

Judgement or Salvation
John 3:1-17
March 5, 2023

John chapter 3. Yes, we have Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews who Jesus is talking to about being born again and Nicodemus has this vision in His head of how impossible it would be for him to be stuffed back into his mother's womb. An camel through the eye of a needle, a man stuffed back into his mother's womb and be born again. Yes, very impossible. Yet, he is confronted with the phrase, "You must be born again."

Jesus said Nicodemus must be born again, have you been born again? Yes, you were born from your mother, years ago, that is the flesh born of flesh but the second birth is not of the flesh as Jesus said, it is of the Spirit. Where can the Spirit go? He is like the wind, He blows where He will and He is the one who caused you to be born of water and the Word. Yes, you were born again, born of the Spirit, so yes, you can get to see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus should have understood and yet he didn't. Jesus tells of how Moses lifted up the serpent on the stick that all who looked to the snake would be saved from the poison of the fiery serpents that were biting the people as they complained about not having food and water and even complaining about the food of Angels, the manna that had sustained them through the wilderness.

They had to look to that bronze serpent, set on a pole and they would be saved. Even though Jesus was alive at this point, He was pointing forward to the day, He too would be lifted up on the cross where all who lift up their eyes to Him would be saved. But what were the Jews looking for, especially Jews like Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews? They were looking for the Messiah alright but not the type of Messiah that Jesus was.

What were they looking for in the Messiah? They were wanting someone who could get rid of the Romans so they could go back to the way it was with David. The Lord was with David and he ruled well and brought in all sorts of wealth, only second to his son Solomon. Those were the glory days and for them to think they could be had again, especially with the promised Messiah, the Messiah promised way back in the beginning with the first parents was not really a stretch.

That is what they were counting on but God had a different plan, a different type Messiah. Jesus was that different Messiah.

God came to the Israelites in the cloud by day and by the fire by night as He led them to the promised land. They were chosen by God to have the Messiah come from the line of David and to make all things new for them and something they really didn't expect, the Messiah would also come for the rest of the world.

Jesus the Messiah came in the flesh and yet the Spirit is the one who enters people to be born again, to create faith, faith to believe in Jesus as the one sent by God.

As Jesus said with the verse most people can recite from the Bible: "For God so love the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." This verse is the Gospel in a nutshell. It touts God as the god who loves the creation He has made so much He would actually send, His only Son that whoever has been given faith to believe in Him will not perish but live, live eternally with Him.

We see this as the greatest news ever and yet how different is this Son than the one the Jews were looking for? They were looking for the Son, born of a woman to come to conquer, to bring about condemnation for those who were not Jews. Get them out of the way so they could thrive again.

But what does Jesus say in verse 17? God had a different plan. He did not send His Son into the world to condemn it. No, He was sent in order that the world might be saved through Him. He came to save, not only the Jews but also the rest of the world.

Yet when everyone is born of the flesh, how do they start out? They start out as enemies of God. Yes, you started out that way too. Before the Spirit created faith in you, you were like a ship with no rudder. You could not seek God. You would have nothing to do with Him before the Spirit brought about your second birth, your being born again.

Yes, we have John 3:16 that many know but with the next verse, we see that God wants no one to be condemned. That is not in His plan. He wants everyone to be saved but not all will. No, some will reject His plan of salvation that comes through Jesus and Jesus alone.

We see Jesus saying that He has come not to condemn the world but that the world "might" be saved through Him. Not all will be saved even though His salvation is for everyone. He didn't die on that cross and rise back to life three days later only to die for 90% of the people, you know all those who are the "good" guys. No, He died for all, even those we might consider too bad to really care about. We might say, take em out and rid the world of their evil and yet if the Spirit penetrates their blackened hearts with

His light, they too could find themselves in heaven with Jesus, even though they had done so much evil.

As you are walking down the street or entering a store, each person you meet, Jesus died for them. Their only hope for life past this life is Jesus. Many you see have no idea. They don't know what you know that there is coming a day when They will be judged and if they believe, they will be saved and if not, they will find themselves in a place totally unlike those who believe.

The title to this sermon is Judgement or Salvation. You might be thinking that we all will be judged on the last day but on that day, those who don't believe will hear the words of Jesus that He never knew them.

Martin Luther talks of unbelievers as those who are already judged. In a sense, until the Holy Spirit enters them, if they were to be killed, they would then have their future in place. So many are walking around that way and we are the blessed ones who have been born again. We have been born of the Spirit so we have eternal life and are not the might be saved ones. Our future is secure because Jesus has come and did what He did on the cross and then rose for our justification.

Nicodemus didn't know what he was in the midst of with Jesus. Jesus brings up being born again. That term didn't fit into his vocabulary. So much of what we know about Jesus, even the being born again, may still be terms that people have no idea what you are talking about.

The Jews thought they had it down and because they were God's chosen people, their future was secure but they didn't know Jesus. They were counting on their sacrifices and their work under the law to get them in the good graces of God. They should have known that their sacrifices could never be enough as they had to keep it up, year after year but like everyone, they were sinners like us, thinking we could somehow do enough or do it right or not so bad. Yes, sin has affected and infected us all.

Yes, we sin but the Holy Spirit lives in us to direct us down the right path. Do we always listen, no we don't. We tend to look at ourselves as good and others that have deficiencies. We all know there are things we are "good" at and others may not be that good at but does that make them any less than us? Just because others may think of us as something special, anything special about us is that the Lord has made us His own.

We know we need to be born again and have been but when it comes to others and their seeing their need for what we have, that is where we, so many times fall short. We are like Nicodemus in the not knowing how to share what we have been given. Nicodemus didn't know about this born again thing. We seem like we are in the dark at times, too. Jesus could be saying to us as He did Nicodemus, "Are you not one who should be teaching the world around you? You have come to church, week after week. You have gone to Sunday School and Bible Study, you have even delved into the Word yourself, have struggled with it, thinking about the words and what they mean or could mean, letting scripture interpret scripture, so you know so much. Yet like Nicodemus you fall short at times.

You know of Jesus and what He has done. You know why He needed to come. When Jesus asked the disciples if they too were going to abandon Him like many others who couldn't understand another of Jesus sayings where Jesus said that "...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and will raise him up on the last day." John 6:53-54 He went on to say that His flesh and blood was true food and drink, not just some imagery. It was after this that Jesus wondered about the other disciples and Peter responded with "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life."

The bread and wine you are about to partake is that real food and drink. It is Christ's very body and blood, real food for you and your faith.

Some of you have heard of Bryan Wolfmueller. He is a pastor that was in Aurora Colorado but now is in Texas. He has a YouTube video where he talks of the importance of this meal. He compared it to gold coins and bars. We know the importance of partaking of Christ's body and blood and if we were to truly equate the value, it might be like putting gold coins on the paten and gold bars in the chalice. As it was passed down, each could take a coin and a bar. Then he said you might even have outsiders coming to the rail making it hard to keep track of who could or couldn't partake.

Nicodemus didn't understand all that Jesus was and how the Holy Spirit was involved in all this. You have come to know that Jesus came to save and at the same time He wasn't coming to condemn. Yes, there will be a judgement day where those who don't believe will find themselves in hell while we who believe will live out our salvation in Jesus, forever in the new heaven and earth with Him.