have lost their importance and significance. You may have found His loving words to be just words for you, and perhaps, you have forgotten that they are a promise to every person who comes to Jesus to be born again, born from above. These brief words are found in the Gospel of John, in John 3: 16. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." As I come to Dick Douglas' funeral, I know of no greater comfort for you as a family, Nancy, Janie and Tracy. I want us for a few moments this afternoon, to explore the five brief messages in John 3: 16. They are messages of love from heaven to all of you in the Douglas family and to all the rest of us here today. John 3.16 has been called the Gospel in miniature. If you want to summarize the Christian faith in one sentence, you can do no better than John 3.16.

YOU HAVE SOMEONE WHO LOVES YOU. (I.) Jesus said in John 3: 16, “For God so loved the world.” In America, millions of folks take it for granted that everyone is a Christian because at least one of their parents or grandparents were Christians, or because they have prayed to God on occasion, or even prayed a sinner’s prayer. The truth is, when death comes, we all come to a full stop in our lives and we are given a fresh chance to rethink where we stand with God. If words or a story become too familiar, we tend to either forget them or minimize them. The shame regarding John 3: 16 is that millions of folks know this verse but they do not know the Lord. They are hearers of the Word, but not doers of the Word. There is a phenomenon at the Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone Park that is fairly remarkable. The workers there at that restaurant get used to the geyser going up. Do you know what they do when it is Old Faithful time? One minute before the predictable eruption, the tourists leave their tables and run to the window to watch the display of God’s majesty, power and glory in this methodically erupting geyser. During this time when the tourists run to the windows to watch Old Faithful go off, the waiters and the waitresses at the Inn run to clean the tables and refill water glasses. The majesty and the glory and the power of the geyser have become common, way too familiar.

Did you know that John 3: 16 may be so familiar to you that you forget the majesty and the wonder and the glory of God the Father, sending God the Son, the Lord Jesus, becoming the God-man, virgin born, who was crucified and suffered and died in our place, to atone for our sins at Calvary. At the cross, Jesus paid the penalty so not one of us needs to die and go to hell, unless we choose to ignore this all too familiar message of love. If Dick were here to speak today, I believe he would say to all of us, “Listen again to heaven’s telegram from this preacher.” “You have Someone who loves you, and that Someone is Jesus.” The last time I ever attempted to preach on John 3: 16 at a funeral, it was here in Rock Springs at one of our funeral homes. I saw family members trying to cut me off, putting their hand across their neck in a gesture of “Stop! Stop!” Then one brave relative who was a pall-bearer yelled out, “Stop! My mother wouldn’t have wanted you to preach this.” I stopped. I cut the service short as the family wanted no more of me speaking this first message, “You have someone who loves you.” Secondly,

YOU HAVE A GIFT IN GOD’S SON. (II.) Jesus said, “For God so loved the world,” and now the second message, “that He, the Father, gave His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus.” Don’t ever minimize the cost of God’s love and His offer to the world of salvation through His shed blood. I knew the loss of my Dad who died May 10, 1966, at age 55 when I was only 21. When I turned 56, 11 years ago, on March 1st, 2001, my Mom died. Dad’s death was costly for me and I am still

deeply affected today, 21+ years later. Mom's death was even harder on me, because she was my foremost intercessor, my prayer warrior, who prayed for me continually. Losing a parent is tough, Janie and Tracy. Losing a spouse, Nancy is even harder. Losing a grandpa is a huge costly ordeal. When God the Father gave His only begotten Son, to die for us sinners on the cross, sinners who don't deserve His love, that costly gift to us was the costliest gift ever given. Thirteen years ago, my second daughter, Heather became very critically ill. She lost most of her blood, which they gave her back in blood transfusions. For three hours, I was on my knees at home, begging God to spare Heather's life. I told the Lord afresh, "I can't understand Your great love for us as sinners—so much love that you freely gave up Your only begotten Son to die in our place. God gave me back my daughter. She lived and she is a wife and mother of five sons of our seventeen grandchildren.

Yet, when I tell you today that "you have a gift in God's Son," don't forget that a gift is not a gift that you can claim as your own, unless you receive it. The Word of God declares in John 1: 11, 12, speaking of Jesus, "He came unto His own, the Jews, but His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons and daughters of God, even to those who believe on His name." Not one of us is forced beyond our will to receive this gift of God's grace and salvation. Many millions, even billions leave this gift untouched and unopened. They choose to take their chances, by saying, "I'm okay. I live a good life." This free gift of salvation doesn't come to the good people, the fit and healthy people, the church members, the ones who have been baptized, or the ones who go to the right church. No, God's free gift only comes to those who repent of their sins, believe and receive and embrace Jesus, asking Him to come into their hearts and lives and spirits. "You have Someone who loves you. You have a Gift in God's Son." Have you received God's costly free gift of Jesus? Thirdly,

YOU ONLY HAVE TO BELIEVE. (III.) Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, --now the third phrase, "that whosoever believeth in Him..." This believing is far, far more than mere mental assent or mental agreement. We can believe in someone and not vote for them. We can believe a person is a great person, but we don't go on to marry them. Millions of people in America get the cart before the horse. They live together without committing themselves in marriage. They skip commitment. They don't believe enough in each other to commit and receive each other in marriage. The meaning of believe in the Bible is an "I do" commitment even as we say "I do," in marriage. Today, at Dick's funeral, God the Holy Spirit is knocking at the door of your heart asking you, "Will you have Me to be your lawfully wedded Savior and Lord?"

Jesus is a gentleman. He will not pressure you. You must freely receive His free Gift of Himself to be saved. Yet, nothing short of an “I do” commitment to Jesus will save you. You only have to believe, which means you only have to repent of sin, and then believe and receive Jesus into your heart and soul and mind and spirit.

Believing is not saying a prayer and then living life the way we want to live it. Believing is giving our hearts and our minds and our souls and our spirits to Jesus. It means we tell the Lord we want Him to change us into His image. We can no longer live for ourselves and do our own thing. That isn't salvation. That's only a taste of salvation to say a sinner's prayer, if you have no intention of letting God change you and no intention of living for Him. When I was dating my wife, we stayed pure in our relationship, but occasionally, I kissed her, and I got a tiny taste of marriage. It was not enough for me to be married. I had to go all the way to the altar and promise Jinny my commitment for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health. By God's grace, we have now been married over 45 years. Sixty four years ago I gave my life to Jesus as a young boy. Just like marriage, I haven't been perfect, but I've been changed, committed, and I've become a new person. Only believing isn't the same thing as when my mother would clean my ears as we walked up the hill to church. She would moisten her fingers and wipe behind my ears, with what she called “a lick and a promise.” A lick and a promise is not the same as a good scrubbed bath. No, believing means we are washed in Jesus' blood, born again, that's biblical believing. Fourthly,

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DIE. (IV.) Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him,” and now the fourth message, “should not perish.” No one in all the world is born, planned by God to die and go to hell. The call of God is for every person. II Peter 3: 9 is clear, “God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Yet each of us were born into this world just like Dick Douglas. We were all born as hell-bound sinners with no hope of eternal life. What a glorious message Jesus gave us. He said, “You don't have to die—should not perish.” Jesus knew He was going to die for us on Calvary's cross, so we would not have to perish. Each of us are appointed, just like Dick Douglas, to die. His appointment was on Wednesday, August 8th. He didn't want to die. He wanted to live, but his time to die came. Did Dick perish? Never! I spoke to him on Wednesday morning. He opened his eyes and I asked him if he had put his faith and trust in Jesus. He said “Yes!” I asked him if he was ready to die and go to be with his Lord. Again, he said yes. Before I could return to be with him after leading our Wednesday night prayer meeting, Dick died, but he never perished. The word perish, *apollumi*, means to be fully destroyed, to be lost forever. For the believer, what happened to Dick on August 8th

was what Paul tells us about in II Corinthians 5: 8, that we are “absent from the body, present or at home, as the song we heard today, at home with the Lord. There’s one fifth, last message.

YOU CAN HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (V.) Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish,” and the fifth message is, “but have everlasting life.” These five messages mean all the difference in eternal life, or eternal death and eternal separation from God in hell forever. The five messages are, You have Someone who loves you. You have a Gift in God’s Son. You only have to believe. You don’t have to die. You can have eternal life.” Dick has eternal life today. For years Dick struggled trying hard, but not sure of where he stood with Jesus. Finally, in Warrenton, Missouri, Dick gave up his struggle of trying to be saved. He surrendered to Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit gave Dick assurance in his heart that he was truly saved, with eternal life, on his way to heaven. Today, God is calling for you too, knocking at your door, but the decision is yours. God will not force His way into your life. Would you receive Jesus today at Dick’s funeral?

Invitation: This is your invitation to repent, believe and receive Jesus personally, intimately, committing your life to Him. Bow your heads, would you? How many of you desire to commit your lives to Jesus today, to be washed in His blood, to become His born again sons and daughters? If you desire to be truly saved today, in just a moment, I am going to ask you to pray after me. How many of you desire to receive Jesus right now? If so, just pray after me, “Dear God, I am a sinner. I need You to be my Savior. I repent today of my sin. I ask you to forgive me and save me. I give my whole life to You, Lord. I receive You by faith. Live in me by Your Holy Spirit. Make me Your born again child. I will live for You, Lord, the rest of my life with Jesus inside me. Thanks for coming in to stay. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Benediction: And now, Father, until the Day dawns and these shadows flee away, until you keep Your promise to return for us Your Bride, please comfort the hearts of the Douglas family. Draw us all now into Your loving arms, Lord. We ask Your benediction of love and grace on everyone here today, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.