

Jesus and Nicodemus

Sermon - May 1, 2022

Scripture Reading: John 3:1-19

Golden Verse: *“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* John 3:17

In just 16 verses, John 3:4-19 summarizes the whole Bible. Verse 16 is called “The Small Bible” which presents us with God’s gospel, showing us the source of salvation, which is the love of God.

“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.” (NIV) This:

- shows us the extent of God’s divine love: God loved us so much that he was able to give us his Only Begotten Son;
- tells us how salvation was accomplished: he gave Christ to death;
- explains how we were saved: by faith in the Son of God;
- tells us who will be saved: all who believe in Jesus Christ;
- and, what salvation is: salvation from loss and gaining eternal life.

Let’s highlight another extremely important phrase Jesus says here: *“Shall Not Perish”*.

This phrase of Jesus is a great warning, a distress signal from above, from heaven to the world, to you and to me: *“Shall not perish”*. Now let’s take this message in a very personal way. Jesus is pointing at your soul, your heart, your life, whispering or shouting in your ears: “be careful not to lose your soul, your life, do not perish”. And now Jesus is placing our loved ones, our children and grandchildren, before us, saying: be careful, that they should not perish. God does not want anyone to perish, and for this, he talks to us now about what he did for us, so we and our loved ones shall not perish.

Nowadays, we often hear that this world has become chaotic and miserable, filled with human errors. But here, we are informed that God loves this world. God loves this messy, chaotic, violent, and corrupt world. This unloving world is loved by God. God did not create the world to perish. God has made such a sacrifice for the world that he gave his only begotten Son, for this world and for your soul.

“Whoever believes in him shall not perish.” Here, God is urging me and you and the whole world to look up to Jesus, the crucified one. If you want to be saved, please look up to Jesus on the cross, and you can see that God wants to save you.

Once, as the people of Israel were on their journey from Egypt to the land of promise, they misbehaved, turning against God and Moses.

For this, God surrounded them with poisonous snakes as punishment and many of them died. But at the same time, God gave them a way to be saved.

Moses was ordered to create a snake of brass, hanging on a pole in the middle of the camp. They were informed that all who looked up to the brass serpent would be saved from the deadly poison. The snake bite was bringing death, but the way to be saved was incredibly easy.

They just had to look at the snake pinned to the pole. They had to believe that taking a look up to the pole would save them. And that was true. We have to believe that God’s promises are true today and always.

There is a wonderful old hymn that encourages us.

There Is Life for a Look

1. *There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved,
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.*

○ **Refrain:**

- Look! Look! Look and live!***
***There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee.***
2. *Oh, why was He there as the bearer of sin,
If on Jesus thy guilt was not laid?
Oh, why from His side flowed the sin-cleansing blood,
If His dying thy debt has not paid?*
 3. *It is not thy tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood, that atones for the soul;*

*On Him, then, who shed it, thou mayest at once
Thy weight of iniquities roll.*

4. *Then doubt not thy welcome, since God has declared
There remaineth no more to be done;
That once in the end of the world He appeared,
And completed the work He begun.*

5. *Then take with rejoicing from Jesus at once
The life everlasting He gives;
And know with assurance thou needst never die,
Since Jesus, thy righteousness, lives.*

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The gospel of the Lord is incomprehensibly simple: *“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.”* (John 3:14-15) Our reformer, Jean Calvin, says that if our thoughts are tormenting us as serpents, and if the thoughts of repentance and self-blame are strangling, we should look at the cross that God has set up in this world. The crucified and glorified Christ provides us with salvation, healing, peace, and victory. Just one look at the cross: it’s there for everyone! There is nothing more to be done, nothing else to do - just believe that God’s Word is true. He does not want the world to be lost, so he gave his only begotten Son.

In Psalm 34:5, we read: *“Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”*

When troubles might surround you, take a look at Jesus, and you will experience that something special will happen to you: your frustration may go down and you will experience an immeasurable peace. If your conscience would torment you, just take a look at Jesus. If you cannot come to terms with the circumstances of your life, look up to him and everything will change in you.

God does not want you to perish. Moreover, he wants you to have eternal life in his glorious home. We should not be afraid of dying one day, but we should be afraid of not inheriting the everlasting glorious life in heaven, which is much, much, more than 80, 90 or 100 years here on earth. It is ETERNAL.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have **everlasting** life.” (KJV)

But right here is the big question: how can one get possession of this eternal life?

It is clear that no one can give himself this eternal life; no one can get it on his own. Just as, at that time, we did not give ourselves this transient earthly life, so we do not give ourselves eternal life. Just as we received this earthly life from the hands of God, eternal life is a gift of God. Just as we are born into this mortal life, so we must be born into eternal life. As we got earthly life by birth, we can get eternal life by another birth, born by the Spirit of God.

This is why Jesus says to Nicodemus: *“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”* (John 3:6-7)

The Greek word that our Bible translates as “born again” has multiple meanings. In a simple way, it can be translated as: birth from above, gaining a new sense of life from God, and becoming a child of God through the acceptance of Jesus Christ.

Only God can help us through the Holy Spirit to understand how much we need Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer. If we accept Jesus as our King, if we adjust all our words and actions accordingly, God will suddenly in ONE MOMENT create in us a NEW being, or he will bring us through journeys when he will shape us, creating us radically new. This is a gift of God and we have to ask for this gift.

As King David was praying in Psalm 51:10, *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*

No wonder Nicodemus asked in amazement: How can I be born again? He had spent his whole life studying and teaching the Old Testament. He was a well-respected person, but Jesus said that even he had to be washed by the water of baptism and by the Holy Spirit to receive eternal life. He had to ask for this and had to accept the new redeemed life from Jesus.

There are so many Christians who know everything about Jesus from how the Bible talks to us about him, but this knowledge is only in their heads and this never moved into their hearts. They never asked Jesus to be their personal Saviour. And this is a crucial problem.

Please ask Jesus to occupy your heart, mind, and whole being, and you will experience from inside what it means to be born again, born from above. Everything that you knew about Jesus will come alive in your heart. You will not only understand but you will also feel the love of God and know that you can impact the world. You will experience that God forgave all your sins. You will understand what God wants continue to do in you and what your new role might be in this world.

Look up at Jesus, who gave his life for you and me on the cross. Look at him as the resurrected and glorious God. Look at him and then you will see yourself differently, as he sees you. Look at him, who was given to us that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have an **eternal glorious** life. Amen