

Walk in Love

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[0 : 0 0] That was from John 3. Jesus replied, Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. How can someone be born when they are old?

Nicodemus asked. Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born. Jesus answered, Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water.

And the spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at me saying, you must be born again.

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit.

How can this be? Nicodemus asked. You're Israel's teacher, Jesus. And do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen.

[1 : 1 2] But still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things, and you do not believe. How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

No one has ever gone into heaven, except the one who came from heaven, the son of man. 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.

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.

For God did not send his son into the world, to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Amen.

Thanks, Joe. Well, we're going to think about what Joe read to us from John's gospel. Gave you a little challenge at the beginning.

[2 : 1 5] Can you memorize the verse before the end of the service? For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

So, going to keep coming back to that, hopefully you can remember it. Every Sunday, I try and give you a thought for Thursday, like something just to remember on Thursday morning, what was church about?

What was Neil about? What did I hear? Well, on Thursday this week, and the next week, and probably the week after that as well, the Thursday thought is John 3, 16.

Wake up, think, what was church about? John chapter 3, verse 16. 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.

I hope those words will stick with you forever. If you're not a Christian, and sometimes you're unsure of what Christianity is all about, that's an amazing summary of Christian belief.

[3 : 16] that's the heart of the Christian faith. That's what you're choosing or rejecting. If you're a young person, and you want to know a really helpful truth about God, that will carry you through life, then 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.

That's a great truth to carry with you for the rest of your life. You might be an older person, full of anxiety, as you get near the end of your days. Well, remember this, God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

So, it's just a really helpful, helpful thing to know. Hopefully, in your dying day, you will be able to remember how much God loves you.

that he loves the world so much, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. Been thinking a lot about walking with God.

I speak to lots of you who feel God is really far away, that you have no sense of his nearness in your life, that he's absent from your own existence, at that personal level.

[4 : 35] And so, this year, we're thinking about a church about, how do we learn to live more in God's presence, or aware that he is present? And, how can we learn to walk with God in life, rather than feel abandoned by God, or forgotten by God?

And, today, that's the thought, really, that I'm taking from John chapter 3, is, to walk in love, to walk in love. And, that's an amazing hope to have, isn't it?

That actually, we might be able to walk in love, and, have an experience of God's love, that is real and powerful, and lasting in our lives. So, God loves the world.

That's the first thing, that I want to say to you today. Secondly, he gave us one and only son. That's the second thing. The third thing, whoever believes, will not perish, but have eternal life.

So, God loves the world. He gave his son, so that whoever believes, will not perish, but have eternal life. So, that's just three simple ideas, that are here. In this verse, as Jesus speaks, to a Jewish religious leader, called Nicodemus, who despite all his religion, was still looking, for enlightenment, or truth, or understanding, of salvation.

[5 : 46] God loves the world. Well, here is, the world, our beautiful planet. But, you know what? I think, we all worry about the world, and we live in a really anxious age, where so many people, worry about what's going on, in the world around us, and about the future, of the human race, and of the planet.

Save our planet. What's the future, of the world going to be like? There's ice caps melting, there's drought, there's mass migration, there's terrible pollution, and climate crisis.

There's famine, there's cruelty, there's humanness, there's homelessness, and there's human trafficking. There's a drugs trade, that's worth billions of pounds, that is built on violence, and praise on the weak.

There are, all these fears, that haunt us day by day. You'll die of old age, we'll die of climate change. We think the world, is going to end soon. We think that, the social unrest, that surrounds us, is going to overtake us.

And so, it is an anxious world. The pandemic, I think, has just made, that worse. We feel as if, our world is broken, and that our world needs help.

[7 : 03] There's the environmental crisis, there's racial injustice, there's pandemics. We're alienated, from each other as people, and we're alienated, from the world, that we live in.

It's so much brokenness, in all of these different, facets of our existence. But the real underlying root, of all of that, is this, that we're alienated, from God, our creator.

The world has gone astray, from the God, who made it. We've gone astray, from the God, who made us. And the world is doomed, to perish. Except that, God loves the world.

So the ruins of our world, are the backdrop, to the love of God. God, and that love, brings him, to rescue and restore. So no matter, how anxious you are, about the planet, or how anxious you are, about your own life, God just comes back, with this amazing truth.

I love this world, and I love you, because you're part of my world, my creation. And so, John 3, verse 16, is an incredibly, reassuring verse, when we worry about, what's going to happen, in the world, and what's going to happen, to us.

[8 : 20] God comes back, and says, I've got this. I love, the world. I'm caring for it. God sets, his vast, immeasurable, endless love, on this world.

This is a world, of ruin and guilt. There's nothing, particularly lovable, about it in many ways. But God loves it, anyway. God loves liars. God loves greedy people.

God loves polluters. God loves the hateful. God loves the self-righteous. God loves the spiteful. God loves the ignorant. God loves the intolerant.

God loves the wrong-minded. God loves the cartels. God loves the exploited. He loves all of us, despite our heart of darkness. God made a world that was a garden, and we've wrecked it, and turned it into a loveless, lifeless desert.

But he still loves us. And he loves us so much, that he's coming to redeem it. He loves us so much, that there is no Bible writer, that can tell us exactly, how much he loves us.

[9 : 32] But we know this, that it's enough, to send his son Jesus, to redeem us, and to help us. So God loves the world.

That love doesn't come, from outside of God. That love springs up, from within the heart of God himself. God loves, because it's in his nature to do so. He is love.

C.H. Spurgeon was a Baptist preacher, a couple hundred years ago almost, who said this, this stream of love, flows from its own secret source, and the eternal deity.

It fills itself, from the springs of the infinite. God loves simply, because he will love. A love that is so great, so powerful, that God can't hold it back.

It has to come from him. It has to flow, from his person, from his being, from his throne, into our world. And that flow of love, to our world, is never interrupted.

[10 : 33] The tap is never turned off. It just keeps coming, and coming, and coming. A world turns its back in God, God keeps loving. A God wants, a world that wants nothing, to do with God, well God isn't thwarted, he keeps loving.

The world, rebels against God. A world that destroys itself, God keeps loving. A world, to which God sends his son, and then this world crucifies him, God keeps sending his love.

So God loves the world. He really loves the world. Second thing, God has sent his one and only son. Those who love a lot, give a lot.

And God's love, spares itself nothing. God gives everything he has, to bless and save us. If you, are a parent, then you know you'll do anything, for your children.

You'd give them a kidney, you'd give them a lung, you'd give them your blood, you'd give your life, for the child that you love. So God, loves, you. And that's amazing, isn't it?

[11 : 41] Because, you know, we would think that, if God hates evil, and if God is absolutely, and relentlessly, committed to what is just, and good, that when he sees the evil in this world, and the mess we're making of it, surely he's just going to hit the delete button, and say, scrub this, it's too much of a mess, let's, let's have a do-over.

Well, God loves, too much for that. He doesn't, press delete, he sends, his beloved son, so that we will no longer, live as orphans.

This is the beloved son, in whom God says, he is well pleased. This is the beloved son, who is one with the father in heaven. When God gives his son, he gives himself, because Jesus is one with the father.

Jesus is not less than God. So God gives all he is, and all that he has. And God seems to love us, even more than he loves Jesus.

He did not spare him, so that he could spare us. He sent his son to be born in a manger. He sent his son to be a refugee in Egypt.

[12 : 58] He sent his son to labor and sweat, in a carpenter's workshop, hammering in nails, sawing wood, building, working, toiling.

He sent his son amongst politicians, and priests, who looked at him with snake eyes, scheming hearts, and violence. He sent his son to poverty, to hunger, to homelessness, to thirst, to poverty, he sent his son amongst crowds of people, who called for his death, and laughed at his suffering.

He sent his son to the cross, to loneliness, and to sorrow. He sent his son to bear the sin of the world. He sent his son, the just, to die for the unjust, in order to bring us to God.

God didn't do that in a whim, or out of sentiment. It is the eternal, unchanging, ceaseless purpose of his love, to send his son, to rescue people like us, because God loves the world.

Often we live as orphans in this world, lost, alone, anxious, afraid, but God sends the son, so that we can be brought into God's family, so that we can be adopted, as sons and daughters of the king, of kings.

[14 : 23] That's so personal, isn't it? So personal, that we don't have to live alone, and adrift, and afraid, and vulnerable. God is a God, who will be a father to the fatherless, he says.

God invites you, through his son Jesus, into friendship. He invites you, into his care. He says he's going to hold us by the hand.

He's going to walk with us, into tomorrow, into the future. And that, when he walks with us, he will keep our hand in his hand, and he will always walk with us in love.

When God adopts us, he makes us his own, and he never leaves us. We don't need to live, as orphaned children, in this world, alone, and anxious, and afraid. God loves us.

He loves the whole world, in an unending, unbreakable way. But he loves you, in a deeply personal, and individual way. Knows your name, knows your date of birth, knows your DNA, knows your, your suffering, knows your sorrows, knows your sins, and your thoughts, and none of it surprises him.

[15 : 39] And none of it, turns back, the river of his love, towards you. He looks on all of us, with compassion, and sympathy. He looks with all of us, with love, and says, come to me, and rest.

So, God loves the world. God sent his one, and only son, thirdly, so that whoever believes, will not perish, but have eternal life.

So, that's a great word, isn't it? Just that, whoever believes, in him, will not perish, but have eternal life. That means a lot of people, will get eternal life.

An awful lot of people, will have eternal life. But not the usual suspects. Jesus is speaking, to this man, Nicodemus. Nicodemus would have had, a very fixed idea, of who might get eternal life.

He would have thought, people like him. The people of Israel, perhaps. Religious people, respectable people, good people. But, when God says, whoever believes, that's telling us, that, it's not for those, who just keep God's laws, or lead, decent lives, or who are really, really, really, really sorry, for their sins, or for those, who have an amazing, faith.

[17 : 02] None of these are, what get you, eternal life. Eternal life, is found in Jesus, by believing in Jesus. Whoever believes in Jesus, it doesn't matter, what they're like, has eternal life.

It's not about, what we do, it's about, what Jesus has done, for us. It's not about, how much we trust, it's about, who we trust. Whoever, covers, all kinds, of people.

It's for old people. Whoever covers, those who are, at the end of life, who are kind of, teetering, towards, the grave. And God says, that if they believe, in Jesus Christ, they will have, eternal life.

It's for the young, for those in their teens, for those who have, all of life, and all its promise, ahead of them. And God says, if you, will believe in Jesus, you will never perish, young person, but you will have, eternal life.

It's for happy people, to the happy people, of this world, God says, if you believe in Jesus, you will never perish, you will have, eternal life.

[18 : 23] You will have, eternal joy. And it's for sad people, to the sad people, in this world, God says, if you believe in Jesus, you will never perish, you will have, eternal life.

It covers, all of us. It covers, the hard hearted, and the cold hearted. It's for all of us, whoever we are, however, we feel.

That's my phone battery, so, the sermon might end, sooner than you think. So, it's for all of us, whoever we are, and a lot of us feel, well, because we don't, you know, because we're quite dead inside, spiritually, that, this can't be part of, of our experience.

But, it's not about how we feel. It's about where our faith is directed. I'm going to give you a quote, from Spurgeon, the Baptist preacher again, who says this, he says, oh, you that feel yourselves guilty, and you that feel guilty, because you don't feel guilty.

So, I'm supposed to feel guilty, but I don't. You that are broken in heart, because your heart will not break. So, those of you who feel, unmoved, by what you hear of Jesus.

[19 : 56] You, that feel that you cannot feel, it is to you, that I would preach salvation, in Christ, by faith. So, it's not about how you feel.

Do you have the right feelings, the right experience, the right emotions, the right sense of God's presence, the right inner circumstances, that's not the root of it.

To you, God says, all that truly matters in the end, is that your faith, is in Jesus Christ, that you are trusting, in him.

it is Christ, the object of our faith, who saves us. It's for whoever believes, in Jesus. So, it's not how big your faith is, or how meager your faith is, how strong your faith is, or how faint your faith is, it's the fact, that your faith is in Jesus.

It's him that saves us. And to some people, he gives great faith, because faith is his gift. And to some, he gives weak and struggling faith.

[21 : 13] Your faith might just be a fragment, a sliver, the thinnest of threads, that connects you to Jesus. It might be, as Jesus would say himself, the tiniest seed of faith.

Your faith might be, microscopic. Here I am, looking down a microscope, looking for your faith. It's so small, I can barely see it.

But it's there. The tiniest element of faith. And it brings eternal life. Because tiny, fragile though it is, it is faith in Jesus.

Believe in Jesus. Believing in Jesus means, accepting that it's true. That he died for your sins. And it means accepting it for yourself.

Accepting that it's true means, accepting that my sin is real and actual. And that what Jesus did in the cross for my sin, is real and factual.

[22 : 20] He is atoned for me by his death in the cross. I have to be able to accept that. And then I have to be able to accept it for myself. Atonement, salvation becomes mine when I accept this for myself, what Jesus has done for myself, by putting my trust in him.

