

John's Gospel @ CF!
John 3:16
Sermon Notes – BK
April 14, 2024

The Gospel of John... continued

We are continuing in CHAPTER 3 today!

LAST Sunday – We started this chapter...

- In **the letter** this week, I called it the **“Nick at Night”** meeting
- It is the **encounter Jesus had with Nicodemus, who “... approached Jesus by night...”**

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to talk with Him.

- **We don't know why he came at night**
 - o Could be to **avoid criticism**
 - o Could be **he was afraid**
 - o **Likely Nick just wanted some uninterrupted conversation with one who was performing miracles and acting in a way he had never seen before.**

Nicodemus shows Jesus respect and is respected by Jesus as well... Though Jesus does challenge him!

As we covered last week...

John records the conversation beginning with Nicodemus making a statement,

John 3:2

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”

Jesus does not even respond to this statement.

Jesus knew what was in Nicodemus' heart and went straight there...

It is **interesting** that Jesus is meeting with **one of the most spiritually influential men in Jerusalem**, but speaks very **clearly**, and **authoritatively** –

Three times Jesus says to Nicodemus,
“Truly, truly I say to you...”

Jesus got to the core of the matter, as he says,...

John 3:3

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus could only see what was on the outside

- “No one can do these things...”
- “How can a man be born when he is old?”
- “How can these things be?”

Nicodemus was being challenged in a way I think he had likely never been challenged before.

He could only see and think *in the natural*.

Jesus was taking him higher...

Jesus made it clear –

- Salvation is of God and God alone
- You must be born “from above.”

Jesus was shifting Nick’s mind from “*earthly things*” to “*heavenly things*.”

Using the metaphor of wind to reminded Nick that this is about the moving of the Spirit of God...

...this is why Jesus came...

“...that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

This leads us to today’s verse. Yes – verse.

What verse are we talking about?

John 3:16!

Yep – that’s all we are hitting on today...

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

In case you are wondering, this is likely a quote of Jesus.

Some translations don’t include it in quotes as Jesus’ continued teaching to Nicodemus, but most of the translations I looked up, did have it included.

- Some have it more as **teaching from John**.
- *Many “classic” translations* (KJV, ASV, Darby, etc. **do not have quotes** at all.

MOST agree – this was still Jesus speaking...

Have you ever paused to think about these words being the words of Jesus himself?

John 3:16.

The most well-known verse of the NT for us Christians.

Used to be at just about every end zone of Football Stadiums – for all to see as the PAT or the field goal was being kicked,

In today's day and age, I see this as more than a great verse to tell about Jesus...

This verse is also a great "tell" about Christians.

What do I mean by that?

How we read John 3:16 tells us a lot about what we believe about God.

Let me read this verse for you in a few different ways, and see if you know what I mean...

John 3:16

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

SOME –

- They make the gospel all about them.
- This is the mindset behind:
 - o Health and wealth
 - o God is my wish-fulfiller/ my "genie in the bottle."
- *"...thought of me... above all..."*
 - o I wonder why Jesus prayed for *"...the cup to pass...?"*
 - o It was for His glory above all!

I know this is counter-cultural to a lot of teaching in our Christian culture today, but it must be tested!

This is why so many people leave the church, because God didn't do what they asked Him to do.

- Simply put – this is not a Biblical "reading"/ understanding of John 3: 16...

How we read John 3:16 tells us a lot about what we believe about God.

THEN THERE IS...

John 3:16

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

THIS is the mindset that says –

- *As long as you are sincere...*
- **God is ALL love – right where you are... *NO NEED to change!***
- **“God knows my heart”**
- **Not Biblical**

How we read John 3:16 tells us a lot about what we believe about God.

THEN... There is...

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Here, God is BIG, SERIOUS, and (usually) MAD

- These people can **make even John 3:16 sound scary!**
- Heavy **emphasis** on **RULES** and God’s *holiness*, not much in the **area of kindness** (that leads us to repentance! Rom. 2:4)
- **It would be a MIRACLE if ANY OF US get to Heaven!**

This is also how cults are started...

- Those who are **IN**
- Those who are **OUT**
- **Those who FOLLOW** (“the teachings” or “the code”) and **those who are DOOMED TO HELL.**

Sadly – this is where a lot of us get thrown by society – like it or not!

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THEN there is...

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

SO... it is **ALL about God AND His interaction and invitation?**

YES!!

Look at the action words... They are ALL about HIM!

“For God so loved...”

God initiated it all – God is the one who loved first!

This would **not be news to Nicodemus**, He would understand that.

God's unconditional love...

John teaches in his first letter...

1 John 4:19

"We love because he first loved us."

"For God so loved... the world..."

THIS would have been a bit **unhinged** for Nicodemus!

He understood God loves the Jews... but THE WORLD?

This has been **God's heart all along**

Call of Abraham (still Abram) in Genesis 12

God has always had the world in mind.

Jesus declared this, the second time He **cleansed the Temple...**

Mark 11:17

"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?"
(Quoting Is. 56:7)

"For God so loved the world..."

"...that he gave his only Son,"

Nicodemus would have likely **thought of something more** here too...

One **commentator** put it –

"These words seem to carry a reference to the offering of Isaac; and Nicodemus in that case would at once be reminded by them of the love there required, the substitution there made, and the prophecy there uttered to Abraham." (Alford)

It is important to note...

God did not wait for the world to "clean up" before He PROVED HIS LOVE in sending Jesus.

Jesus willingly came to a world that was a mess.

- Jesus **lived in** the mess
- Jesus' **disciples** were a mess
- Jesus' **observation of the religious leaders** was a mess
- Jesus' **opposition to ministry** was a mess

- Jesus' **betrayal** was a mess
- Jesus' **trial** was a mess
- **Jesus died the messiest of all deaths**

AND... All of this... a display of His love...

Romans 5:8

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

YES – GOD is the one who **gave** His only Son...

- **Not** something ***we can earn***
- **Not** a result of ***knowing enough*** of Torah (for Nicodemus)
- **Not** because ***the good outweighs the bad...***

Salvation is a GIFT

Paul makes this clear in Romans 5:15-17 and in **6:23**

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Though it is a gift –

There IS something we must ***DO...***
We must **believe**.

“...that whoever believes in him...”

Believe... the word means, **“to have a faith directed unto, believing or in faith to give oneself up to”**

Again, it is **“whoever”** believes...

This is **the invitation** to **“...whoever believes in Him...”**

We see in the Gospel, **from a blind beggar to Pharisee** and all in-between –

“...whoever believes in Him...”

No one is outside of the reach of the love of God.

Isaiah 59:1

¹Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;

“...whoever believes in Him...”

“...should NOT perish...”

Perish - to incur the loss of true or eternal life

This is **the promise** of God...

Not that we will have *an easy life*...

We **WILL** have troubles, THAT is **promised**...

John 16:33b

In the world you will have tribulation.

We see many times Jesus (and others) were troubled...

BUT this is **not the same** as the promise here...

THESE troubles are temporary!

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Clearly this “**perish**” here has to do with **eternal life**...

Then **WHY** even go here, “**Captain Obvious?!**”

Because people bail on God when times get tough.

- When He ***doesn't heal***
- When He ***doesn't provide*** what I want
- When He ***doesn't fix*** what's going wrong...

This promise to “**not perish**” is speaking of the **forever** after this life!

“...whoever believes in Him should NOT perish...”

“...but HAVE eternal life.”

This is the “**free gift of God**” – NOT the “**wages,**” or “**pay check**”

A free gift... from Jesus – ONLY Jesus!

Jesus told Nicodemus earlier (John 3:3)...

“...unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

This verse – John 3:16 – encapsulates the whole Gospel...

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

How do you read this verse?

How we read John 3:16 tells us a lot about what we believe about God.