

Sharing the Good News of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] you. Please open it up to the Gospel of John, chapter 3. And if you don't have a Bible, we do have a few Bibles in the seats just in front of you there, the black hardcover book. John chapter 3. This morning we're looking at what I think is the most famous or popular verse in the entire Bible. John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Not only is it well-known and well-loved in the church by many of us, but even in the world. If there's one verse that many people know, this is it. If there's one reference to a verse that they've heard of before, this is the one. John 3.16. And so we want to look this morning a little bit at how this came to be said.

How did it come to be written? Where does it fit into the story of Jesus, which we've been looking at through the Gospel of John? We want to consider a little bit of what these words mean.

We want to talk about what comes after these words. What else was said with these words? And then finally we want to look at how can we share Jesus using these words with people in our lives.

So that's where we're going. So how did we get to these words? If you've been with us for the last couple weeks, you know that we've been looking at the Jesus conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He was a member of the Jewish ruling council and he came to Jesus to pay him a visit.

And Jesus had a conversation with him. He told Nicodemus that not only he, but everyone must be born again must be born again if they want to enter into the kingdom of God.

[2 : 1 6] So they kind of talked a little bit about being born again. And then last Sunday we talked about how this whole story of Nicodemus really goes to show how Jesus knows what's in a man, how he knows what's going on in our hearts and in our minds. He knew that. Nicodemus, even though he saw the miracles that he did, did not believe, did not receive his testimony is true.

But Jesus was gracious to Nicodemus. And even though Nicodemus did not receive his testimony and, and, and believe the words he was saying is true, Jesus left Nicodemus with a gracious sign to watch for so that he might yet believe in verse 14.

He said this, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the son of man must be lifted up that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Jesus was pointing to his death when he would be lifted up on the cross for the salvation of people. He was telling Nicodemus to watch for that, that he would know that he is the son of man. It's immediately following this, that we come to this famous verse, John 3, 16. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

The first thing that I want us to notice is how this kind of follows or comes into this discussion here. Jesus has said this to Nicodemus. He's, he's made this point, the son of man must be lifted up so that those who believe in him will have eternal life. And, and I think what's happening here is kind of a further statement or explanation of, of what that means, of how this applies to all of us. Maybe one of the first questions we need to think through is whose words are these?

Are these the words of John or are these the words of Jesus? Some of you, as you look in your Bible, may notice that these words are in red. John 3, 16 is in red. Others may notice that they're not in red, while others are. There's kind of a bit of a back and forth with scholars there over, you know, were these words spoken by Jesus or are these just the words of John, the one telling the story, offering, injecting explanation and clarification into things.

[5 : 05] The original manuscripts are, we don't have the original manuscripts of the New Testament, but the oldest manuscripts that we do have, they don't have red letters. So we, we can't just go back and look and see. In fact, they didn't even put spaces in between the words or use punctuation.

That's just how they, how they did it. Context just kind of was, was obvious to people. They, they understood. So there is this question of, are these the words of Jesus or are they the words of John, the apostle? Some will say, these are the words of Jesus because they just kind of come right after what Jesus says to Nicodemus. Others point to, they look more, more at the words and, and the words that are chosen here and say, these are, these are probably the words of John because similar phrases and words are used in other places in the gospel of John where it's pretty clear that John is speaking, especially back in chapter one. Phrases like only begotten or one and only son. Um, Jesus refers to himself as the son of man, but here it's, it's very clear that the person speaking is referring to him as the son of God. And so some would say that they think it's, it's John speaking personally, in my opinion, I think it's John. Um, but, uh, either way,

I think what's important for us to know is that these are still the words of Jesus. Either way. I mean, if Jesus spoke them to Nicodemus, of course they are. Uh, we can see that clearly, but even if it was John who penned them, they're still the words of Jesus.

Later on in the gospel of John, this is what Jesus will say to his disciples. This is on the evening of his betrayal. He says to his disciples, which included John, you also must testify for you have been with me from the beginning. And then if we go down a little further in that passage to chapter 16, verse 12, Jesus says this, he says, I have much more to say to you more than you can now bear. But when he, the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own. He will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come. He, the Holy spirit will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the father is mine. That is why I said the spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you. Now there's a lot in there and those words certainly would take more time for us to really digest and think through. But the gist of what Jesus is saying is that you, John and other disciples, you must testify about me, but you won't be doing that alone. The Holy spirit, I will send him and he will speak to you the words that you are to speak to others. And the words that the spirit gives you to speak, where will he get those from?

He will get them from me. He will speak only what he hears from me. And so there's a bit of a chain there. But at the end of all of this, the words of John are the words of Jesus given through the Holy spirit to whoever will listen. So, you know, as we come back to John three 16 here in one sense, either way, these are the word, the words of God. They carry the same weight and authority as, as God's word, even if John is the one who said them and wrote them.

[9 : 10] Now let's not miss how, how this, how these words connect to what has been said before this conversation with Nicodemus. Jesus has been talking to Nicodemus and, and this is what he said to Nicodemus, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness. So the son of man must be lifted up that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. And then what, what I think John is doing here is he's, he's kind of springboarding off of that and giving an explanation. This is what Jesus is talking about as he says this, he, he kind of pulls some of the very same words out for God. So love the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes there's that everyone who believes part again in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. So this is us kind of getting the, the big picture view from John. This is what Jesus was talking about when he spoke to Nicodemus, when he said that he must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

This is what he's talking about. And we might, uh, just notice that word. So for a moment, just one little word. I mean, oftentimes it's traditionally been preached, you know, God for God love the world so much that he gave his one and only son. Um, the truth is that word is, it's not an intensifying word. It's a connecting word. It's, it's the same word that's used up in verse, uh, either 14 or 15, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness. So the son of man must be lifted up. So we might even look at it as for, for so God loved the world that he gave his one and only son, or as some translations have it in this way, in this manner, God loved the world.

He's drawing a parallel between what Jesus said and applying it to the world, to the bigger picture.

And so let's just take a moment to, to, to go back and look at what Jesus said about how he must be lifted up. As we do, we'll notice that there are similarities and differences.

Jesus was referring to the, the story in the old Testament when the Israelites, they were grumbling and complaining against God. They were saying it'd be better if we die, uh, if we went back to Egypt, then die here in the wilderness. And God decided to give them what they truly deserved. And he sent venomous snakes among them. The snakes bit many of the Israelites and many of the Israelites died.

[12 : 09] Those who had not died, they cried out to the Lord for help, for grace, for mercy. And God in his mercy gave them a way to be saved. We talked about this a couple Sundays back and at the Lord's table, that way was lifting up a bronze snake on a pole. And whoever had been bitten could just look up to that snake on the pole and they would be cured instantly. They'd be spared from death.

Jesus is saying that what he has come to do is, is like that. What happened back there is, is like an analogy of what is about to happen with him. And there's some similarities.

There. The people back then were facing death because of their sins against God. In the same way, we also are facing death because of our sins against God. God in his love and his mercy back then, he gave a way for them to be saved. Here in the present time, as Jesus is speaking, God is giving a way for people to be saved. In both cases, this way is, is through something that is lifted up on a wooden pole or a wooden cross. And it's a matter of life and death, but there are some big differences here. If we look back to that old story, it's about the children of Israel, people. But John makes it clear here for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son.

He applies it not just to, not just to the, the particular people that it happened to back in the story, but this is for the world. Back then in the old Testament, it was a snake of bronze made by Moses that was lifted up on the pole. But the provision of God here in front of Nicodemus that is here, that has come into the world now is from God. It is the son of God. It is Jesus.

He is the one who will be lifted up on a cross. As it pertains to the, the children of Israel and, and that time where the snakes came among them, when they were bit by the snakes, the venom was, was fatal. It would lead to physical death.

[14 : 46] But as John kind of traces out the analogy and helps us see what Jesus is talking about, how this applies his word that he chooses is perish for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish. And when he uses that word, he means more than just physically die. As he goes on, we see that he's talking about perish in the ultimate sense as in perish at the final judgment. He's talking about condemnation.

Back in the, with the children of Israel, if they looked to God's provision up there on the pole, they got to live another day. But in the case of Christ, those who look to him and believe in him as the provision of God there on the cross, they get to live forever. So there's, there's some similarities and some differences. And John is helping us see just what Jesus means as he says this.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Now there's some things that John says after this, and we want to look at those for a minute and just see what, what else does John have to say here? Sometimes we get so focused on verse 16 that we just, we miss all the stuff that comes right after.

After this, uh, Jesus, uh, John says this, for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

[16 : 37] These are wonderful words. In Christ's coming the first time, it wasn't, uh, a time to do a kingdom cleanup and to set everything to right.

His main purpose in coming in that first time was a rescue mission. It was to save people.

He goes on in verse 18, whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only son.

If there's one thing that's clear in these words, and maybe before we even get to that, the, the, the first statement is wonderful. Whoever believes in him is not condemned.

That's a statement of the gospel of the good news of Jesus right there. Whoever believes in him shall not perish. They mean the same thing in the ultimate sense. Whoever looks to the son as the provision of God and believes in him is spared what they deserve.

[17 : 56] Judgment. Or the sentence that we will receive at the final judgment. But John, he moves on from there to make very clear just where we stand without faith in Christ.

He says, whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only son.

That's where we stand without Christ. Literally in, in, in, in the original languages, having already been condemned. We, we, we carry that already.

That status. That's that, that, that, that position before God. And there's only one way. To change that, to, to, to get out from under that. And it's by believing in the name of God's one and only son.

John wants us to be clear. This is the way he is the way that God has provided. So that we might be saved. From there, John goes on to say this.

[19 : 04] He says in verse 19, this is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Now there's a lot in here. These are, these are deep words. These are words that are worth taking time to just meditate on. I mean, they say a lot about how things are between God and between man.

how things are in our world. John's already taken up the metaphor of light at the very beginning of his gospel. And here he does it again.

Light has come into the world. That light is, is the sun. It is, it's Jesus. It's the words that he said.

[20 : 17] But people loved darkness instead of the light. And they will not come into the light. Why?

John gives us a couple reasons. It's really, it's really just one reason. Because their deeds were evil. Jesus, the light of the world, he, he shines light on our sin.

He exposes it for what it really is. He brings conviction of it where he goes. And because the deeds of, of men are evil, we, we don't want them to be seen.

So we move away from the light. We hate the light. We want to continue doing those things. We love those things. And therefore we hate the light.

This is, this is, this is what's going on between God and mankind. This is the dynamic. The response to Jesus is not always favorable or positive because of how he, as the light, exposes our sin for what it really is.

[21 : 39] Our deeds for what they really are. Evil. Deserving of condemnation. With the rest of our time, I just want to talk about how can we use these words of John 3.16 to share the good news of Jesus with others.

Most of us are familiar with these words. We know what they mean. And I hope that they've, they've really touched the hearts of each one of us in this room. Most of you, some of you, I hope will have it memorized.

If you don't, today is the day to, to commit this to memory, to really soak, soak in these words and meditate on them and see what is there.

The glorious good news of Jesus. This verse is what I like to call the gospel in a nutshell. And there are a number of verses like it. The good news is just kind of laid out with some of the core essentials so that we can just hear it all in one little piece.

But even as we talk about how to share Christ from these words, I want to just remind us that this is just one little piece. This is just a tiny seed. This verse.

[23 : 00] What is the gospel? The gospels, it's, it's, it's big. It's, it's the whole story of Jesus. He is the good news right from the start of his story to, to the end of it.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all together. That's the gospel. That's the good news of Jesus. What the prophets foretold long ago about this one.

That's the good news of Jesus. What we see explained in the New Testament letters in, in, in revelation. That's the, that's the future coming good news of Jesus.

That's the full reach of the gospel. If we could, we would want to share all of it with someone. But sometimes we have a moment where we may only get to just share a little bit.

And if that moment comes up, whether it's a devotional or a conversation with a friend, even just an opportunity to pray or, or, or to speak about Jesus, this is a wonderful place to go because a lot of the, the core pieces of the good news of Jesus are right here.

[24 : 13] And it's a verse that many of us already know. And probably the people that are listening to us, hopefully they'll have heard it already and there'll be some familiarity there.

So how do we share the gospel from John three 16? This would be my encouragement. First off, memorize this verse, commit it to your heart, and then just take some time to think through what, how would I share with a person just in my own words, based on some of the, the key aspects that are here in this verse, the place that I would encourage you to start is with this little phrase right here, shall not perish.

If you say these words, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. What, what is the person that you're sharing with thinking about when you say this?

Shall not perish. Well, what perish? What do you mean by perish? Why would we perish? This is really the place to start, I think, because without this, the, the, this is not good news.

It's, it's good for us to remind people gently what perish means, why we need this gift of God's son.

[25 : 37] And so what, what you might do is, is just remind them of, of the, the big story of, of scripture. God created the world. He made everything good. He created you and me, but we sinned against him.

We, we rebelled against God. And because of that, he said that our, our punishment will be death. And so we're, we're under that sentence.

And, and someday the Bible tells us that we're going to face that. We're going to stand before him in judgment and receive what we deserve for our sins. And it's, it's, it's not even just physical death.

It's more than that. It's condemnation. It's, it's, it's hell. It's death in the ultimate sense, the worst sense. that's what John means when he says, shall not perish.

The next thing to share is the good news of what God has done about this problem that we have. We're facing judgment. We're facing, getting what we deserve from God for our sins.

[26 : 52] We're on the hook, but the good news is simply this. God gave his son to fix that for us. As you think about sharing these words with, with a friend, you might want to explain what does that mean?

What does it mean that he gave his son? Gave him to do what? You might, if you have time, go to the Christmas story, send him into the world is very much in view here.

But if time is an issue or if you can't share more of the story of Jesus, go straight to the cross. He gave his son and then go straight to the cross.

The gospel summed up in two words. Paul does this in 1 Corinthians. He says, it's Christ crucified. That's the pinnacle moment where our sin problem is fixed at the cross.

Explain that. What does that, what did he do there? What does it, use you, do it in your own words. You know, there, there are many metaphors in scripture. There's the metaphor of ransom.

[28 : 05] There's the metaphor of sacrifice, of substitution. Just pick it, explain it in the way that, that you feel most comfortable, that you understand.

Jesus went to that cross to, to, to receive on himself the condemnation that we deserve so that we could be forgiven and go free.

That's what it means that God gave his son. I think it's so important as we do share with people that we remind them of why he gave his son.

It's one of the best words in this verse. Loved. God loved the world. That's why he did this.

Because he loves you. Make it personal. God loves you. And so he sent his son to do what he did so that you might be spared what you deserve on that final day.

[29 : 13] from there, if you have time, if it fits, talk about the world. This may not fit in every conversation or you might not need to go there.

But it's good news that God has given the gift of his son so that anyone might be saved. This is not just restricted to a specific group of people, race, or ethnicity.

ethnicity. This is for all. It's not restricted to those who have lived a good enough life. It's for whoever believes in him. Maybe the person you're talking to feels like they've done some things that are just beyond what God could forgive.

No. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. then you might take a moment to talk about what it means to believe in Jesus.

This is really this is our response. So, we start with our problem. We're destined to perish. Then we look at what God has done for us to fix it.

[30 : 26] He gave his son because he loves us. And what do we need to do to receive this gift? We need to believe in him.

That Jesus is that one, that provision of God. If you get the chance, you might want to explain what does that mean? What does it mean to believe in Jesus? Even as we've looked at here in this conversation with Nicodemus, there's been some discussion over what does it mean to believe?

to truly believe. Nicodemus believed that Jesus was a teacher who came from God, but he also did not accept Jesus' testimony.

So, what does it mean to truly believe in Jesus? Explain it. There are many other places you could go. James chapter 2. You could look at some of what Paul teaches in some of his letters about true faith.

And then finally, what does all of this secure for us? What does believing in Jesus, what do we get from all this? This is the good news of the gospel.

[31 : 42] We don't get what we deserve, which is to perish. God's judgment upon us. We get eternal life.

life that lasts forever. Heaven. There are many ways we could describe it. I would hope that in a just a genuine conversation about this with someone that the person would ask, well, what does that mean?

What is heaven about? You know? And maybe have the opportunity to share a little bit of what the scriptures say there. remember. So, I would encourage you to commit this verse to memory.

Think about these key parts in the verse and just have it in your heart, what you might say to someone if you had the opportunity. I think that's very simply what it means to be prepared, to be ready to give an answer to those who ask for the hope that we have in us.

And this is one easy way to do it. It's a verse most of us already know. And so, as we do that, just a couple words of encouragement. My encouragement would be to share the gospel in conversation.

[32 : 55] Sometimes we kind of get this feeling of like, you know, if we get that moment, then we're just going to let fly and it's going to be a little sermon. Just share it naturally in conversation.

Let there be opportunity. How are they receiving it? What's the response on their face? Even as Jesus talked to Nicodemus, he said to him, you're surprised by what I'm saying to you?

You shouldn't be. You know, maybe they want to ask a question before you're, you've got through everything you want to say. Let it be natural. Let it be a conversation. Sometimes I think we kind of feel like, you know, we got to get the whole thing out before, because this is our chance.

But share it in conversation. Let it, just use your own words, be natural. It's different if you're giving a devotion. I mean, you might have the opportunity to say a whole bunch and then talk to people about it after.

The second thing I want to encourage you with is that we should expect poor responses. John has just said this in here. Jesus is the light that has come into the world, but people hate the light and will not come into it because it exposes the evil that they're doing.

[34 : 14] This is natural. This is to be expected. So don't let that discourage you that people might not respond favorably. Jesus has already told us that. As Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

But to us who are being saved, it's the power of God. Or we could look at the parable of the sower and the seed and the soils. The problem wasn't with the seed.

It was with the soils in how the response happened. And so we should expect that sometimes we will get a poor response, that people will not like what we say or they won't buy it or they'll disagree.

That's okay. Share it anyway. And the other side of this, of course, is we can expect that some people will respond favorably. Some people will be saved.

It'll be a work of God. I want to encourage us simply to be courageous. Fear is often a thing that just it gets in the way.

[35 : 20] Yeah, this is a big deal. These conversations aren't always easy. But be courageous. Ask a person. So what do you believe about this? Can I share the good news with you?

There's the simplest way to, can I share what I believe about Jesus? The thing that gives me hope every day. Be courageous. A big factor in this is simply setting straight in our hearts whose approval we really value most.

Gods or peoples. if we're constantly craving that approval from our friends and from other people it's going to be hard to say words that we think they might not like to hear love deeply in order to share the good news with people we need to love them deeply sincerely from the heart that we're going to we're going to take a risk we're going to say it we're going to initiate the conversation we're going to ask the question even though we don't know how they're going to respond because we care about them we don't want to see them face what they will face without christ i want to encourage us all simply simply with this we don't need to be ashamed of christ he is our savior he has done what needed to be done so that we could be saved and one day he's going to come back he's going to bust through the clouds with power and great glory and every word that we have said about him every time we have risked to try to share with someone about jesus all of those words will be vindicated as paul said i am not ashamed of the gospel it's the power of god for salvation to all who believe i want to encourage us to let go of anxiety paralysis you guys know what i'm talking about you get that moment where you're on your own and you're thinking about how might i share this with someone in case it comes up in the conversation and and you're thinking through i want to say these i want to make sure i i don't leave this out and we can get so worked up and just worrying about what's going to happen in that actual conversation in that moment if it comes when it comes and we kind of get paralyzed by that and then we don't end up saying anything at all we're so worried that this might be my one chance to say it to share it with this person and if i'm not ready to share it perfectly then i'm not going to take the chance don't get caught up by that trap don't worry about it if i could encourage you one thing i've learned from preaching almost every sunday morning is that it almost never comes out exactly the way that you planned it or thought that it would come out this is the real moment here and that's okay maybe you didn't say everything that you planned to say or thought you would say or even the most important thing you left out but god can still use what you did say in that moment in amazing ways that one simple phrase that you said that you thought wasn't even the most important thing could be the one thing that they put their trust in and believe and that leads them to search out the rest and understand the rest of the story and they're born again and they're saved so don't get caught up in anxiety paralysis god uses ordinary people like you and me to share his good news and to save and lastly i want to encourage you just to pray for opportunities if we're going to go to the work of preparing ourselves and thinking through you know john 3 16 what might i say in this conversation if i could have it with someone let's pray for opportunities and let's see how the lord will bring people to us and and and be ready to share in those moments so that's my encouragement with john 3 16 it's a familiar verse

let's put it to work let's use this good seed that we've been given let's let's let's sow it and do it for the glory of christ let's pray father in heaven thank you for these words thank you for the ways that you have worked in our hearts thank you for the love that you have shown in sending your son and giving your son for us we ask that you would give us courage give us boldness teach us guide us help us in sharing this hope that we have with others we pray right now and ask would you give us opportunities lord we know you've put us in this community for a reason that you could take us home to heaven right now if you wanted to so we pray and ask that you would give us those opportunities do that work in our hearts that needs to be done so that we'll be ready when they come to speak for you we ask this in jesus name amen amen thanks for that josh you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you