

01 | Good News, Bad News

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Well, hello, everyone, and welcome back to another Walk with God. My name is Nicole Stark, for those of you who don't know who I am. Today, I'm excited to introduce a new series called Being Right with God. Super stoked! And so, we're going to go ahead and jump right on in. The title of today's message ... I don't know if you take notes, but if you don't, you probably should. The title of today's message is this: Good News, Bad News or Bad News, Good News.

I want to share a quick story as we go into this. I remember when I was in high school, I was a basketball player--I love, love, love basketball! I had a teammate, and she would always come up to me, I don't know why, but every so often, she would come up to me and she would ask me something. She would say, "Nicole, I got something to tell you!" And I'm so stoked, I'm excited, and I would respond, "Okay, what do you have to tell me? And she would say this phrase, which is probably familiar, she would say, "You want to hear the good news first or the bad news?" And I would say, probably 99% of the time, I would always respond, "Yo, give me the bad news, give me the bad news first. And then I would love to hear the good news." Why is that? Why is it often that we want to hear the bad news first

before the good news? And I think it's because when we hear the bad news first, it makes the good news all the better. And today, I want to kind of introduce this topic. Did you know that the gospel is good news? But it's really only good news to those who know the bad news. So much like me when I was younger, I'd always ask, "What is the bad news?"

Today, I want to tell you the bad news first. I know it's going to be forward, and so I'm not going to apologize for being forward, but I want to tell you what the bad news is, and the bad news this, get ready, check this out: Everyone has sin; that's the bad news. Everyone has sin. There is not one person that's righteous. In fact, let me read this scripture to you. Romans 6:23 says this: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Let me focus on that first part, "For the wages of sin is death." You know sin has a price, right? We sin, and sin has a price that we have to pay. And that price, the wages of sin, is death, and what is death? Well, death is simply this: eternal torment in hell. So, what is the bad news? Condensed, it is this: because we've all sinned, because we were all born into sin, our destination is hell, eternal torment. Now, I know you're staring at me and you're like, "Gee, she's being very forward!" But the reality is that if we don't know who Jesus is, if we have not accepted Jesus into our lives, this is the destination. The bad news is this, that we go to hell. And now, I'm not going to end the message here, don't fret! But knowing the bad news, knowing this is where we're

going, and this is where we're headed if we don't accept Jesus.

So then, what is the good news? I want to introduce the good news to you. And many of you are familiar, but the good news is this: it's simply the gospel message. I want to share a very familiar passage of scripture with you. It's John 3:16. You've probably heard this before. You've probably seen an Instagram account or seen it on someone's letterman jacket. But let me share John 3:16, which says this: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever..." (I love that part) "...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Can I tell you what? The first couple of times I read this scripture, it was just a nonchalant scripture to me. It was just a scripture I would quote, something that I would just say because everyone knew it. But when I got this scripture, it was more than just a popular verse in the Bible. When God revealed this scripture to me, I saw something that I've never seen before. And here's what I want to highlight. The first thing I want to highlight is this: Jesus recognized we had a sin issue. Isn't this crazy? So, we committed sin, right? We know this, Adam and Eve, right? When they ate of the tree, sin entered the world. And because sin entered the world, we were separated from God. And I love this part because in John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world..." Jesus recognized there is a sin issue, and the only way that mankind, humankind, can ever get to be with Me in heaven for eternity forever is if I come down and

give My life to them. So, check this out: "For God so loved the world..." What did He do? He gave! Come on, that is good news! God recognized our sin issue. God saw where we were headed and He said, "I've got a solution." I wonder what the conversation in heaven actually looked like, Jesus and the Father conversing. I wonder how that discussion happened to where Jesus ultimately made a decision to say, "I'll go, I'll go ... I'll give Myself away. I'll go to them." Because He so loved us.

You know, what's so interesting, is I have a dog, whose name is Jax. Most people don't think he's cute, but I won't be offended, okay? But can I be honest with you? I love my dog. I love him. He's awesome. He's fantastic. But can I tell you, I don't love him enough to become a dog and to save him. First of all, he's weird, right? If I became, I don't know, like a husky or something strange, what can I tell you? I don't love my dog enough to give myself away. But can I tell you when Jesus looked at us, when He saw this is what's going on, when He saw what happened, He said this, "I'm going to give myself to them." So John 3:16, that beginning part, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes..." I love that part, whoever. Who is "whoever"? Whoever is whoever, right? You, me, whoever--whoever believes in Him. Check this out: "...shall not perish..." That word perish means shall not go to where? We talked about what's the bad news ... hell, right? So, shall not perish, what is that saying? If you believe in Jesus, right? He's

saying if you believe in Me, guess what happens: you won't perish. Come on, someone! If you believe in Jesus and the sacrifice that He made, He's saying this: You won't perish. And hell, for those of you who don't know, it's eternal torment. Do you know what eternal means? It means forever. And then ever, and then ever, and then some ... forever and ever. And Jesus is saying this, that whoever believes in Him won't go there. You won't perish, you won't die. You won't be sent to hell. Why? Because when you believe in Jesus, whoever believes in Him, shall not perish.

But check this out, "...but will have everlasting life." I love that! Jesus is promising us this, that if we believe in Him, He's saying not only will you not go to hell, but He's saying, "I've got everlasting life with you." You know, the greatest gift is that we get to be with Jesus forever. I love how Jesus didn't just create a place, a good place, for us. He didn't just say, "Okay, you're not going to go to hell." And then, "Here's a good place. I won't be there, but there's a good place. I'll save you from hell." No, He said, "I've created heaven so that you and I can be together." And so, when we believe in Jesus, we don't perish. No, but we go with Him into everlasting life. And that's eternity. Where? In heaven! Friends, can I encourage someone today that this is really good news, that when we believe in Jesus, when we accept Him into our lives, when we know who He is, He spares us. He's saying, "You don't have to go to hell." You don't. You know, the bad news is not for you.

I love what Romans 10:9-10 says. Let me read that: "...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart..." (I love this) "...one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." What is the Scripture saying? Maybe many of us, or maybe a few of us, are watching this and we're thinking, "Okay, so how do I get there? How do I get to heaven? How do I get to this good news? Friends, can I tell you, we just read it, that if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus: "I confess the Lord Jesus and I believe in my heart that God raised Him from the dead." Can I tell you, we have to believe that what Jesus did is true. That's how we get into heaven.

I remember, and I'll quickly share the story as I begin to conclude. But I remember when I was a freshman in high school; seems like a really long time ago, because it was. But anyways, when I was a freshman in high school I had a friend, her name's Chelsea, and she's one of my good friends to this day. And I remember she loved, loved, loved the Lord. I mean, just loved the Lord. I was a freshman, and I was considered probably not a follower of Jesus. For the first three years, of high school and a little bit even in my junior high years, I kind of walked away. I kind of was like, "God, I love You, believe in You, kind of, but I'm going to do my own thing." And so, going into my freshman year in high school, I did just that. I did my own thing. I joined basketball. And it was amazing. And I remember

I get into this class, I don't know why, but I made a decision to take woodshop, and I had woodshop sixth period. And this friend, like I mentioned, Chelsea, she had this class with me. And every week, without fail, my best friend at the time, Chelsea, would always invite me to youth group. I mean, every single week, she'd always come and she would ask me, "Hey, Nicole, I think you should come to youth group with me today." And I would be like, "Chels, I don't want to go to church." And then, the next week, she'd come and she'd say, "Hey, I think you should come to youth group with me tonight." And I'd look at her and I'm like, "Chels, not going to go," She's like, "After practice!" I'm like, "Too tired. I don't want to go." And for probably the course of six to seven months, every single week, my friend would invite me to church. And finally, after six or seven months, I finally made this decision. You know, I'm just going to show up, not because I wanted to, but because I wanted her to stop asking me. And so, I go, and I remember I sat at this church service, hands over my chest, just annoyed; did not want to be there. And I remember hearing this pastor, and he's talking about the love of God. And I remember just for the first time hearing God's love for me. And I remember, fast forward, you know, now a lot of years later, I look back at that time and I'm reminded of Chelsea and her persistence in bringing me to church. And often I'll text her and I'll just say, "Hey, thanks again for your persistence and your love to take me to church."

Here's why: Chelsea caught something when she was a freshman that I never saw. She recognized both the good news and bad news. She recognized, hey, if you don't know who Jesus is, if you don't know the good news, there is bad news for you. Heaven and hell are real. And she would persistently invite me to church, and she would persistently ask me to keep coming to church. Why? So that I can encounter this Jesus. So that I can encounter Jesus who not only saved me from my sins and rescued me from hell, but so that I could be with Him in eternity. Friends, can I tell you something? When we know the bad news, it changes the way we live our lives. It makes us appreciate the good news all the more. It makes us so grateful for the sacrifice of what Jesus did for us.

And so, as I conclude in prayer, I just want to ask you this question. Do you know the bad news, to the extent that you can celebrate and be grateful for that good news? I'm telling you, when we know, oh God, this is what You saved me from, it changes us. And so, let me pray for you as we conclude day number one. Father, I thank You for today. God, I thank You for sending Your son Jesus, who died on the cross for our sins. But I thank You that You love us, that You've got a plan for us, and that You're for us. God, I ask today that You would reveal to us all the more what you saved us from, Lord. We love You, and we bless You, and we thank You. In Jesus' name, we all say amen and amen!