

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to John 3

We are continuing our verse by verse study through the gospel of John.

We are in the portion of scripture where Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews – a strict follower of the scriptures – an overall good guy

Who came to Jesus Christ by night wanting information about how to draw closer to God.

There was something missing, there was a void in the midst of all the religion.

So, for the past two weeks – we have studied this conversation that took place.

Nicodemus – it's not about keeping a list of do's and don'ts, it's not about what you can do for God – it's about regeneration, it's about being born from above, it's about being born again, a spiritual rebirth is required – and the only way this occurs is by looking upon the Son of God who was hung up on the cross – to pay a debt He did not owe.

And last week – we looked at the gospel, the Good News, summed up in one verse –

John 3:16

These 25 words show us

That the love of God is limitless, that it embraces all humanity, that no sacrifice was too great – it shows the price tag God put upon each and every one of our heads (this is how much God values us all),– as He gave the best He had to give – His only Son, His well-beloved – for you and me.

This morning, we are going to continue examining the conversation that took place – and we are going to examine the why?

Why did Jesus come?

Let's pray...

[Jhn 3:17-36 NKJV] 17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Here in verse 17, we find the explanation of why God “gave” His Son.

I had you make a note of the word condemn –

In the Greek – this word means – to separate, to divide; to approve; to judge

We get the English word critic from this Greek word

This is a word reserved for the courtroom

It is the idea of judgment being handed down upon an individual

The courtroom has heard the evidence, the judge has pronounced his judgment and now the prisoner is “condemned”

Church – as much as we embrace John 3:16, one of the errors of the church has been its failure to embrace John 3:17

Oh church I pray - that we who've been born again might remember this, today, this week and until God takes us home; that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn, but to save.

This means that if we are one of those believers who go around wagging their finger in people's faces, pointing out the things they can and the things they can't do – we have it completely wrong.

We are not representing Jesus.

If we have a reputation for condemnation rather than compassion, we have it completely wrong.

Again, we are not representing Jesus.

Because that is not what Jesus Christ did in His first coming

He did not come to condemn/judge the world -

Now, there will be a day when Christ will judge –

[Jhn 5:26-27 NKJV] 26 “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 “and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

So, what verse 17 is pointing out is that judgment wasn't Jesus' priority the first time He came – Salvation was His priority.

And that should be the priority of the church.

Now, with that being said –

Turn your bibles with me to Matt 7

Because that always brings up the question regarding judging others.

[Mat 7:1-5 NKJV] 1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 3 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank [is] in your own eye? 5 "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Now, the warning here that Jesus gives us is about how we judge people.

If we judge someone harshly, they we will find ourselves being judged harshly

If we judge people with grace and mercy, then we will be judged with grace and mercy.

We have to be careful of when and how we judge – because there are a lot of individuals who go through life with a critical spirit – always looking for faults in other people.

Now, if we look at verse three, we find that both persons have something wrong – they both have something in their eye.

It is not uncommon to be critical of other people about the same things that we have a problem with.

We have to remember that one of the issues in judging others is pride.

We think that we are better than them – we want to think that their problems are worse than our problems.

That is why we judge.

But the bible warns that pride goes before destruction (Proverbs 16:18)

That is why Jesus tells us in verse 5, that if we are going to be critical of others, if we are going to judge others, we need to examine ourselves first – we need to take that log out of own eyes first.

We need to learn to identify with that person I'm judging because I am just the same.

We need to learn compassion on those who are struggling with the same thing that I am struggling with.

Jesus came to save us.

God's heart is that people would be saved.

Until we come to the point where we stop seeing people as ugly, horrible enemies, and start seeing them as objects of God's love, as people for whom Christ died, then I don't think we've come to know God's heart at all.

Jesus never said "Go into all the world and convict those rotten sinners that they are going to hell" – He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."
(Mark 16:15)

Go and preach the good news – that Jesus loves you and has offered to pay for your sins.

You see church; Jesus couldn't have come to condemn the world because the world was already condemn.

That is what we are going to see in the next few verses.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Jesus came to save the world / He came to save us to rescue us – and the one thing that we must do to be eternally damn is absolutely nothing.

Every one of us this morning has a choice

We can either believe in Him (to place our trust in Him) or we can choose not to believe (to do absolutely nothing)

And by doing nothing, we are damning ourselves.

God is not damning you – you are damning yourself.

You see, the judgment has already been made.

The world is not on trial anymore.

The judgment has already been pronounced – death

We are like a prisoner sitting in our jail cell – waiting for our execution

And then we hear a knock on our jail cell –

A pardon has been offered to us – that is the gospel.

That Jesus has offered to take our place.

Either we accept the pardon or we reject the pardon?

Now, why would anyone reject the pardon???

We have the answer in the following verses.

19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

There is only one reason that people don't believe in Jesus Christ.

It is not because they are ignorant or because don't know any better.

It is because they love their sin.

And even though Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, there is a sort of condemnation or judgment that is continually taking place and that occurs on how an individual responds to the light.

I remember growing up in a home – where I would get up in the middle of the night to get a snack from the fridge and when I would flip that kitchen light switch – all the cockroaches would scatter back behind the fridge and into the cupboards – you could even hear them – that is how many there were.

Sinners love sin

Sinners prefer moral darkness.

Sinners are like the roaches in the house I grew up in

And the reason that they reject the light – is because the light exposes who they really are.

That is why the world pushes so hard against the bible, that is why many people don't go to a church that teaches God's word

It exposes them for who they really are

Therefore, they resent the truth, they resent Christianity, they reject Jesus Christ.

[Jhn 7:7 NKJV] 7 "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

As a pastor – it is my calling to keep the lights in here at Calvary Santa Cruz as bright as possible.

That is because when we serve God, we must do it in the light.

We shouldn't have anything to hide.

And when we fall short, when we blow it, when we sin – we are to get it out in the light.

This means we bring it directly to Jesus Christ.

He is the only One who can do anything about it.

It's interesting to note that even though Nicodemus came to Jesus at "night", he is exposing himself to the true Light.

You see, people who really want to change are not afraid of a little light.

Instead, they welcome it.

Light uncovers hidden things, things that need to change.

People who don't want to change, they run from the light. They make excuses for not going to church, they make excuses for not reading their bibles.

We need to embrace the light and allow it to change us.

22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. 24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

So upon leaving Jerusalem – remember, Jesus had been there observing the Passover – Jesus heads out with His disciples and they begin to baptize people.

John the Baptist was baptizing people at his location and Jesus was baptizing at another location.

Jesus did this because He wanted people to realize His ministry was in harmony with John's.

What John had begun, Jesus would finish.

25 Then there arose a dispute between [some] of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.

So remember, in our earlier studies I had mentioned that the Apostle John – when he uses the phrase “the Jews” he is referring to the religious ruler during this time.

So the dispute is between the religious rulers and John's disciples.

We saw this earlier in chapter 1

The religious rulers had sent a delegation wanting to know why John was baptizing Jews and by whose authority.

So, here the religious rulers – they still can't make any headway against John and his disciples – so what they do here is that they try shift the argument by making John and his disciples jealous

26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified--behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

As Jesus was beginning to baptize people, the crowds began to go to Him instead of John.

So the religious rulers are attempting to bait John – they want him to react in jealous.

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

John the Baptist was not going to react in jealousy because he had a good understanding of the blessings in his life.

John saw His ministry as a "gift" from God.

He understood that it was grace!!!

God gave it. John received it.

Church, we have to remember that we are not in competition with other churches or ministries.

all ministry comes as a gift from God.

There is nothing to get proud about as if you have accomplished something great.

It's God who is at work.

John trusted in the effectiveness & scope of his work to God.

If huge crowds came, it was God's blessing.

If the crowds dried up & went someplace else, that was God's business.

John trusted that as he faithfully followed his calling, what would be would be.

This includes our own lives.

[Eph 2:10 NKJV] 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

As we learn to grow in ministry, we need to remember that it's all a gift from God.

That's what keeps us useful.

28 "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' 29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

Attending a wedding for the first time, a little girl whispered to her mother, "Why is the bride dressed in white?"

"Because white is the color of happiness, and today is the happiest day of her life," her mother tried to explain. (aghhhhhh)

The child thought about this for a moment, then said.... "So why is the groom wearing black?"

John is giving an illustration here

The people are the “bride” and Jesus is the “bridegroom”.

In John’s picture, the Groom is happy to be with His Bride.

And John sees himself as the best man, as the friend of the Groom.

And because the groom is happy – he is happy too.

30 "He must increase, but I [must] decrease."

As a forerunner of the Messiah, John knew the day would come when his ministry would fade out & be taken over by the One he was sent to announce

One of the biggest problems that we all face in being useful to God and useful in the lives of others is...is the issue of me

We all like to be the center of attention.

Just put me in charge God – I will show you what I can do.

And as we read the gospels – we find that this is something that Jesus’ own disciples struggled with.

In Mark 9 – we find the disciples arguing over which one of them was going to be the greatest

And then in Mark 10, James and John ask Jesus if they can be His number 2

We want to be the center of attention

The problem is that the world doesn't need more of us.

The world needs more of Jesus

We need to move out of the way.

You see,

John knew that when he stood before God, the question would not be how many people he had baptized.

The question would be if he had been faithful with his calling.

The numbers are up to God.

Faithfulness is up to us

31 "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 "And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. 33 "He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. 34 "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.

For John, Jesus wasn't just some sort of competing ministry.

John the Baptist realized that Jesus was in a different class than he was.

Jesus wasn't just another different preacher, Jesus was from heaven.

Jesus is above all.

He's been there, He's seen heaven, heard heaven – yet the people don't want to hear the message that He was bringing.

Remember, all they wanted to do was talk about religious things instead of spiritual things.

35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Look what John the Baptist is doing.

He starts out being questioned on whether his feelings were hurt when Jesus' ministry was doing so well.

And he ends up doing what he's supposed to be doing anyway, bringing people back to hearing the gospel.

The wrath of God speaks of His justice.

God is just

And because He is just and holy, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished

However, the paradox of God is that He loving as well as just.

God loves you and doesn't want you to have to pay for your sins because He knows that it's too high a price to pay.

And that is why God sent His Son.

To pay the penalty for our sins.

Jesus came to save us from the very correct, very appropriate wrath of God.

To escape the wrath of God, we need to have our sins paid for.

That will only happen if we are trusting in God's remedy, His Son Jesus.

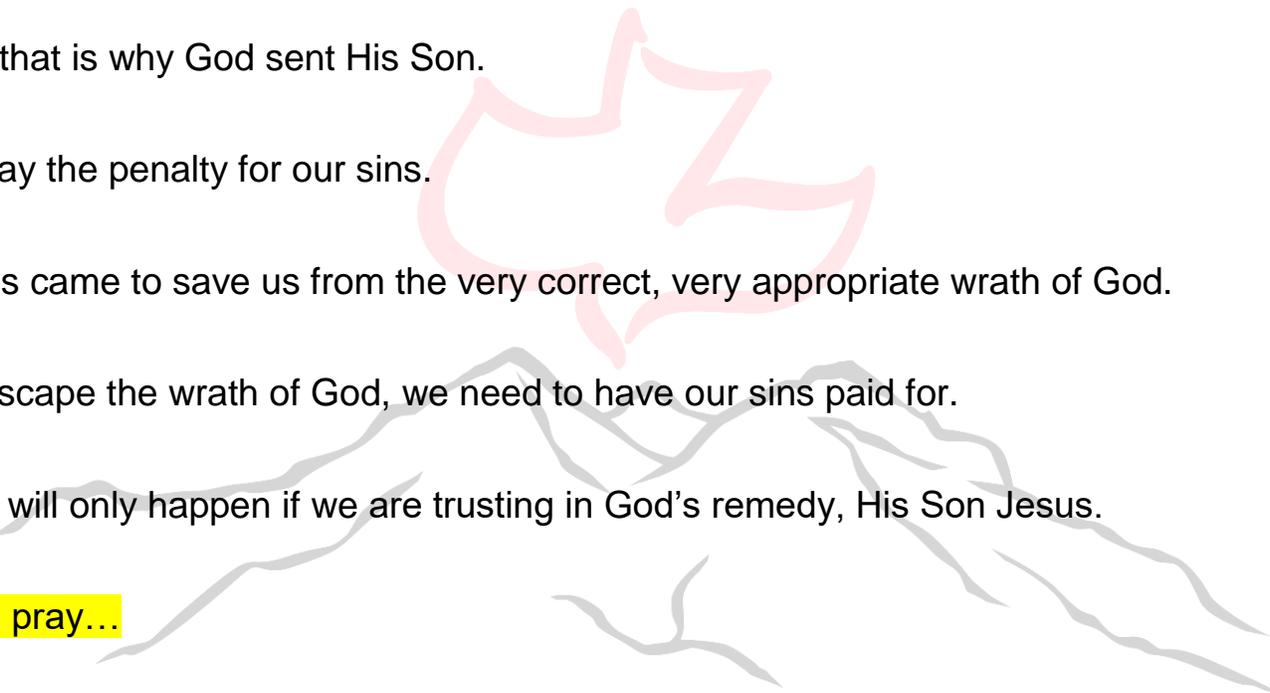
Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.



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Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

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