

Sunday September 3, 2023 | John 3:13-21

We have been looking at the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. As a pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin Nicodemus was only willing to come see Jesus by night. Jesus cuts right to the heart and teaches Nicodemus about the need to be born again. Humanity is spiritual dead, and needs a spiritual rebirth. Our dead heart must be made alive by the work of the Holy Spirit. This was a foreign concept to Nicodemus, but it should not have been. Jesus references back to the Old Testament in Ezekiel 36 and 37 to show the need for a spiritual rebirth. Jesus is going to continue with this line of thinking and give further detail about the New Birth.

John 3:12-21 ESV

- (12) If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?
- (13) No one has ascended into heaven **except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.**
- (14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
- (15) that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.
- (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.
- (17) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.
- (18) Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- (19) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
- (20) For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.
- (21) But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Jesus points out to Nicodemus, if you do not believe the earthly things, I am telling you then how will you believe the spiritual things I tell you. Jesus then gives His credentials to teach on these things in verse 13. He says no one has ascended into heaven yet to be able to teach on heavenly things. At this point the sacrifice for sins has not been given. Every Old Testament saint has gone to Abraham's Bosom/ Paradise waiting for the sacrifice. They were not in heaven yet. Jesus has the first-hand knowledge and authority to teach on heavenly truth because He is the one who descended from heaven. He is God. Jesus is going to give an Old Testament example again to show how we can receive the spiritual new birth.

John 3:14-15 ESV

- (14) **And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,** so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
- (15) that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

Jesus is referring to a story that happened back in Numbers 21. Israel has refused to enter the promised land and now is wandering in the desert for 40 years. The Israelite's had a habit of complaining and disobeying God then receiving judgment.

Numbers 21:4-6 ESV

(4) From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. **And the people became impatient on the way.**

(5) And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe **this worthless food.**"

(6) Then the LORD sent **fiery serpents** among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.

God has been constantly providing for Israel in the wilderness. In chapter 20 God brought water from a rock and He has been daily providing Manna for them to eat. Israel become impatient and complains about the perfect food that God provides. **When we focus on our circumstances, we tend to miss how God has been at work.** Judgment comes for their lack of trust in God. Poisonous snakes start to bite the people and cause many to die.

Numbers 21:7-9 ESV

(7) And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

(8) And the LORD said to Moses, "Make **a fiery serpent and set it on a pole**, and everyone who is bitten, **when he sees it, shall live.**"

(9) So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, **he would look at the bronze serpent and live.**

The people cry out and realize they have sinned against God in their lack of trust and complaining. They plead for a relief from the snakes. God's solution is very telling. God does not have them try to **fight and kill** the snakes. He does not provide an **ointment** for their wound that might heal them. He does not ask for an **offering** to be taken up. He does not tell them to look and **inspect** their wound to be healed. Anti snake laws are not passed to try and protect the people.

God has Moses make a bronze statue of a snake. The thing that is causing death is raised up on a pole. If you would simply look to the bronze snake, you would be healed. Jesus is saying that He is that bronze snake. We are to look to Him to be saved.

John 3:14-15 ESV

(14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **so must** the Son of Man be lifted up,

(15) **that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.**

Jesus had to be lifted up on the cross. We are called to look to Him just as Israel had to look at the snake raised up. This offer is universal. It is for whoever would believe.

Isaiah 45:22 NLT

(22) Let all the world look to Me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.

Israel looked to the object of their curse to be saved, we do the same as we look to the cross.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

(21) For our sake He made Him **to be sin** who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the **righteousness of God**.

Jesus became sin on the cross. He took on every bit of sin and paid every judgment that was came from that sin. He became our curse. We can be given His perfect righteousness when we believe in what He accomplished. The gospel message is not how sin was ignored. The gospel message is how sin has been paid for. Now we can have His righteousness, now we can have eternal life.

John 3:16 ESV

(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 one of the most famous verses in scripture. I want to encourage you this morning to see it afresh. We can treat familiar verses like this as common place and not truly appreciate the incredible truths it presents. In context it is giving further details about why Jesus was lifted up for all to believe in. God loved the World. God’s love is not what saves people. His love was the motivation for saving us. He **loved** the world so He **gave**.

God so Loved the World, don’t miss the so in the verse. It means **this is how much, or in this way**. It refers to both the **degree** He loves and the **manner** in which He loved. His love for the World was so great He was willing to give His son. Also notice that this love was for the World. The sinful, selfish, proud, nonbelieving, vile, evil, God hating World.

Romans 1:29-32 ESV

(29) They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. **They are full of envy, murder, strife**, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,
 (30) slanderers, **haters of God**, insolent, haughty, boastful, **inventors of evil**, disobedient to parents,
 (31) **foolish**, faithless, heartless, **ruthless**.
 (32) Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, **they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them**.

This describes the depth of sin in the world. It describes what we watch on the nightly news. It describes the sins in our society that bother us so much. We watch God’s name openly mocked. We watch rampant immorality, and the celebration of immorality. We watch liars and deceivers invent evil. **Think about how much more sin God knows about when He can actually see into the heart of man**. God looked at the depth of humanities sin, an evil that we cannot even imagine and **He so loved the World!** It is so easy to read this verse that God so loved me, that He gave... We do not tend to think about ourselves as once being a part of the World. That is exactly who you and I were before Christ. We were of the World.

Romans 5:8 ESV

(8) but God shows His love for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.

Not after we stopped sinning or once we stopped being apart of the world. While we were still vile sinners, Christ died for us. Words fail to describe the depth of God's love. We are told the one thing that can help reveal it to us is in the cross. When God so loved He gave Jesus.

1 John 4:9-10 ESV

(9) **In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.**

(10) In this is love, **not that we have loved God** but that **He loved us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

When God sent Jesus, it helped reveal to us how deep His love is for the world. God did not send an angel or some created being He sent His one and only son. This word (monogenēs) is the same as in John 3:16 and emphasizes **the absolute uniqueness of Jesus**, He is the one and only. This reveals how incredible God's love truly is. It is not about how much we can love Him. Hear that for a second. **A walk with Christ is not about how much you love Him. It is about how much He has loved us!** It is a tragedy that so much of churches today are about what we can do for God, and how much we love Him. In the end we make salvation and our walk about us. Part of the reason for this is our selfishness and pride. Another reason is that we don't know God well. **The more you know about God the more you will know about His love for you.** It is such an incredible truth that Paul prays we would have the strength to grasp it even a little bit more.

Ephesians 3:18-19 NIV

(18) may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, **to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,**

(19) and **to know this love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

There is an extra dimension listed, 3 dimensions makes a shape but Paul prays that we would grasp 4 dimensions of Christ's love. It is a love that surpasses head knowledge and yet we are offered the chance to experientially know this love.

John 3:16 ESV

(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.**

God loves us so deeply to send Jesus, our simple response is to believe. Just as Israel was called to look at the bronze snake, we are called to look to Jesus. We are to believe, to trust in Him. To trust He is fully God and fully man and paid for our sins on the cross. We tend to over complicate what it means to believe in Jesus. **Jesus was just willing to compare it to a look.** Israel was told look to the bronze snake and live. If you looked you trusted that message. Believing in Jesus is trusting Him. When we believe in Him, we are given eternal life. Eternal describes the **quality** and **quantity** of this life we have been given. It is never ending and amazing. **There is no end to it and there is no limit to how incredible it is.** Our future is grand because of Jesus. We have eternal life because of Him, our Savior.

John 3:17 ESV

(17) For God **did not** send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved **through Him**.

The first time Jesus came He did not come as the judge but as a savior. He came so that the world would be saved through Him. The utter tragedy is that even with such an incredible offer some will still perish. If you believe in Him your future is incredible, if you reject Jesus, you still stand condemned.

John 3:18 ESV

(18) Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe **is condemned already, because he has not believed** in the name of the only Son of God.

If you believe in Jesus, you are not condemned any more. The judgement for your sins was fully dealt with at the cross. Yet people refuse to accept what Jesus did for them. They stand condemned because they do not believe. **A nonbeliever's sin is not their biggest issue. Their refusal to believe is.** They stand condemned because they are rejecting Christ's payment. They stand condemned because they do not believe in Him. This is such a sobering truth. We wrongly think of nonbelievers going to hell reluctantly. **God does not send people to hell they send themselves.** It is a self-inflicted. They are refusing the offer of salvation.

John 3:19-20 ESV

(19) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people **loved** the darkness rather than the light **because their works were evil**.

(20) For everyone who **does wicked things** hates the light and does not come to the light, **lest his works should be exposed**.

The world that has been so loved by God, loves the darkness. Verse 19 repeats the same word for love (Agape) that God showed the world. It is a self-sacrificial love. **The World loves the darkness to such an extent that they are willing to sacrifice themselves for it.** They refuse to come to the light; they do not want to be exposed. They would rather stand in condemnation than admit they need the eternal life Jesus is freely offering. Remember the context, Nicodemus has come to Jesus by night. **Believing in Jesus exposes our need for Him.**

John 3:21 Legacy Standard Bible

(21) But he who **practices the truth** comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested **as having been done by God.**"

The world does wicked thing and refuses to be exposed. As believers we come into the light. We now have the ability to walk in **the** truth. To walk in a fellowship with Jesus. We have been given a new life. We are not in the light because we started practicing the right things. We are not saved by our own works. Once we have been born again, we can now start to practice the truth. Anything that we do in the truth has been accomplished by God in us.

John 15:5 ESV

(5) I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, **for apart from Me you can do nothing.**

Apart from Him we can do nothing. We can so easily lose sight of this truth. We know Jesus saved us then we think we can live on our own strength. We think we can take it from there. Jesus not only accomplished our salvation but wants to walk with us in a relationship. Being exposed by the light declares our never-ending need for Him.

These last few verses show the drastically different responses to the light. The world loves the darkness and refuse to be exposed. Believers come into the light and are exposed. The gospel is a dividing truth. Believing in Jesus offers eternal life or rejecting Him leaves a person in their condemnation. God's love has made it clear He desires no one to reject Jesus. This truth is for "**whoever believes in Him**" which is repeated in verses 15, 16, and 18.

Ezekiel 18:23; 32 ESV

(23) Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

(32) **For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone,** declares the Lord GOD; **so turn, and live."**

God takes no pleasure in a sinner receiving judgment for their sins. He is glorified in His justice, but there is no pleasure in it. He does not desire any to reject what Jesus has done for them.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 ESV

(3) This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

(4) **who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

(5) For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

(6) who gave himself as a ransom **for all**, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

God desires all to be saved and come to the truth. God not only desired for all to be saved but He provided the means. Jesus gave Himself as a ransom, the payment for all. God's love is so incredible that He was willing to love the world and provide a salvation even as they keep rejecting and refusing Him. As believers we look forward to when Jesus is going to come back, but every day we wait we need to remember what God is accomplishing.

2 Peter 3:9 ESV

(9) The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish**, but that all should reach repentance.

God is not slow in fulfilling His promises to come back but every day He delays is another day people can turn to Him. As believers we know Jesus who has given us eternal life. Let's share Him with those that God puts in our path.