

Title

Who Do You Say I Am?

INTRO:

Good morning, church!

First Sunday of the year

First Sermon of the year

We are getting back into our John Series

It's been 4 weeks since we have been in this series

In this series, we are walking through the book of John

We are looking at all the big moments and teachings of Jesus

And today, we will be looking at a part of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus

Before we get there, though

Because it's the new year, many of us think about improvement

- Better habits
- Better choices
- Better discipleship
- Better focus

And we create goals to get there

But in John 3, Jesus... He doesn't talk about self-improvement

He talks about a rescue

- He talks about being lifted up
- He talks about belief
- He talks about life
- He talks about light and darkness

And in just a couple of verses

Jesus lays out the heart of the gospel

Why He came

What he came to do
And how people would respond to that message

The new year is a great time to think about how to improve

But I think it's a better time to focus on the message of the gospel

In these next few verses... each of us fit in somewhere \We are either looking to Him for life

Or turning away from the light

So this morning, as we return to the book of John

We are going to focus on the Words of Jesus as he is having this conversation with Nicodemus

When we left off last

Pastor Frank taught a great message on Nicodemus

In that he briefly covered a few verses, I want us to focus on this morning

If you will turn bibles to

SCRIPTURE:

John 3:14–15 “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.””

Jesus is still in this conversation with Nicodemus

And Jesus, He brings up this Old Testament moment

- The Israelites were constantly complaining
- They complained about where they were, what was happening, Gods Judgement
- And God said boom here is some poisonous snakes that will bite many of you, and those that get bitten... well... they die

The Israelites realized at this point that they just sinned, and they went to Moses and asked him to pray for them that God would remove these snakes

Here's what happened as Moses prayed

Numbers 21:8–9 “The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.”

- When we read that there should be a little bell that rings in our head that say “That sounds like Jesus.”

Just like this bronze snake

- Jesus was lifted up

This Bronze snake represents judged sin

- And on the Cross, Jesus... He bore that judgment

For the Israelites, if they wanted to live after being bitten.. they would have to look up to this bronze snake

Which I'm sure for a few felt silly

- Put my trust in this snake on a pole... no thanks

Just like the Israelites who had this bronze snake

- We look to Jesus
- Who was lifted up on the cross
- Some will look up and find life
- Most people... they will find it silly and die...

Jesus turns this example of the bronze snake and shifts it to what is currently happening as he is talking to Nicodemus

John 3:15 “that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.””

Jesus says.. whoever looks toward Jesus... Believes in what he has done on the cross.. will be born again and have eternal life

Eternal life

This is so much more than just a long or even never ending life

Its not life here on earth

- I mean, to live in this life forever would stink
- There is so much that I love about my life
- Wife, Family, this church, food, so much to see and do

But forever in this world.. not fun... just look around and see what's happening

The idea of eternity here is a certain quality of life

- It's a quality of life that is of God's kind of life
- It's something that we get to enjoy when we say yes to Jesus and will be fully experienced in eternity

And this is not something easy to picture in our minds

- Its a hard concept to imagine
- Life forever

I know I've tried wrapping my head around this and I end up stressing about it

It doesn't seem possible or even imaginable

BUT I have landed in a place that says, The Lord I serve doesn't know Impossible, The Lord I serve clearly has something set up that is going to be breathtaking, its going to be amazing, Its going to be way better than whatever I can imagine

So... I can't wait... I cant wait to see what God has for me

If we continue reading the conversation that Jesus was having with Nicodemus we read in:

John 3:16“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 some reason.. every time I preach John 3:16 comes up...

This is one of the most well-known scriptures in the world

Most of us grew up with this as our first memory verse

Or even remember Sunday school lessons about it

It's on Shirts, Bracelets, Its seen on athletes, Musicians say it, Actors say it

For instance Its reported that in 2009, 90-94 million people searched on Google “what is John 3:16” after Gators QB Tim Tebow wrote it under his eyes

That moment in time... even if it's less than 90 million SO many saw this verse ... read these Words of Jesus

And in that moment, there was 2 choices that could have been made

- Saying Yes to Jesus
- Saying No to Jesus
- One leads to life
- One leads to death

What's so cool about that is that one small decision to be obedient... left a massive impact on the world

- Imagine if we were obedient in the small things as well
- another sermon for another time

Let's break down these verses

For God so loved the world...

Jesus was telling Nicodemus why he was here

For God so loved the world

- He loved one person at a time
- One decision at a time
- One encounter at a time
- One new birth at a time

God's love prompted Him to take action

and it was an action in form of Grace

- God could have just wiped out the world once again
- God could have hit the reset button
- But he didn't

It is God's grace that saved us

- A grace that said, I'll send my son in their place
- By God's grace we are here this morning
- Meeting with each other
- Worshipping with each other
- Fellowshipping with each other

Because God so loved the world... he gave his one and only son... that whoever believes in Him.. shall not perish but have everlasting life...

See, this verse is what changes someone's direction in life

There is an action here that someone must take

The action is Belief

It says whoever believes in him

And to believe we have to know who He is...

In America, most people have heard of Jesus

And most people would describe Him in some way as :

- A good teacher
- Moral leader
- an agent of change
- A prophet
- A man of God

Jesus had a similar conversation with His disciples

And He asked them who the crowds called Him

- And they answer like, John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets from long ago

Then he made the question Personal

Luke 9:20 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.””

This question is one that we all have to answer

- We are all faced with this question
- We have an answer to give

Our answer will reflect the way that we live

We answer this question by what we believe and what we do
If we really believe in Jesus
If it looks like the answer Peter gave

- Christ,
- Savior,
- Redeemer

Your life will reflect that

- By the things that you do
- the way that you speak
- the way you handle hard news

John 3:16 is a personal invitation for everyone that hears this message to experience eternal life

When you trust in Jesus alone as your personal sin-bearer, divine judgment is removed and eternal life is freely given.

So who do you say He is?

Is it one that resembles what the world says about Jesus
Or does it look like what Peter said?

Part of understanding who He is looks like

Putting our trust in him

- That He is the one who took our place on that cross
- That He is the one that took our sin on that cross
- That He is the one that gave His life so that we can have life

There is this trust factor in belief

- It also looks like trusting him to provide
- Trusting him to guide
- Trusting him to give you strength
- Trusting him for Joy
- and so on

This is a belief that's more than a Conclusion that you came to in your mind

It's a belief that you have experienced in your heart

- Experience A love that is not like any other love
- See God's love it covers a multitude of Sin
 - o The proof is Jesus on the Cross
- Once you experience that love
 - o It's easy to give up your plans
 - o Ideas, dreams
 - o and fully surrender to what He has for your life
 - o To have this full relationship with Jesus

This next part of the conversation between Jesus, it shows us why Jesus came

and it lets us know what happens to those who reject His message

Lets continue reading in:

John 3:17–18 “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

Verse 17: Jesus reveals to us the heart of God

It was not for the purpose of condemnation but

That by sending Jesus
HE would be the one to bring salvation, Rescue, hope, healing

There was a world that needed a savior

- And Jesus was the answer to that problem

There is a large misconception about the reason why Jesus was sent

Many teach and preach that He was sent to save you from:

- Hardships
- Persecution
- To solve all your problems
- Give you everything that you want
- Some teach about Jesus, like when you say yes to him, he becomes a genie
 - o That's when you ask for something he's there to serve you...
- God didn't even send Jesus to make you happy...
- God did not send Jesus for any of those reasons

God looked down at His creation

And what he saw was His people in a position that they were not able to escape
He knew that there was no way that we, on our own, could make it out of it
Because none of us is worthy to pay the price of the penalty

Out of God's love and grace

- He sent his son to save the world
- He came in human flesh
- To walk this earth
- to be tempted just like we have
- to be beaten, betrayed, and backstabbed

Because he is the only one who is worthy enough to pay the price of sin

Romans 5:6–9 “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”

Jesus

was sent at just the right time

- For some, it might have seemed too late
- Some will argue he came too early

But the word of God says he came at just the right time

While we were still powerless

Not able to escape condemnation on our own

Not able to pay the price of sin

God sent Jesus at the right time to die for the ungodly

This word For in the Greek means

- For the sake of
- in behalf of
- instead of

We on our own could not pay the price of sin

So God sent Jesus for the sake of us

We could not do it on our own

But God’s love is revealed to us in this section of Scripture

in verse 8

While we were still sinners Christ rescued us

He took our place on that cross

He took our punishment on that cross

He took our shame on that cross

He took our everything on that cross

On our own... we could not do it

But God saw another way

John 3:16 is one of the most remarkable verses

ITs an offer that I wouldn't want to pass up one
Eternal life for those who accept it
Yet this offer has consequence

Verse 18 let us know that those who do not accept this offer

This relationship with Jesus

Those who refuse to believe

Their decision makes their condemnation certain

Before you accepted, we were sentenced to a punishment
Before you said yes to Him we were one step closer to that punishment
Here's the thing

- We all were once guilty
- guilty of sin
- guilty of evil
- guilt of wrongdoing

But those of us who have said yes to Jesus

Those who are saved, we have been rescued from condemnation

- That punishment is no longer the same
- That punishment was taken for us on that cross
- And it changed our eternal address
- We have been rescued from hell
- We have been rescued from the wrath to come

Verse 9 from Romans

Says that we are justified by Jesus blood
And that we are saved from God's wrath through Him

- Not through good behavior
- Not through going to church
- Not through serving
- Not through being moral
- But through JESUS

He saved us from God's wrath
He saved us from Hell

I mentioned there are those who preach a message about its Jesus that serves you

But here is the truth

If Jesus never did another thing for me...

- If he did not answer another prayer

- If he did not provide a job
- If he did not provide another meal
- If he did not provide any more guidance
- I still owe him everything

I was once heading for Hell

Verse John 3:18 is letting us know that those who reject the message of Jesus

Those who choose to ignore His words

Their eternal address... has already been determined

- I want to make it clear that Jesus is talking about the people who have heard this message, read this message, and make a clear decision not follow Jesus
- A question that could come up is “what about those who have never heard the message of Jesus?”
- Paul gives us some answers to that question in Romans 1 and 2
- This again is about people who are making a choice after hearing this message, not to believe

Jesus, He has made this very clear

Salvation has been offered, and condemnation is real

And there is a decision that needs to be made

So the question now is

Why do people still reject Him?

If this is a free gift

If this is an offer of grace

How come so many still say no?

Jesus finishes out his conversation with Nicodemus, answering that question

John 3:19–21 “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”

Jesus here says here the verdict

- Here's the Judgement

- Here's the condemnation

This language is almost in like courtroom tone

- This is not a theory
- This is not a suggestion
- This isn't Him guessing

This is a final conclusion

After examining everything

The verdict is this

So he continues with the evidence

“Light has come into the world.”

- This is a statement
- It is here
- It has come

And the light here is Jesus

The light is the Gospel message

Its John 3:16

It has entered a dark place...

Here Jesus explains what hold people back from saying yes to Him

People loved darkness instead of light

Loved...

- That's a strong word
- They loved the darkness
- Darkness allows you to be in control
- Darkness lets you be your own authority
- Darkness allows you to decide what's best for you
- Light... It threatens that

Jesus pointed out that

People would rather partake in darkness than light

- Don't believe him, turn the news on, go on social media, listen to today's music
- You will see what people worship
- You will see what they would rather focus on

Some of us... we were the same at one point

- We were in a place where we would rather focus on things of the world

- We would rather focus on what makes me happy
- Focus on what brings me success
- We were the gods of our own lives

Notice why they don't come into a relationship with Jesus

Because the darkness feels safer when you do not want things exposed

they fear that their deeds will be exposed

They love their sin so much

- that they don't want to face it
- or a God who will judge their sin

Jesus points out that people aren't rejecting Him because he is cruel

More so because He is honest

- They do everything they can to hide who they really are
- They do everything they can to hide the darkness they are living in
- Those who live in darkness have rejected the free gift of eternal life

But those who have been saved

Those who answered the offer and accepted this gift

Whoever lives by the truth... Comes into the light

The beauty of the Gospel is this

The light exposes

But it doesn't expose to destroy

- It exposes so that it can bring healing
- It exposes so that it can forgive
- It exposes so that it can set you free

At the cross

Jesus took the punishment

- So when you step into the light
- Mercy is left waiting for you
- Grace is left waiting for you

Coming into the light

It doesn't mean perfection

It means honesty

It looks like

"Lord, here I am, I trust you with it"

CONCLUSION:

Church as we leave here today

As we walk out of the building

There is a dark world...

But light has come into it

The question for us today is

How are we going to respond to it?

- Some will come and find life
- Others turn away and remain in darkness

Here's the good news, though

If you are in Christ, you no longer remain in that darkness

You once were condemned

- But now you are forgiven

You once were lost

- But now you are found

You once were headed for wrath

- But now you have eternal life

And that means something for us today

IT should change the way we live life

- Jesus didn't just save us from something
- He saved us for something

There is a dark world outside these doors

But God has chosen to place His light... Inside His people

Matthew 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

each of us... who have been saved
we have that light in us

Part of our job is to go out and be the light

We have answered the question that Jesus asked... Who do you say I am...
I guarantee there are people around you who need to hear that answer

- Maybe people in the workplace
- Maybe family members
- Maybe friends
- Maybe a stranger at the gas pump next to you

Whoever it might be... There is a gift that is waiting for them

- Maybe you're that voice to introduce them to it

God might just use your obedience, your story, your words

To impact the world around you

There might be some here in the building or even watching this online

Who is still standing in the dark

- You heard the message
- You understand the Gospel
- But you haven't stepped into the light

John 3

is a personal invitation to Step into the light

Jesus said

- Look to me
- Believe
- Live

Not fix yourself

Not clean yourself up

Not improve

Just look to the one that was lifted up for you

So... the question remains

Who do you say He is?

Pray