

SERMON FOR MARCH 5, 2023

TEXT: JOHN 3: 16-17

THEME: ONE WAY

“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.

In the name of Jesus:

Street signs exist for our safety. If you ignore them, you do so at your own peril. When crossing a street, you begin to cross the street when the sign flashes the symbol that shows a person walking, that means it is safe to cross. A pedestrian sign that flashes do not cross in red means that it isn't safe to cross the street, that there is oncoming traffic. To cross the street against the traffic, that is when cars are moving quickly in another direction that you want to cross, well, to do so means potential harm to you and perhaps others. You do so at your own peril.

And it just isn't that particular do not cross sign that you need to observe, there are red lights, caution lights, stop signs, merge, and yield signs that are posted that are to be observed for your own safety. One particular sign that needs to be observed is the sign that says one way. This sign means that there is only one direction to travel, only one way to go when traveling safely, you go in the direction that the arrow is pointing. You follow the sign.

One way means just that, go the one way, not the other way, but the one way that the sign is pointing to.

Today, people like to think for themselves and believe that they can make up or follow their own way when it comes to their eternal salvation. Popular opinion today is that there is more than one way to be saved.

So many people today share the common belief that God created the world and watches over it, which is true, but then they fool themselves into thinking that all God wants is for people to be good to each other and to be good people and then they conclude that they are good enough to be saved. They then will justify themselves by comparing their morality with others, thinking that they aren't as bad as what others might make them out to be, so therefore God will be good to them and bless them. Many people stay away from church because they don't think that they need church, they don't need to be forgiven, because they haven't been THAT bad. So God, as a God of love, will overlook our shortcomings and grant salvation to anyone who is in their own eyes a kind and a good person. I think that Nicodemus thought the same thing when we approached Jesus to begin a conversation in the middle of the night.

We see in our text that Nicodemus begins a conversation about eternal life with the understanding that he, Nicodemus, had done enough to be saved.

He certainly respected Jesus as a teacher and wanted to get His opinion, And what Jesus had to say changed Nicodemus forever. Nicodemus approaches Jesus and says: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who comes from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” But note how Jesus responds. **3** Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This blew Nicodemus’ mind, he couldn’t grasp what Jesus was saying. So he asks: “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” **5** Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Why in the world does anyone need to be born again? It’s because there is something wrong when they are born the first time! When anyone makes a mistake in life, the one thing that they hope for is a do over, that is, a chance to get right a second time what they had gotten wrong the first time. And so the reason why Jesus tells Nicodemus, and also you and me, that we need to be born again is because we have been born into sin the first time, and as a result of sin, we are not right with God.

So this is why Christ came into the world, not to condemn the world but to save it. This is why Jesus boils down the basic teaching of the Bible to this

well known, familiar verse: “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.”

How simple is that for Nicodemus to understand? How simple is it for you and me? God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus His one and only Son to save the world, so that through faith in Jesus sinners will not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him.

Jesus is here saying that there is only one way to be saved. Elsewhere in the Gospel of John Jesus says that He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that no one comes to the Father except through Him, that is, by having faith in Jesus.

We live in a world where people have incredible knowledge. There have been tremendous scientific discoveries as a result of this knowledge. We have technological inventions that people ten years ago could only dream of, and make no mistake, these discoveries and inventions are gifts from God. They are blessings in our lives and benefit us and others immensely.

Yet when it comes to the things of God, Jesus explains the truths of heaven so clearly and so simply that even a child can understand it. God so loved the world and so loved you that He sent Jesus to be the Savior. Jesus was

born of the Virgin, He lived for a time in Israel, He touched others with His love, He suffered for the sins of the world, died on the cross, and then rose from the grave, so that all who believe in Him have eternal life here and now and are given the certainty of life beyond this existence with the Lord when He comes again to make all things new.

Nicodemus became a changed man as a result of this conversation with Jesus. Later, after Jesus' death, Nicodemus is one of the faithful ones who takes Jesus' body down from the cross and wraps it in linen cloth and places the corpse in the tomb.

We don't hear anything about Nicodemus after that, but I would like to think that this sincere man who was also a good man was changed by the news of Jesus' resurrection. I think that Nicodemus understood what Jesus was talking about with him late the evening three years before.

But of even more importance is that you understand what Jesus is saying. For what Jesus said to Nicodemus, He says to you today, that God so loved the world, that He so loved you that gave His one and only Son, so that by believing in Jesus you have eternal life by His name.

That is why you have been baptized. That is why the Holy Spirit has given you faith in Jesus, so that you believe! For Jesus was born for you, He lived, He died, He rose again for you so that you might be saved.

All other religions teach that man must ascend or go up to God, so they attempt to be saved by their own efforts and works. They think that there are many ways to get to heaven. But Jesus says something entirely different. God came down from heaven in the person of Jesus. There is only One way to be saved. For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son so that by believing in Jesus, you will have life by His name.

Amen