

Understanding the Tragedy of Unbelief

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John 3:9-13

So I have a friend who might watch this, so I'm not going to use his name, even though he probably wouldn't care. But I have a friend who was pretty hostile to Christianity when we first met. He had money and enjoyed having a good time. And he was introduced to me by a mutual friend, so me and that mutual friend, the two of us, we set out to try to win this guy to Christ. So he would come to church once in a while, but often begrudgingly, but we became friends and we enjoyed our conversations, and you know how I was just a regular guy, even though I had pastor in the front of my name. Multiple times, we'd go back and forth well into the night about God, and sin, and Jesus, and salvation.

At times, he would just look at me and laugh, other times, no matter what I said, he would just, "I just don't get it." And other times he would express amazement, and this is what he said, "How can someone so educated and so cool," that's what he said, "How can someone so educated and cool, how could you believe such nonsense?" And I wonder if that's anyone here today or watching online. You have everything you want, pretty much. You come to church or tune in every once in a while, maybe begrudgingly. You enjoy the preaching maybe, the music, but maybe you laugh at what Christians believe, or you get it for a split second, but it fades away. Maybe you're amazed at such, how down to earth just these normal, educated, even cool people are followers of this guy that lived 2000 years ago and died and supposedly rose again. So when you hear about it, when you contemplate it, when you're here even he's like, "I just don't get it."

See, not understanding Christianity, not understanding Jesus in general, that's normal, and we've been seeing that in the person of Nicodemus. Like my friend Nicodemus had it all. He was a prominent member of Jewish society. He was part, he was part of the religious and social elite of his day. He was the teacher in Israel, verse 10, the teacher, the best and brightest teacher of his day perhaps. A well-known, a recognized authority in the Bible. He taught people for years about how to go to heaven, and it was all wrapped up in being Jewish and being good. Just obey God's laws in the old Testament, never turn away from him, never defect, be Jewish, put that together and you are assured to have the kingdom.

And that's no small matter, right? Everyone wants to be assured of heaven, don't they? What happens when you die? What happens one second after you die? That matters greatly, right? Because we all die. So to have Jesus say to him, "Everything you know, everything you believe, everything you teach is false." He's saying to Nicodemus, "You are no closer to heaven now than anyone else, regardless of your position in society, your ethnicity and your good works. None of that gets you in Nicodemus because," chapter 3, verse 3, "Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No one has the ability to get into heaven, it's unattainable, it's impossible for someone to enter unless that person is born again, born from above, raised from spiritual death to spiritual life, having your sins wiped clean from you forever.

You see in verses 4 and 9, just like my friend, Nicodemus doesn't get it. This is too much for him to grasp. It would mean the utter rejection of his entire system, his ethnic based personal achievement, earn your salvation religious system. He would have to put that on the altar, light of fire, burn it up and say, "I've been wrong for decades and Jesus you're right." He would have

to turn from all of that and say, "Jesus, I'm going to come to you like a child." Yeah. He'd have to give up his place in society, his position in Jewish religion. You'd have to give up on the idea that personal holiness gets you into heaven. It would mean admitting the bankruptcy of all that he's ever known and saying, "Jesus, I come to you like a child. 100% trusting you for your mercy and grace."

See, by the time we get to verse 9, which I know has taken us over a month, but by the time we get to verse 9, Nicodemus is not ready for this. Jesus has been explaining the new birth, the absolute need for the new birth that you must be born again or you will not go to heaven. He, he's explaining how all of this is part of the Old Testament, it's something that Nicodemus should have known. Think about it. He is personally taught about salvation by the savior himself, the greatest teacher, the greatest explainer of truth in existence and he doesn't get it. Now, why doesn't he get it? Well, we've seen in previous weeks, he doesn't get it because he is not born again. And what this dialogue, which really becomes a monologue in verse 11, what this text has is truth, it helps us understand the tragedy of unbelief.

Think about it for a second, verse 9, the tragedy here is tangible. The guy who maybe knows the Bible better than anyone else, the guy who is certainly the best teacher of the Bible of his day, a guy who spent countless hours studying, meditating, discussing, debating, counseling, people with the Bible, yet the author of the Bible, the Logos, the mind of God himself teaches him truth from the Bible and he misses it. You see the irony in that? You see the tragedy in that? See, the only thing worse than what's happening with Nicodemus right now would be that if you were someone, if you were waiting for someone, maybe for hundreds of years, and that someone you've been waiting for him because he's been talked about in your sacred writings and that someone shows up, and when he shows up you don't not only reject him, but you crucify him. That would be worse than what's happening now, but that's about it.

And here's the thing, the tragedy of Nicodemus is unbelief, is repeated thousands of times every day. How many people grew up with the truth only to walk away from it? How many people memorize parts of the Bible, know songs based on the Bible, have fond memories of church and people at church, but the pleasures of disobedience are too strong? How many people have heard the truth of Christianity, but still cling to their good works as their ticket into heaven? How many people think I can earn my way there, I can do enough, so that God looks at me and says, "You are awesome, get in here, right now." How many people know the facts of about Christianity and know the facts about him are true, and yet refuse to believe in him, refuse to trust in him, refuse to give him their lives so as to be saved and instead opt for a different path, another path of salvation, a path like there's no need for salvation because I'll just disappear when I die? No you won't. No, you won't. The Bible said, "Is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes the judgment." So you die and you still exist because after that comes the judgment. And here's the other one too, there's no path to salvation, like I don't need salvation because I'm just going to die and come back. No, the text says it is appointed as a fixed rule that you will die once. Or there's in path that says, uh, "I save myself, I do it my way. I know what the Bible says, but me and the man upstairs, we got to deal going." No you don't. The Bible says that if you make your own way to heaven, if you think you can get there on your own, then Jesus died for nothing. And guess what? Jesus didn't die for nothing, he died to rescue sinners and give them the way to salvation. You think there's another way you're wrong, Jesus is the only way.

Or there's a path that says, "I'm going to get to this later. Today, I'm gonna do my own thing, I'm going to live my life, someday I'll give my life to Jesus, but not today." "Yeah, I think it's true. I

think it's real. Maybe when I get married and have kids, kids need religion, I needed it, they probably need it too. Keep them in line. So I'll get to that later." Not necessarily. Luke 12, the Bible talks about a man who thought like this and in response to this, the Bible says, "You fool, this night your soul could be required of you." And then you will stand before God knowing the truth and knowing you rejected it, living forever with the regret that you knew the truth and didn't believe when you had a chance. This is the tragedy of unbelief and this is what Nicodemus was facing. But John writes this book and he relays this conversation. And we're talking about it today so that this tragedy will not happen to you, so that you will turn and be saved.

Now let's see Jesus assessment of Nicodemus starting in verse 9. In response to what Jesus has been saying to him about being born again, Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be? This is impossible." Now we can maybe understand his misunderstanding, right? I mean, it'd take a complete paradigm shift for him to turn from everything he believed and everything he taught a bunch of people about entrance into heaven in order to embrace what Jesus tells him here. But notice what Nicodemus calls Jesus in verse 2, take a look at verse 2. He says, "Rabbi, leader, teacher, we know that you are a teacher," what? "Come from God, for no one can do the signs that you do unless God is with him." So he recognizes truth about Jesus, he is from God, God is with him. And because that's true about Jesus, he should have shattered his entire paradigm and said, "It doesn't matter what I believe, God is with you, God is with you. You came from God, I need to do everything you say."

He should have trashed his entire paradigm about salvation given his life to Jesus, but his pride, his self-righteousness, his views on things versus Jesus views on things, they just didn't match. And all of that is getting the better of Nicodemus. So Jesus verse 10, rebukes him. Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and that you do not understand these things?" That's a rebuke, that's a mockery. "You know the Bible; you're the great teacher and you missed all this? I mean, it's not like this is some obscure thing and deep in a book nobody reads, you do teach the Bible every week don't you, Nicodemus?" Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, Joel chapter 2 and a whole bunch of other places talk about this Nicodemus, you're the expert. You know the new covenant, when the Messiah comes, there's going to be a new covenant. And it's going to be marked by the holy spirit, going from being with you, to being in you. You know all this Nicodemus. You have the Old Testament; you've had the preaching of John the Baptist and you've had Jesus in verse 3 to 8 and he missed it.

He knew the truth and yet he was ignorant of the truth at the same time. Which Christian, is something you need to know about the unsaid people that you love.

Point 1) ***Realize unbelief produces ignorance. Realize unbelief produces ignorance.*** Now, when I say that, I don't mean ignorance, like a lack of information, and I certainly don't mean ignorance as a low IQ, that's not what I mean. What I mean by ignorance here is this, the foolish ideas someone believes when they're trying to get around the truth of Christianity. Why is it that a guy who knows the Bible so well, who hears the Bible taught from God himself, the God he claims to serve, and yet he rejects it? Well, listen to Romans 1, "Starting with the knowledge everyone has from creation about the one true God, the God of the Bible, that knowledge gets warped." Romans 1:21, quotes, "Although they knew God," non-Christians, although they knew God, every non-Christian knows the God of the Bible is the only true God. "Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened, claiming to be wise, they became fools."

That's why you will often hear really educated people, when they talk about Christianity, say some of the dumbest things as fact. I remember talking to a guy, and when I said to him, "So let me get this right. You're saying there's no such thing as absolute truth?" He puffed his chest out, looked at me like I'm an idiot and said, "Absolutely." This guy was working on a master's degree in physics at UCLA at the time. He said to me like he's a scientist and only an idiot would disagree with him. I just looked at him, it's like claiming to be wise, they become fools. I remember another guy telling me there's no such thing as objective right and wrong, everything is personal opinion. And he was just going on and on about this. So I go, "Hey, can I see your wallet?" He gave it to me, I put it in my pocket and I just kept talking. He's looking at me like, and finally he goes, "Hey, you can't do that. Give me my wallet back." And I said, "You right wing bigoted fundamentalist, wacko, how dare you impose your morality on me, that's your morality stealing. You Know, that, you have a problem with that, but I don't. I make my own reality. I make my own, I make my own morality. Don't force your morality on me you bigoted right-wing fundamentalists." And then I took his wallet out and I gave it back to him because he got it, he realized no, no, no, there is objective right and wrong. He lived that truth even though he didn't believe it. Why does this happen? People try to justify their unbelief, but to do that when Christianity is true means they have to embrace foolish ideas in order to try to get around Christianity. And they do that because in the words of second Corinthians 4:4, "The God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel."

So you hear these true about Jesus and not only are they wonderful, they're just obvious to you, but they can't even see it, they can't even see it because they're blind. This happens because in the words of Ephesians 4:18, Non-Christians are "darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God". So they keep themselves from God, and it says, "Because of the ignorance in them." So they have all of these objections that amount to ignorance because God is the one true God, but that ignorance is in them, the verse can include, "Due to their hardness of heart." Their hearts are dark and hard against God, that then produces an ignorance that keeps them from coming to God, through faith in Christ.

Sadly, this is so often true for people who grew up in church, who've read the Bible enough times to be dangerous. So that they think, or they say some things they think are just super profound but are really ignorant. People with a bunch Bible knowledge who aren't born again, this becomes the seed of false teaching. So they say things that aren't accurate about the Bible. Have you had this kind of conversation before? Your child who grows up in church, homeschooled, in Awana, all that Christian school, whatever says they don't believe in God anymore because it's just oppressive, stifles my true identity and I just need to be liberated from this. And you think, well, no, I actually believe in Jesus set me free from the oppression of sin, gave me my true identity as a child of God. And when the principles of Christianity are applied to government, it ends slavery like huh?

Or other things like, hey, there's a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of New Testament. So it's mean, nasty, rotten guy, then this guy's wonderful, and nice, and merciful, and puppy dogs, and ice cream, right? Like, so it happens. There's two different Gods in the Bible, never read the book of Revelation. Things like God, God's love means that he will, that no one will ever go to hell. Things like Adam and Eve are fictional characters and not real people. Things like Satan and demons, angels, all that stuff is just, like can't even touch that. Things like the Bible is abusive and dangerous and contains hate speech. Things like the Bible teaches you can earn your salvation when the Bible teaches the exact opposite. Titus 3:5, God

quote, "Saves people not because of deeds done by us and righteous, but he saves people," quote, "According to his mercy."

Things like you can become a god, things like Jesus was gay, things like the promise Sodom and Gomorrah was being unkind to strangers. God destroyed those cities because of a lack of hospitality. That is the dominant view today of that text. I can just go on and on and on with these things. My point is, do not be surprised but realize that unbelief and ignorance go together. As with Nicodemus, so with all non-Christians claiming to be wise, they become fools because they reject Jesus and have to justify it. But that's like trying to justify two plus two does not equal four, it's foolish.

Now listen, that you are not that way, that you see things clearly, is not something you can ever pat yourself on the back for, right? It's not something you can look at the mirror and say, I am awesome because I don't believe that garbage, or I can watch the news and go look at those idiots. No, right? Because if it weren't for God's grace, what? That would be us, that would be you. And the only difference between them and us is God's mercy. And that's it. Paul says 1 Corinthians 15:10, "I am what I am by the grace of God." The only reason we don't respond that way to Jesus is because God has been kind to us, and our prayer is that he will be kind to them too, right? But like the sun coming up tomorrow, we should anticipate ignorance proclaimed as absolute certainty from those who don't believe in Jesus.

And if you realize this, you can anticipate it so it won't surprise you when idiocy comes out of their mouth and you're like, you don't go like you're an idiot, but you go, I'm going to control myself because I know this is what happens with a mind that's darkened and rejecting the things of Christ. And by the way, knowing this is true means that you can anticipate the questions and get answers. Christianity is a 2000-year-old worldview that's been attacked from the very beginning, right? Jesus was not killed for being too nice to people, he was murdered by his enemy. So Christianity has had enemies from the very beginning, so there's not a single attack on Christianity that hasn't happened and hasn't been answered by some of the greatest minds in the history of the world. So the answers are out there, you just got to find them. And here's the cool thing, if you can't find them, pastors are nerds, we love to find those things. You know, so you can't find it, come talk to one of us.

Now from Jesus assessment of Nicodemus's ignorance, let's look next at Jesus accusation against Nicodemus's his response to his teaching on the new birth. Remember Jesus is teaching about how to go to heaven and he's saying, "The only way that's going to happen is if you're born again." Nicodemus rejects this, verse 11, Jesus, Jesus confronts that rejection with, "Truly, truly I say to you, what I'm saying right now is true truth. We speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I've told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Clearly we just saw there Nicodemus is being accused by Jesus of not believing in him. When he earlier said again, verse 2, that Jesus was a teacher from God who God was with, so he got that right, and that was about all that Nicodemus got right. He got Jesus right. but he didn't believe what Jesus said. So he knows the facts about Jesus, but he didn't embrace those facts in order to say, "Okay, what you're saying is true, and I need to turn from everything and trust in you." Everything Jesus said about the new birth and entering the kingdom, he is saying here in verse 11, he is saying as an expert, Nicodemus rejects it. In fact, everything Nicodemus was ignorant about, namely salvation, heaven, the kingdom, all of that, Jesus is the world's greatest and only expert on.

So Jesus is saying verse 11, "I'm talking about things that I know from personal experience. I'm talking about things that nobody told me about. I'm talking about the things that I know from experience." Why? Because in the words of John 1:2, "I have been with God from all eternity." So Jesus says what he said, like in those words in verse 11, "I'm speaking about what I know, I'm bearing witness to what I have seen." But notice, he didn't say "I" in verse 11, well notice verse 11, it says, "Truly, truly I say to you," and then he goes to, "We, we speak of what we know, bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony." So he goes from this singular I to these four plurals. And then verse 12, look, "If I have told you," he goes back to singular, what is he doing there? Good question.

I think what he's doing there is he's saying the things that I'm saying to you, it's not just me saying it, it's me and it's the father, and we are speaking of things that we know we bear witness to, the God that you serve is speaking through me when I speak. Why do I think that? Listen to Jesus in John 12:49, he says, "For I've not spoken on my own authority, but the father who sent me has given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say therefore, I say as the father has told me." So every single thing that you ever hear Jesus say in the Bible, Jesus is saying, "I'm simply saying what I've been told to say by the father." He says it again, John 8:28, "I speak just as the father taught me." There's a direct line from God the father to Jesus, to the words that he speaks.

John 8:38, Jesus said, "I speak of what I have seen with my father." So you look at those words in verse 11 and we speak at what we know, we bear witness to what we have seen. John 15:15, Jesus tells his followers, "All that I've heard from my father I've made known to you." So as you think about all of that, what Jesus says he does not say on his own authority, he is saying simply and only what God the father tells him to say. So, that means to ignore Jesus is to ignore God. Oh, but wait a minute I love God, but this Jesus stuff I don't know about all that. No, you do not have God unless you have Jesus too. In fact, notice verse 11, that that word "you" at the very end there, "but you do not receive our testimony", that "you" as plural. Meaning Jesus is not just talking to Nicodemus, he's saying you Nicodemus, those you represent, those like you, those in the category of unbelief, you do not receive what the God of the universe is saying through me.

And then verse 12, so verse 12, if Nicodemus don't believe Jesus when he talks about earthly thing, and with that earthly things, I think Jesus is talking about being born again, it happens from heaven, right? But where does being born again happen? Happens here on the earth. So he's saying, "If you're not going to believe me when I talk about earthly things like being born again," verse 12, "Then you're not going to believe if I talk about heavenly things either." And again, we know why that is, it's because he's not born again. But as we step back from this text, this gives us further insight into the tragic consequences of unbelief, consequences you and I will see play out in the lives of those that we love, as point 2) we, ***Admit to reject Christ is to reject truth. To reject Christ is to reject truth.***

Jesus makes it clear in this text that he knows the truth and he speaks the truth. Which means everyone talking about anything that doesn't agree with Jesus is automatically and categorically what? Wrong. I know that's hard to hear in our live and let live, I create my own reality kind of world that we have right now. Well, listen, you may want to create your own reality where gravity doesn't exist. And when you jump off that building, you realize that what you want does not affect reality one bit. See the goal of life is to conform our thoughts and to conform our lives to reality, a reality that is outside of us, not inside of us. When what we think, what we want doesn't match reality, reality doesn't ever change. And in the same way, we may want to create

our own reality where what Jesus says doesn't impact a thing, but that's an illusion that'll vanish the moment we stand before him. And in that moment, we will rue the second we ever thought in our rebellion that we knew something better than Jesus did. To reject Christ is to reject truth.

Jesus put it this way, John 14:6, "I am the truth. I'm the truth." So either he's right about that or he's wrong about that. And I don't know about you, but I never want to be on the other side of an argument from a guy who said, I'm going to be crucified, I'm going to be in the grave three days, and after that, I'm going to rise from the dead and then, pulled it off. I never want to disagree with that guy, because I'm automatically wrong if he can do that. And yet, if Jesus is the truth and we reject him and we automatically don't have the truth because he is the truth.

John 1:14, Jesus is, "Full of grace and truth." 1 John 5:20, "Jesus is true." And in John 18:37, Jesus said, "All who are on the side of truth, listen to me," meaning if you don't listen to him, if you reject him, if you do not receive him, if you do not believe him, then you don't have truth, you have lies disguised as truth, convincing you that they're true all the way to your own destruction. But when you believe in Jesus, when you give your life to him, John 8:32, "You will know the truth," and what?

The truth...

"The truth will set you free." I was talking to a friend of mine this week and this was the issue, the truth will set you free from everything that's chaining your life. So will you come, will you believe, will you give your life to Jesus who is the truth, or will you keep cutting yourself off from truth by rejecting him? Everything he said, he said as the greatest possible expert on that subject. So everything he said about God, he's the expert. When he talks about heaven, he's the expert. When he talks about marriage, he's the expert. When he talks about true and false religion, he's the expert. When he talks about what a man is, what a woman is, he's the expert. When he talks about the future, he's the expert. There's not one single subject that he ever talked on that he's not the expert in. And we foolishly think truth and freedom are found outside of Jesus.

We think we can and find satisfaction, the joy and peace that we so long, we think we can find that everywhere but Jesus, but it's not true. It's like looking for a drink of water from a sewer. No, it's worse than that actually, it's like taking a drink of clear liquid, hoping it's water when it's really poisoned. Tragically, you only learn it's poison when? When it's too late. And that's the tragedy, is that people are tricked into thinking truth and satisfaction and joy are found outside of Jesus, so, so we make our truth or we're all about our truth. But listen, your truth doesn't matter unless it matches The Truth. And I know that sounds like insane, it's so bigoted, intolerant, the question you should be asking though is not how does it make me feel, the question you should be asking is, is it true?

This is what people do with religion, they ask themselves, do I like this? Does it make me feel good? Does it match everything I already believe because I'm the standard of all things? And fail to ask the most important question there is, is this true? And Jesus says, "Guess what? I am the truth and I will set you free, forever." Now verse 13 starts with an invisible "and", you see it there? No you can't because it's invisible. But in the Greek text, verse 13 starts with the word "and". And That's important because what it means is that verse 13 is explaining the heavenly things that he's saying, "Nicodemus you're not going to believe if I say it," but he's, "I'm going to say it anyway." So verse 13, all the way to verse 21 are these heavenly things.

And when he begins to talk about these heavenly things, he starts with the issue of authority, verse 13, "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the son of man." So this conversation with Nicodemus has gone from regeneration, verses 1 to 8, to rejection, verses 9 to 13, to reception or belief, in verses 14 to 21. And Jesus says what he does from verse 3 to verse 21, he says what he does, because Jesus is saying in verse 13, "I am in a class by myself." What he says in that first phrase in verse 13, he's saying no one went into heaven to come back to teach heaven's truth, that's never happened. No one has ever done that, but there is one who descended from heaven to teach heaven's truth, he is verse 13, "The son of man," Jesus, himself. Son of man is Jesus' favorite title for himself, refers back to this figure in Daniel chapter 7, verse 13 and 14, this human, the son of man who goes into heaven and speaks to God face to face, and then is given authority over the whole universe.

He says, "Son of man, that's me. I have that authority." So what Jesus is saying here is that, "I alone am qualified to talk about heavenly things because I came from heaven, that's where I'm from." And the imagery of John, 1:50-51, Jesus is the ladder between heaven and earth. So the idea here is that since he's from heaven, he speaks with heaven's authority. No one else can say that, which means when it comes to Jesus, we all must, point 3) **Recognize Jesus exclusive claims.. Recognize Jesus exclusive claims.** These things are printed out on Saturday night, but if they were printed out Sunday morning, that word recognize would be crossed out and it would be the word submit to, or embrace, or believe. Because the issue is not intellectual, Jesus right here is driving him towards you better listen to what I'm saying because I come from heaven.

That word "except" there in verse 13 means Jesus is saying I'm in a category all by myself, which means that I am the sole, the only, the exclusive authority. John 6:33, Jesus says, "I'm the bread of life and I've come down from heaven to give life to the world." John 8:42, Jesus came from God because he was sent here by God. John 17:5, listen to Jesus prayer. He says, "Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was." And then Paul just flat out says 1 Corinthians 15:47, Jesus, "Is from heaven." He's the only one. Nobody else in that category, God in his grace becomes a human being, the word becomes flesh in the womb of Mary in order to bring us to heaven where he's from.

Now, there are more exclusive claims about Jesus. We already saw John 14:6, right, "I am the way and the truth and the life," and then to explain what he means by that he says, "No one can come to the father except through me." John 8:24, Jesus said, "Unless," there's that exclusive part, "Unless you believe that I am, unless you believe I'm deity, you will die in your sins." Hebrews 5:9 says, "Jesus is the of eternal salvation." He's the source, he's the fountain there. There isn't another one. He's the only door that when you open this religious door, the location, the destination is heaven. He's the only one. 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven." The under heaven is land, heaven wraps around the earth. There's no place that you could go where you will find another name that will get you into heaven, it is only the name of Jesus by which we must be saved.

1 John 5:12 puts it this way, "He who has the son has life. He who does not have the son does not have life." Those are exclusive claims about Jesus, that he is the only way to eternal life, the only path to heaven, the only name by which anyone will ever be saved, the one only an exclusive source of eternal salvation. He's the only one. So I wonder how does that strike you? What does that do to your heart? That's so narrow minded. I can't believe there is someone in the 21st century that thinks such back woodsy nonsense, bigoted, intolerant, exclusive, whacko. Is it

narrow minded to teach that two plus two equals four? Question. Is it exclusive to say the sun will come up tomorrow? Is it totally bigoted for me to say the pulpit is brown? See what Jesus is doing in verses 11 to 13 is he's taking a religion out of the realm of personal preference and opinion, and he's putting it where it belongs in the realm of fact, reality, and truth.

See 21st century Americans, we think about religion in the same category as movie tastes, right? There's no right or wrong answer about movie tastes, you just pick the ones you like. And Jesus is saying, "No, no, no, no, no. Religions are like math problems, there are right answers and wrong answers to the questions that religions are asking." And he's saying, "Here's the thing," notice the text. He's not going Nicodemus, "I know this kind of like rubs you the wrong way and doesn't really match you know what you've been thinking before, but hey, just, just give me a little bit. Just meet me halfway." No, Jesus doesn't ask us if we like this, if we agree with it, Jesus say, "Hey, would you like it to be another way? I mean, I am the creator. I can just make another way." And the reason he doesn't do that is because he is not our equal. We never look Jesus in the eye at the same level, he is God.

So he doesn't ask us for our opinion and he doesn't ask us if we like what he's saying, he simply says, "this is the truth and this truth will set you free. I'm an eyewitness to everything I'm saying, I'm the authority of everything because I've heard it and seen it myself". The one from heaven is talking about how to go to heaven and yet to reject what he says is to be rebuked and to be confronted with truth just like Jesus did to Nicodemus in our text. Why? Because the issue is truth, the issue is truth. So the issue for Nicodemus, the issue for all of us, is will you receive the truth by receiving Christ or will you reject him? To reject him, Jesus is saying is to reject the only authority there is under heaven about how to go to heaven. To reject him for some other authority is to reject truth for error, it's to embrace a lie instead of fact, it's to live in fantasy instead of reality.

And for some reason, our culture loves fantasy, and they believe if they just like really believe it, they can make fantasy true until the moment they stand before the creator of reality and realize I've been wrong, I've been deceived, and I had a chance to believe. So what's it going to be for you? The friend I told you about at the beginning, just like Nicodemus, eventually came to Christ. He realized, both of them realized that Jesus was the truth and they gave his life, and both of them gave their life to him. Now what I've tried to do is I've tried to explain the text and I've tried to explain issues that keep people from Christ, Justifications, rationalizations that people give to say like, no, no, no, no, no, no. And this text just obliterates them all and leaves you before him with the decision, will I receive him or will I reject him?

And so I've tried to explain the text and cut through the objections so that if you hear his voice, please do not harden your heart. No more, not yet, no more, not now, no more, I've got a better way, no more, I disagree, humble yourself. Be done with the resistance. Why would you want to live another day cut off from the source of salvation, cut off from the source of truth, and joy, and satisfaction, cut off from the source of hope and peace? Come to Jesus and you will find rest for your soul, because the truth will set you free. Don't leave here today without that.

Let's pray. Jesus, last night as I got to this moment, I was reminded while I was praying about a scene at the end of John 6, Where you'd been teaching some very clear and very hard truths. And the text says that many who followed you no longer followed you anymore. And then you looked at the 12 and you said to them, "Do you want to go away too?" And Peter, talking for the 12 said, "Lord, where else are we going to go? To whom else shall we go? You and you alone have the

words of eternal life." And that's the issue now. Like those followers, like that text, we have a decision to make. Are we going to walk away, say nope and continue once again to cut ourselves off from not just truth, but the joy and the peace and the hope that truth gives, or will we receive you who is the truth, who will set us free from our sins? Jesus, that's really the goal, is that we align our thoughts and align our lives to the truth. And so I pray that for all of us, that whether it's the first time or more and more after that first time, that you would conform our hearts and conform our lives to the truth. So that when you do, when we do, the truth will set us free and we will get to live in that freedom until we see you face to face and really experience the truest possible freedom after that. So please do these things for each of us I pray for the glory of your name. Amen.