

the gospel of

JOHN

witness to the light

JOHN: JESUS IS GREATER

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Scripture Reference: John 3:16-21

Please remain standing for the reading of God's word. It comes to us today from the book of John chapter 3 verses 16-21,

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. 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. And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things, hates the light and does not come to the light lest his work should be exposed. 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.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated

Good morning. How are we doing? Yeah, yeah. Good. Before we get started, well first of all, I'm Jeff Vanderstelt. If you don't know who I am, I'm one of the elders here

and I'm giving my time primarily to teaching and training. And so I serve a lot of you this way on Sunday mornings, so it's good to meet you. If I haven't yet, I'd love to see you afterwards. Come say hello to me. I want to make sure you all have a Bible, so if you don't have a Bible, raise your hand. We will give you a Bible that you can keep, in fact, if you don't presently own one, so raise your hand and we'll get you one if you don't have one yet. Today we will be on page 518 in those Bibles. John 3, is the passage we're looking at.

While those are being handed out, I want to just acknowledge that there are some churches that struggled today in terms of should we meet, should we not in light of the news with the virus, just so you know, we're going to keep tracking with schools and what they're doing, and so we just got a notice last night that all the schools will be meeting Monday, and so they're realizing at this point they believe it's safe. So I just want you to know that that will, we'll do whatever we can to stay up to speed with what is actually happening. But I still want to stop and pray because for a lot of people this is creating a lot of fear, a lot insecurity and so we want to pray to God to meet us all in that and also to eradicate this right. So let's pray and ask God to help.

Father, we come to you and we know that you are the Great Physician. We know that you are the one who nothing can get by without you knowing about it and doing something about it. And so we ask that you would, we pray for healing of anyone who is presently sick. We pray for wisdom that you would grant our doctors, that they would be able to come up with the way to bring healing and help. We know that you can supernaturally stop this at any point. So we ask of that as well. Father that you would do that and we also ask that you would give us wisdom as we move forward. Set us free from fear that can so paralyze us and keep us from truly living. Lord, we thank you that we can be here together today. Keep us healthy, protect us, watch over us, watch over our hearts. And Lord, as we open your word, we pray you to remind us of your great love in Jesus' name. Amen.

Alright, so the question I want to ask this morning is this. I'm gonna ask it a few different ways. First of all, does God love everyone? Does God love those who even reject him? Does God love people who do evil? The big question is, does God love sinners? Okay, that's the big question of today. And the passage we read said,

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

Now, D.L. Moody was an evangelist in the 1800s, some of you, how many of you have you heard of D.L. Moody? There's a Bible school named after him in Chicago, very famous preacher, he wanted, he acknowledged that this verse, when he finally saw it and realized what it said changed his entire understanding of the love of God. He tells a story about very early time in his ministry when he traveled over to England and while there he met a guy by the name of Henry Moorhouse and as he was talking with him, Moorhouse said,

I'm really thinking about coming to America. And Moody responded pretty quickly. Well if you come to American, you should ever get to Chicago, let me know. I would love to give you an opportunity to preach at my church.

Of course, after Moody said that he regretted saying that because he realized he'd never heard the guy preach. So, he got a little nervous about saying that and kind of hoped he would never come to America.

And sure enough eventually Moody receives a telegram from Moorhouse and it says, this,

Just arrived in New York, I'll be in Chicago on Sunday, Moorhouse.

So Moody now is freaking out because he knows that he promised that he could have his, that he would give him his pulpit to preach. So he begins to talk to his wife and get counsel from her and from some of the church leaders and he had just decides what their counsel to let the guy preach at least once, and if he's good than a let them preach again. But the day that he was going to preach Moody had to be out of town. So Moorhouse came, he preached.

After the week was over, cause I guess he continued to preach, the leaders seem to think he could do a good job,

Moody returned and asked wife, well how did he do?

And his wife responded, Well, he's actually a better preacher than you are. He's telling sinners that God loves him, loves them. You got to go hear him.

And Moody's first response was, what? He's telling sinners God loves them. That's not true.

Well you remember Moody is a young preacher and so she said, well he's been preaching on John 3:16 all week and so you probably should go listen. So Moody went to the church that evening to hear him preach.

Moorhouse got up on the pulpit and began to say, I've been hunting for a text all week that I, and I just can't find a better one than John 3:16 so I'll just talk about it one more time.

And it turns out he had been preaching on the same text every night. And Moody later testified as he sat there and listened to him preach this text that he for the first time, saw the greatness of the love of God and it changed him forever.

There's a preacher of God's word who didn't believe God loves sinners, but John's really clear in Jesus' words, God so loved the world. The world, the word world in the Greek new Testament "kosmos" is used 186 times. In every single instance it's used to connote a sinful situation, a broken reality.

So what John is saying that Jesus said is that God loves sinners. He loves the sinful world. He loves sinners like you and me. And some of you are like, well, I'm not a sinner. Well, Paul would beg to differ and so would rest the rest of the Scriptures that at one time we all were sinners. Ephesians 2, Paul writes to a church in Ephesus and he says this,

You are all dead in the trespasses and sin in which you once walked following the course of this world. (there's that word again), following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature, children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Notice it doesn't say by nurture, we're children of wrath, but by nature we were born into this reality. That from the very beginning of our existence, we were bent against God and towards our self in a way that turns us in on ourselves and actually leads to destruction of our very being. That's all of us.

Abraham Kuyper is famous for saying there is not one, not a one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry "Mine!".

But parents. What is the phrase that comes out of the mouth of a two year old most often? "Mine!" And "No!" That's the other one, right? Just like the seagulls on Finding Nemo, right? Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine.

If you're a parent, you know the nature of sin is real. That we're born into an existence where as parents, we know as soon as we possibly can, we're trying to curb or withhold the destructive reality of sin inside of our kids. That's why we discipline. That's why we have to train them in the way they should go, because if not, they will go and pathways that are destructive, and this is true for all of us.

That's why Jesus says, as we heard last week, you and your children must be born again because you were born into a broken reality. You're born into a state of rebellion against God. You are born into a way of living that destroys relationships. And so we all need a spiritual rebirth as Jesus said last week. Now the good news is Jesus doesn't just say, hey, you must be born again. He says, you must be born again, the Spirit will bring it about and it'll be through what I've done and that's what we're going to talk about today.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

Why did the Son of God take on flesh and become a human? Because Gods so loved sinners. Why did Jesus live his life and serve humanity the way he did? Because God so loved sinners. Why did Jesus willingly die on a cross? Because God so loved sinners.

Jesus willingly submitted his life to the Father's will. He lived a life of perfect obedience and submission. Never once did he rebel. Never once did he turn away. He is to us and for us the righteousness of God, showing us how we ought to live, showing us how we have not lived and then living it for us. And then he himself willingly went to the cross as our righteousness, dying in our place as a substitute so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus who knew no sin, Paul says to the church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 5:21,

He who knew no sin became sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

John writes later in a letter, 1 John 2:2,

He (referring to Jesus) is the propitiation, which is the atoning sacrifice or the full payment for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

He's offering this to everyone regardless of how wicked we have been, regardless of the things we've done. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that he might be the full payment, the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only our sins, but the sins of the whole world. John is really clear about. Does God love sinners? Absolutely. How much? The depth of God's love for sinners is measured by God's own love for his own Son. I want to say it a different way. He loves you and I, as much as he loves Jesus, like Jesus prays at the end of his prayer, it's often referred to as the high priestly prayer in John 17,

Father, I pray that you would love them with the same love that you love me with.

That's pretty, that's remarkable. God loves sinners. As much as God loves his own Son. I want to say that again. God loves sinners as much as God loves his own Son. Do you believe that. Do you believe that right now? God's saying, I love you like I love Jesus. Well, I'll say it another way. God's love and giving Jesus for you says you are worth Jesus to him. God's loving giving Jesus for you says you are worth Jesus to him. That's the price tag on your life, the statement of worth that God deems you have. It's your worth, his own Son. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son and all you have to do is receive. All you have to do is believe. He's not asking you to do anything other than believe it and receive him.

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

Now, here's the tendency. All of us are going to have heard all of this before. Jeff, give me something new. There is no better news than this. There is no better news that God is saying to you. You must, you don't have to clean yourself up. You don't have to pretend. You don't have to act like you have it all together. You just have to say, I am a sinner apart from Christ, hopeless but in Christ because I believe in what he's done and receive it for myself, I get to freely receive eternal life through Jesus Christ. And this isn't just about belief about Jesus. I want to be clear. This is about belief in Jesus. In fact, the language of the text is: entrusting your life into his life. Putting the weight of your existence, of your hope, of your future, of everything in Christ Jesus.

How many of you guys ever done a trust fall, right? How many ever had been dropped when someone did that? I watched that happen once and I'm like, I'll never do a trust fall again, you know. This text is saying to trust into interest your life into Jesus is to say, I'm placing my life, the good, the bad, the ugly, all of it in him like I would a trust fall, I'm just falling on him, on his grace, on his provision, on his kindness, on his righteousness. It's all him.

And he's very clear. Jesus, really clear. In this statement, there are only two options, not three, not four, not more. Two options either perish by not believing in Jesus or have eternal life by believing in Jesus. Those are the two options. We'll find that Jesus incredibly exclusive throughout the whole narrative of John, that he is the only way to God the Father as he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me. So there's only two options, perish, be destroyed by sin and its consequences or have eternal life. Be saved by Jesus to live the life, the fullest, most abundant life that never ends, possible. And he wants us to hear it again after verse 16 verse 17 he wants you to hear God's heart for you,

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world.

Please hear that God did not send a Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that through him, the world might be saved. Verse 18,

Whoever believes in him...Now, by the way, I want to pause every once in a while, in the book of John, because John is probably the most definitive gospel declaring Jesus to be God out of all four gospels.

They all say it, but John especially, so even this statement Jesus saying about himself, whoever believes in him, meaning Jesus, he's saying that about himself. The idea that Jesus would say whoever believes in is a statement of his deity because there is no way any Jewish person would say, you've got to believe in me. They would say, you believe in God and God alone. So, when Jesus is making the statement, he is making himself equal with God as the Son of God. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he's not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Now start with this. First of all, God did not send Jesus the Son of God into the world to condemn the world. I want you to hear that. And the reason why I want you to hear this, because so much of the message that seems to be proclaimed out there is a message of condemnation, right? I mean, anybody hear it?

I took my son this last year, Caleb, we went to the Husky game and as we're walking up to the stadium, there's a guy yelling in a Bullhorn as loud as possible: You're going to hell. God hates sinners. And I'm just hearing all. So I asked my son at one point, I go, what are you hearing in the message? He goes, that doesn't sound like good news. And that doesn't sound like a God that we know.

God did not come to condemn the world. He came so that the world might be saved through the Son.

I was at a lunch this last week. I told you guys, I'm beginning to have some conversations with imams and rabbis and pastors, and it's not a joke. I said that to me clear last time we were together, Bob Roberts flew into town and we're having a conversation. What did it look like? You know, we're very clear. We don't believe the same thing. I want you all to hear that. It's like, it's not like I'm getting squishy on you and you're all going to pray for our pastor. Like, no, we're very clearly saying we don't agree, but we should be civil. We should be good neighbors. We should love one another. Our, our own Bible teaches us to love God and love people and so if we can't even fulfill the basic command of loving God and loving people, even though we don't agree, we're in big trouble. Right? That is the fundamentals.

And so one of the, a woman who works for MAPS, which is the Muslim Association of Puget Sound, which is where we're having our lunch together down in Redmond, this woman gets up and remarkable woman Aneela is, is her name, and she's Muslim. And she started to share kind of what they do and what they're about. And at one point she says, I hate to say this, but we know that the people who hate us the most in this country are Christians and all of these pastors are sitting there and we're not disagreeing. We know it's true. Unfortunately, all the stats say it's true. I don't believe that. I don't feel that way to be clear. But when you read what's going on in the reality of our world, that's what they hear. And they're scared to death because of it.

Bob Roberts got up and spoke after her and he, he said he's good friends with the imam who leads a mosque in D.C. It has 30,000 Muslims, I, I'm told, and they were at the prayer breakfast together a few weeks ago in D.C. And, and this, this particular imam was meeting privately with a very, very well-known prominent Christian leader who is very vocally tearing down Muslims all the time, okay. And saying mean terrible things and he's meeting with them and this imam says to him, you want me to become a Christian? Right? And the man of course says, yes, I do. He said, so how are you going to help me become a Christian if you don't love me? He's like, it seems like

your own Jesus teaches that if people are going to know that he's there, his disciples, they're going to know by their love, like you want me to become a Christian, love me! And then he took a picture together and he's like, Hey, they got a picture and clicked it. He said, so now for now and whenever you post something negative about me, I'm going to post this picture of you and I together with arms around each other. So they, everyone knows you love me. Right? It's unfortunate that that a Muslim imam has to teach us our own Scriptures and how to obey them, because Jesus said I did not come into the world to condemn but to save, to show God's love for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

And I'm convinced that we all treat others in the way that we think God has treated us. And so if we have primarily a condemning posture towards other people in the world, it's possible. It's because we still, God is condemning us. That God is looking down his nose at us, very disappointed, very ashamed of you and you're, you're walking, cowering wondering if God really does love you and if you've done enough to prove that you're worthy of his love.

And then some of us go the other direction, we'd say, isn't God lucky to have me cause I'm so much better than them. And that's just another form of self-condemnation cause you know that if you didn't keep up the act he would condemn you as well. Cause you're still thinking you're accepted because of your behavior, but you're not accepted by God because your behavior, you're accepted by God because of Jesus's behavior and what he did for you. Because God determines that he wants to put his love, his affection on sinners to draw them to the Son so that they would see in the sun their only hope for salvation. It's not God's anger that leads us to repentance. It's his kindness that leads us to repentance. It's us realizing we don't deserve the kind of love that God would give and when we see the kind of love we would get, even though we don't deserve it, it leads us to lay down our lives, the safest being in the universe, the one who could condemn us but won't, if we're in Christ Jesus.

So I don't know where you're at today. Maybe some of you are feeling the condemnation, maybe even some of you, as I said, God loves sinners. God loves the world. You're like, I don't know if I agree with that. I would say start with what you think about how he feels about you in Christ. Because all of your external relationships are always connected to the one that's vertical with God himself. Paul even says it this way in Romans 8:1,

For those who are in Christ Jesus (that means they've entrusted their life into him and all that he's done for them) there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Isn't that good news today? Some of you, and I'm included with you, if I look at the things that I tend to do in my life and sometimes regretfully say or engage in, if I, if I didn't believe this to be true, I would be crushed under the weight of my sin, the guilt and the shame, but I don't have to be because in Christ there is no condemnation.

In fact, Paul goes on in many other places to move from calling us sinners to calling us saints. How many saints in the room? A lot of us have a hard time in raising our hand where like, I haven't done anything. I know you're not a saint because of anything you've done. You're a saint because God has made you Holy through Christ his Son. You're no longer condemned. You're called a son or daughter of the living God. You are a saint, made holy through the Holy One, Jesus Christ.

However, Jesus wants to make sure you understand the other reality. If you choose to reject what he has done, you stand condemned if you do not believe in Jesus.

I want to be really clear. Jesus did not come to condemn you, but he did come because you stood condemned. I want to say that again. He did not come to condemn you, but he came because you already stood condemned. Meaning you and I, apart from Jesus, have no hope to stand before a holy God with any confidence that our sin has been taken care of if we don't turn to the only one who can take care of it, which is Jesus Christ. You and I have sinned. The Bible is very clear.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

That word, glory is "doxa", which means the true nature of what God's like. To sin is to fall short in any way of being what God is like and your thoughts, your motives, your words, or your actions. How many of you, don't raise your hand, how many have sinned in the room? All of your hands should go up. Don't do it, but just we're gonna assume you just said yes, right? Because none of us have perfectly displayed what God is actually like in every way possible. We've all fall short of his glory. You were created as image bearers meant to display what God's like in all of life and we've all fallen short. And the result of that Paul says, is that all our sin, that we committed the wage for it, the payment for it, the result of it, the consequence is death. And when Paul says that he's not just talking about our future reality, that we all will die, but that death entered into our lives today and affects our emotional, psychological,

relational, and cultural expression of life, that we really are broken. That we really have been perishing apart from Jesus. And we will if we leave this world having not come to him by faith as the one who can heal our brokenness, remove our sin and give us new life. We were condemned.

I want to be really clear. How many would say there's real hell on earth? Have you seen it? There's real hell on earth. Okay. That real hell on earth that we see all around us is God's way of saying, life without me is really bad. Run to me now so that you get to experience life eternal in a new heaven and a new earth, not the other, perishing in hell run to me now. You all have the opportunity because we all were condemned, but we don't have to be condemned any longer because Jesus did not come to condemn, but to save from our condemnation.

And to be really clear, God puts the choice before all of us. Do you want my love, he says, do you want my Son, he says, do you want life, eternal life, abundant life free from condemnation life that is truly living forever? Do you want it? Believe in my Son. You have a choice.

C S Lewis, in his book, the Great Divorce said this,

There are only two kinds of people in the end. Those who say to God, thy will be done, and those to whom God says in the end, I will be done.

All there in hell, choose it. Without that self-choice, there could be no hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find Jesus says those who knock the door will be open. Maybe you're here today going,

I've been knocking on when looking, I want life. I'm telling you, I'm lifting up Jesus right now to give you him as the answer.

Come to him, believe in him. And I love what Jesus does. First he woos. Son of man did not come to condemn, but to save. Then he warns. If you don't believe in me, then you stand condemned. It's almost as if Jesus saying, if the good news of me bringing you everlasting life, eternal joy and bliss is not enough to bring you to me, then perhaps the bad news of the damning consequences will. I'm trying to woo you, but if you won't be wooed, I'm warning you, cause you, you must heed the word I'm saying. I am the Son of God. I'm the very voice of God on this earth. If you don't believe in me, you have no other voice to listen to.

He wants you to believe not just for his sake, but your sake. He knows that live without him is hell now and will be forever. So you might ask, why don't we put more people not believe? Jesus says in verse 19 that this is the judgment. In other words, the verdict, the conclusion:

the light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Yes, Jesus did not come to condemn or judge the world, but he did bring a judgment. He did make a statement that is true. We would prefer running from God than running to God. We would prefer darkness over light. We prefer sin over submission to God. And to be clear, this is not an intellectual issue. This is a moral one. This is not a head problem. This a heart problem.

How many of you guys know of Rhett and Link? They're YouTubers, famous guys, I know that 11 o'clock is going to raise their hands cause that's a younger group. Sorry, I'm old too. So they have recently come out and talked about how they used to be Christians and served in Crusade for Christ and all that. They've, they've walked away from believing the Gospel, believing in Jesus. And one of the statements that I think it's Rhett makes as he says, it's, I've come to believe that's not so much about what happens after you die, but only what happens while you're alive now. And he goes on to talk about the fact that he's more concerned about how the culture receives them and then believing that somehow God really matters and what he thinks of him.

And Paul actually spoke of a man named Demas when he wrote and he said, you know, Demas used to be with me and preach the gospel with me and all that. But he actually loved the world more than he loved God. He loved darkness more than he loved light. And I'm not saying to throw these guys under the bus. I'm just saying this is what is happening, that we would much more prefer the praise of man and not saying things that are difficult and somehow making sure everybody is okay with us so that everybody will accept us, but that's not the loving thing to do. It's not the loving thing to do.

This text points very clearly to the doctrine of original sin that our first parents, Adam and Eve rebelled against God and after this rebellion it was passed on from generation to generation so that all are born bent on rebellion. As a result, all rebel against God. We all prefer our own way over God's way. That's why last week it was very clear. You have to be born again.

You have to be woken up. You have to be given sight. You have to be given a new heart by the spirit of God and I am helpless. Let me be really clear. I'm helpless to do anything about it every Sunday I gather here, but my hope is that as often as I lift Jesus up before you and declare what he's done for you, that the Spirit of God might just give you sight, might awaken you to the truth. Might finally wake you up from your slumber and you would see and you would believe and you would come to him by faith, and I know last week I said there's some of you have been playing the part all your life, and I said that because I want you to wake up and realize what God has done for you in Christ.

You know your, your response to the light of Jesus is directly connected to whether you've been born again or not. Because if you run to the light, it's because you've experienced him give you a new life. But Jesus is very clear, if you run away, it's because you haven't experienced it yet.

I want to, I just want to stop and ask that question. How do you respond to the truth about Jesus? How do you respond to his words? Do you run toward them? You eager to hear them? Even, even when I, even when you sin, just go like, oh, I just want to run back.

Jesus says, for everyone who does wicked things, hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his work should be exposed in our rebellion. And I'm a, I'll testify personally in my rebellion. My first kind of initial desire is not to run back to the one who will show light on my sin. I kind of want to just go run away from it for awhile and not face it. So, so I'm human. I'm broken. I have that bent in me apart from the Spirit of God given me a new birth and giving me new life and me walking in the spirit to run away when I rebelled, to hide from the light and stay in the darkness.

But, but the good news about the daily pursuit of God's Spirit of my heart is that he continues to tell me, Jeff, you're running the wrong way and it's not good for you. I gave you new birth so you actually want the things of God and you will run to the light because you know that he loves you, forgives you, accepts you and transforms you.

And I bring this up because I find often as I'm working with people in our church and in our community, that some of you are running from community because you don't want the light. Some of you go, man, I just, I just came back to Sunday again because I've been running for a long time and I knew you're going to bring light today. I knew

you're going to preach the truth. I know you're going to lift Jesus up and I know that when that happens, I see my sin for what it is, but hopefully you see the Savior for what he can do.

So what are you doing with the light? Are you running to it? Are you experiencing a desire to see it expose the deeds that are broken and evil or are you staying away or you're running from it? Some of you aren't in community because you know that if you're a community, it would be exposed. Some of you aren't revealing the truth about yourself, even if you're in community, because you don't want anybody to know.

But family, I want Doxa to be the most gracious, loving church we can possibly be so no one ever has to hide again. No one should have to hide their sin, their brokenness, their pain, their wounds. This should be the place where we know the grace and love of God so much that we know we have no condemnation for people either. But we have grace, we have love. We extend mercy because we've received mercy. Amen?

And as you do, as you come to the light, as you experienced the grace of God in community, through the preaching of the word, through brothers and sisters who love you and remind you of what's true in Jesus, and by the way, can I just, can I just warn us, don't continue to go to people who continue to bring a word of condemnation over your life. That's not helpful. In fact, if you need help on that, let us know because we want to correct that. We're not here to bring condemnation. We're here to bring salvation.

But he continues. Verse 21,

Whoever does what is true (which is another way of saying live the life that God saved you to live) whoever does what is true comes to the light.

Kind of weird thing. It's like, okay, I got to run to the light to receive salvation so that I can live a life that's true, and then what happens is I live a life that's righteous, that's godly, that the one that God knew was the best life possible. What do I do? I don't just run it. I run back to the light and go, "more of that". Keep doing it. Jesus I need you to keep revealing the brokenness, healing the sickness, transforming my soul from the inside out so that you, the light can enable me to live in the pathway that is truly living.

And he goes on, he says,

whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out by God or in God.

What's that? That's us as we realize that we're sinners, apart from God, that we've been made saints through Jesus' life, that we are forgiven and being transformed. That the light is shine in the darkness, exposed it for evil. We know we need a savior. We're being transformed by his grace. We start to live a life that looks very different. And all of us who know that go, I didn't do it. He did it. Everything I tried to do didn't work. Even the life that I thought everybody would impress with was destroying me from the inside out because I was just the empty soul, dying but looking like I was living. And when I finally saw the light and he transformed me from the inside out, I kept going back to him cause he keeps transforming me and changing me and enabling me to live a new life. And so I keep going back there so that you can see it wasn't me, it was him. And I hope that you hear that for me as often as I get up here to preach. That I didn't, I have not done anything to save my life. I've not done anything to make me who I am. In fact, I blow it every week when I try it on my own strength and power. I desperately need a savior.

And I need the light of Christ in my life every day, and I need a community of light that will bring it to me so I don't walk in the darkness all alone in isolation. I need a group of people who hold up the mirrors of Christ and let the light just shine on my brokenness. You do too.

I love what Jesus saying. It's like he's speaking directly to Nicodemus. Remember last week we heard that he came to Jesus in the, in the dark at night and it was a way of John saying, Nicodemus was in the dark, but Jesus saying,

Hey, Nicodemus, whoever does what's true comes to the light.

You can just imagine he's kind of going like this.

You're heading in the right direction Nicodemus, keep coming, keep following. You're gonna, you're going to get it.

I love it. If you know the story, I don't want to ruin it for you, but I'm going to have to do it anyway. You've got to hear this. Nicodemus, when Jesus dies and his body is taken down, Nicodemus is there with Joseph of Arimathea saying,

Can we have his body? Can we prepare it for burial?

And he's just got to imagine the guy who put the body in the grave and then comes back to the grave and the body is not there anymore. Is going,

Okay, he was the light of the world. He rose from the dead. I wrapped his body. I saw it in the tomb. He's now alive.

You got to know Nicodemus is, the reason why he shows up three times, by the way, in the book of John, I think John's just going like, Hey, some of you are on the pathway that Nicodemus was on. Jesus drawing you to himself and he's saying to you, through Jesus,

Keep coming. I am the light. Keep coming. I am life. Keep coming. You're on the right path and if you keep coming, you're going to see your evil deeds for what they are and my loving kindness says, I'm not condemning you. I want to save you.

As you experience that, you will boast in Christ and you will be the one who says, I'm not going to leave him ever again. It's crazy. All the disciples leave Jesus at the cross, but Nicodemus there. Pretty amazing.

Have you come to the light? Have you heard the word that Jesus says, God so loved you that he gave his own Son for you? That if you believe in him, you will not perish, but you will have everlasting life. Have you received that? Do you believe that? Jesus says in John 1:12,

Those who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God.

Have you received that family? Well, I'm going to ask you to respond today in one of two ways and I'll lay it out for you. I want you just to bow your heads if you would with me.

There's some of you who've never said,

Jesus, I believe, and I receive what you've done for me at the cross to forgive me of my sins, to give me new life. And today I receive because I believe.

Some of you have never done that. Today is the day to do that. There's others of you who you know, there's areas of darkness that you're not bringing in the light. And you would just say, I would just encourage you in this moment, I'm going to give you, say,

Holy Spirit, would you reveal the darkness? Would you show what needs to come into the light right now? And would you show light on it?

Remember, he's not here to condemn. He's here to save. He's not here to pour out guilt or shame on you. He's, he's, he wants to remove it from you. So, take a moment, one of those two prayers maybe both.

Father, hear our hearts cry. I pray that you would be bringing people into your family right now in this room. Opening their eyes, giving them new birth, granting them faith to believe in the Son of God. And Lord, for all of us who've experienced that before, we are prone to wander. We are prone to hide. We are prone to get more accustomed to staying in the dark than running to the light. Save us again. Deliver us. Remind us of your kindness so that we will run back to you in those areas of our life. Help us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.