

The Gospel of John

God's Gift to Mankind

John 3:16-18

INTRODUCTION

This morning we are covering probably the best known verse in the Bible. John 3:16. It is continuing with a **dialog** between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus had come to Jesus in the night to talk to Him. Nicodemus told Jesus that he knew He was favored by God because of the signs that He was performing. Signs that could only come from God.

We are not even sure that the words found in our text this morning was spoken by Jesus to Nicodemus, or if this is John just writing in some truths that the Holy Spirit inspired him to write at this point. Your red-letter edition Bible probably has these words in red. Some might consider a sermon on John 3:16 and the verses that follow “too simple.” It’s a verse for children to learn. I beg to differ. When all is said and done, there are few Bible verses that say so much in such a small space. There would be very few combination of words that could be put together that could more important for anyone, child or adult to learn and ponder.

ILLUSTRATION:

Most of us have a person in our lives that is impossible to buy for. We are faced with the question that plagues many of us when we want to find a gift for someone, “What do you get the person that has everything?”

The "number 1" answer is, “**a gift card.**”

A New York Times article looked at the gift card industry. More than \$80 billion is spent on gift cards each year. However, this was not the most surprising part of the article. The most surprising part of the article is that around \$8 billion worth of gift cards will never be redeemed. Consumer Reports estimates that 19 percent of gift card recipients will never use them. For the merchant, at least, the gift card is a wonderful invention. Just think of it: millions of people visit your store or website and hand you billions of dollars in exchange for nothing more than a plastic IOU card that may never even be redeemed.

My question is this, “What good is a gift that is never used?”

Our text is one of the most familiar passages of Scripture. No passage of Scripture more clearly explains the significance of the Gospel as well as **John 3:16-18**. To a world full of people that seem to have everything God has given the perfect gift. Unfortunately, like many gift cards people fail to redeem this great gift that God has given them. Today, I would like to look at this familiar passage of Scripture through a set of fresh eyes.

Hopefully, we will see why Jesus is the perfect gift for each and every person.

All Stand and Read Scripture

(Read in unison)

John 3:16-18 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Prayer

We are often in the habit of overlooking our greatest need.

If asked this question, “What is your greatest need?” How many of you would have the forgiveness of sin as your first thought?

The vast majority of us would answer this question according to what our own set of perceived needs were. These needs usually fall into two main categories.

Material and Emotional.

But our greatest need is salvation from sin.

Man believed Satan in the Garden of Eden and chose to eat from the Tree of Good and Evil in order to become like God by knowing the difference between good and evil. This brought evil into our lives and separated us from God due to our unrighteousness. Paul, in Romans 3, clearly shows that “sin” is a problem that each and every person struggles with.

The Old Testament law was written so everyone would know that they have sinned. No one could perfectly live by the law. If we fell short just one time, we were deemed unrighteous before God.

Romans 3:23 (NASB)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

I. THE DIAGNOSIS: CONDEMNED!

So the test results are back. The diagnosis is not good.

We are already condemned!

Verse 18 says that the state of every person who has not accepted Jesus is “condemned already.” That is us, all of us, until we accept Christ. **We’re condemned.** It’s not something that’s going to suddenly happen on Judgment Day. It’s already here. We don’t stand condemned for just not believing - we’re already there from our first sin, and we will remain there until it is cured.

Verse 17 says that "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that

the world might be saved through Him". Jesus was not sent into the world to condemn the world. WHY? Because the world was **ALREADY CONDEMNED!** Jesus was sent into the world to save the world from an already condemned state.

ILLUSTRATION:

A visitor was being shown a famous art gallery by an attendant. In the gallery were masterpieces impossible to price -- famous works of genius. At the end of the tour the visitor said, "Well, I don't think much of your pictures." The attendant answered, "Sir, I would remind you that these pictures are no longer on trial. They're masterpieces. Those who look at them are the ones who are on trial."

The Gospel is never on trial, but those who hear it are. We bring the judgment on ourselves. We're already condemned. Verse 18 says "**he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**"

At certain points in history, God has said, "I cannot salvage mankind!" Once, God chose to start over with just Noah and his family, because the rest of mankind couldn't be recovered. With 40 days of rain He flooded the earth and washed away a human race that wasn't **salvageable**. Abraham sought God's mercy for Sodom. If there had been just 10 righteous people in Sodom, God would have spared it. But Sodom and four other cities were too far gone as a city, and God swept them away with a storm of fire and sulfur. That's some OT bad news!

But listen to the good news this morning! **We are salvageable!**

For some reason, God hasn't torched us with fire, and hasn't said, "**Enough!**" Instead, God has shown patience by waiting and spared us and the rest of the world with the plan to redeem us!

Romans 5:6-8 (NASB)

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God understood our plight and was determined to do something to redeem His creation from the great plague of sin.

II. THE CURE: GOD'S SON.

The good news from **verses 16-17** is good because of the bad news of **verse 18**.

ILLUSTRATION:

Whenever an paramedic unit goes near your house, sirens blaring, we assume something: **that someone, somewhere, needs help**, or else those guys wouldn't be going on a run. We know there's a need because help is being sent. The sirens tell us that someone needs serious medical help.

We should not spend time trying to figure out whether or not we need a savior. That fact is evident because God sent His Son to this earth. The picture of Jesus on the cross

ought to get it through to our heads that sin is a **serious** problem that **God** takes very seriously! Listen to what the siren of the cross is saying about human condition! Listen to what this Scripture is telling us about man without Jesus!

John 3:18 (NASB)

18 He who believes in Him is not judged (or condemned); he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

This is a favorite passage because it tells about God's response to our diagnosis of **condemned**.

This was not a last-minute plan that God threw together. He knew from the beginning what it would cost. But God knew exactly what He was doing, and created us anyway! Why did He go ahead and do it?

LOVE!

John has more to say about love than any other Bible author. If you seriously want to understand love and what it's all about, start by reading all John had to say about it. And, just in case anyone would doubt God or His motives in this, get it straight from John why God would even launch the great human experiment in the first place:

1 John 4:9-11 (NASB)

⁹By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

How much did God love the world?

His great love for us is shown in this way: "**HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON**".

If God says He loves us, we can expect that He is going to demonstrate that love in some way. Indeed He did!

He sent His Son to earth where He would be nailed to a Roman cross, writhing in pain, and die as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. "**This is how God loved the world.**" That's the divine response to our human condition.

What? That's crazy! Who does something like that?

Well, God isn't the only One to do some things that seem a little crazy to other people because of love. What greater, higher motive is there for someone to do something a little crazy than the power of love?

The greatest commandment, and the second greatest, are to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. So, I'm just wondering, if that's what God is moved to do by His great love for us, what kind of things will we be moved to do by our love for Him and our real love for other people?

III. THE RESULTS: A NEW LIFE.

So let's look at the results of our belief. Verse 16 says "**whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**".

Belief is more than just something we consider true. We act on it. Belief is something we do. Don't tell me you believe something is true if it doesn't move you to **do** something.

ILLUSTRATION:

A minister told of a fishing trip that he took in 1996. They area had trouble with wild dogs chasing and killing their animals. They had to shoot over 20 of these dogs. It was believed that the wild dogs were all gone. So, there he was, ½ mile from his car, armed with two fishing poles and a tackle box, all alone, 15 miles from town. You see, he believed he was safe, so he was acting like it. Then, about 9:00 in the evening, he looked across the pond and saw at least five dogs on the other side. As soon as they made eye contact, they headed his direction. He came to a new belief all of a sudden. He believed he was in grave danger, so he ran...hard, without looking back! He never once heard the dogs, nor saw them as he ran, but he genuinely believed he was in danger. If we were to believe that wild dogs are chasing you, you act on that belief! He said "If you are having trouble getting motivated to do some exercise program, just get out in the woods with a pack of wild dogs chasing you! It is amazing what some genuine belief can do for you!"

Truth is something we act on, not just talk about. Merely agreeing that it is true it is not good enough. That means nothing. If we really believe something, we'll do something about it.

ILLUSTRATION:

What if I were to tell you that I taped a \$10 bill somewhere under a pew this morning?

Pause.

Some of you are already looking for it!

I didn't even say I really did it! But, what if I told you I **really DID** tape a \$10 bill under a pew this morning and it is still there?

I have a lot more people looking now.

But, remember, I didn't tell you could have it! Well what if I tell you that you can have it if you find it?

Now, nearly everyone is looking!

Ok. Stop looking. **I put it under one of these small pews up front so none of you**



would find it. Pull it out from under the pew.

This proves my point. If you truly believe even that there is a slight chance that I might have hidden a \$10 bill, some of you are willing to make some effort, to risk being ridiculed, all because you believe that one simple thing **might** be true!

If you really believe heaven and hell are real, you'll do something about it. If you believe you are in eternal danger this morning, you will do something about it. You need to decide to act on the truth. Otherwise, don't bother saying you really believe that what God's word says is true.

So your eternal decision comes down to this: **Belief or Rejection.**

Belief in Jesus is God's cure for our condemned state! The verb tenses here mean it's a **continuing action**, not just an event. You don't believe in Jesus, once, and that's it! You don't just get baptized and trust it will save you. It's not some fleeting moment of acceptance that comes and goes. Verse 16 literally means "that whoever is continuously believing". Verse 18 literally means that "Whoever is believing in Him is not condemned." And as we will see in verse 21 "whoever is doing the truth is continually coming into the light."

Life in Jesus is a lifestyle. It begins with an event and it's lived out from there. We are born again and have a new life in Christ. It is on the basis of that continuing faith in Jesus Christ that we **"will not perish but have eternal life."**

CONCLUSION:

You know your condition. You've heard what God has done. Now you must decide what your response will be. Whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

"Having faith in" or "believing in" Jesus means two things:

1. It means accepting Who He is
2. It also means trusting that He will keep His promises.

The Philippian jailor had seen and heard Paul and Silas' faith in the prison in Acts 16. He was aroused from his sleep from an earthquake. Following is his response to truly believing.

Acts 16:27-33 (NASB)

²⁷ When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹ And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The Jailer Converted

³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."
³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.
³³ And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*.

If you believe in Jesus this morning, we urge you to act on that belief. If you believe that He exists, then trust His promise to meet you in the water of baptism and to cleanse you from all your sins there. Believe in His promise to give you the gift of His Spirit living inside you when you're born again.

The Family of God.