

Life Changing Simple Truths

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to John chapter 3, a meeting of our Lord Jesus with one of the religious leaders of the Jews named Nicodemus.

! In reply, Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

How can a man be born when he is old? Nicodemus asked. Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born. Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit.

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at my 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.

[1 : 36] You are Israel's teacher, said Jesus. And do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth. We speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, 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 desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

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.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

[2 : 49] This is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but men love 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 his deeds will be exposed.

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

Simple truths are often the most powerful. Things that aren't long and complicated, but very simple. Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence, wrote, We hold these truths to be self-evident.

That means plain, obvious. When you say them, of course it's true. That all men are created equal. That's the plain, obvious truth that Thomas Jefferson began the Declaration of Independence with. And for the last 240 years of our nation's history, that simple truth has been shaping our country, and our history, and our conflicts.

[4 : 06] When he first wrote those words, he meant, White men, all white men are created equal. And that was as far as they had worked out that simple truth.

But that simple truth was not going to stay in the place that they put it. It was too powerful. It was too potent. So 85 years later, that simple truth started a civil war.

And that civil war ended with the 14th Amendment, where black people were given citizenship. 190 years after he wrote it, Martin Luther King Jr.

preached those words on the Lincoln Memorial, at the Lincoln Memorial, in the Civil Rights Movement. All men are created equal. It's a simple truth. But it's a nation-altering, blood-shedding, nation-dividing, family-dividing truth.

It's a truth that we are still trying to deal with and trying to figure out exactly what that means. Maybe you've seen the movie Inception. In that movie, it's just a powerful story about how one little idea can be so influential.

[5 : 31] In that movie, Cobb, the main character, is trying to save his wife from the dream world. And what he does is he puts into her mind a very simple idea. This is not real.

Just that. This is not real. He doesn't see, he doesn't understand at that time what the terrible price that she's going to pay and he's going to pay for thinking that.

And she ends up killing herself with that simple truth. This is not real. Simple, powerful, dangerous truths.

Life-altering truths. That's what I want to talk about today. So you have your Bibles open to John chapter 3. I hope you have those open. John 3, 17.

And this is the one verse I want to look at this morning. And in this one little verse, I see three very simple truths. They're truths you can't ignore.

[6 : 35] For good or for bad, they will shape your whole life. Even your whole eternity. Because I'm looking out and I'm seeing persons that millions of years from now will be alive.

In heaven or in hell. But with that very body and that very soul, we'll know exquisite joys or exquisite agony.

And it all depends on what you do with those three very simple truths that we're going to talk about today. So, you should be thinking about this as this morning is very much a fork in the road.

And they're not two equal paths. One path is leading to the light. One path is leading to the darkness. And it all depends on what you do with these three simple truths in John 3, 17.

You see what it says there. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

[7 : 50] The very, the first plain truth is that you need to be saved. You need saved. I told you it wasn't going to be very profound.

If you are born into this world, which that's all of you, if you're born into this world, you need saved. Because it says God didn't send his son into the world to condemn it, but to save it, to save the people of this world.

And so God didn't send his son for no reason. He didn't do it for nothing. That would be a dumb waste of time. And God doesn't do dumb waste of time things.

If he does something, it needs to be done. So if he sends his son into the world to save it, that means that the people in this world, we need saved.

You need saved. Now, saved from what? Save, why? Maybe you don't feel like you need saved.

[8 : 55] Maybe you don't understand that. Well, as we look around this passage and just the part that we read, you can see what Jesus is talking about. The salvation and what he's talking about that we need saved from.

So you can look at, you see the first thing in just verse three. Jesus says, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

So why do you need saved? right? Because, right, if you are separated from Jesus and you come into this world that way, you're born spiritually blind.

You can't see the kingdom of God. You can't see heaven. These things that are true that you have to confront, that you have to live with, you're blind to them.

You're stumbling around in the darkness. So far from getting into the kingdom of God, you can't even see it. So we're stumbling in the dark.

[9 : 57] Our spiritual eyes are broken. It's like if I took a blind person and put them in the car and said, now drive to Florida. That's not going to happen. They're not going to make it.

And that's the spiritual condition of everyone who is born into this world. There's no way they're going to make it. Now, I've seen some really stupid things in my life.

I've done a lot of stupid things, but I've seen a lot of stupid things. And one of the dumbest things I've seen was the last few weeks ago. A teenage girl had seen that Netflix movie, The Bird Box.

And in that movie, everyone has to go around blindfolded. And at one point in the movie, they drive to the grocery store all blindfolded or they can't see the road at all.

And a teenage girl saw this and she decided she wanted to try it in real life. And so, while she was driving on the road, she put her winter cap, her thing, over her eyes, drove blind down the road.

[11 : 01] And of course, what happened? She veered off into the other lane, wrecked her car, wrecked the other person's car. Thankfully, no one was killed. But Jesus says, that's your spiritual condition.

You don't know where you're going. You can't see the way. You're crashing from one thing into the other. You aren't going to make it home.

Not in your condition. Not going to make it into the kingdom of heaven. Not with your blindness. He says, the gate is narrow. And there are few who find it.

And on top of that, we're born blind. You need saved. You need saved. Jesus goes on to say, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and spirit.

Now, we want to put that last bit aside there. But I think what Jesus is saying is no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again. You can't. So the first one was, you can't see the kingdom.

[12 : 12] And now this one is, you can't enter it unless you're born again. The kingdom of God is barred. You aren't just blind to the kingdom.

You're banned from the kingdom. You're barred against it. The gate is locked. So here's heaven. Here's life with God. Here's life eternal.

Here's spiritual life. Here's joy. Here's forgiveness. And God has locked the door for people like you. Heaven isn't for people like you, God says.

Now, from time to time, the U.S. government will ban travelers coming from other countries. If there's been an epidemic disease in that country, they say, you know what? For everyone's safety, say, you're not allowed to come here.

Or if you are allowed, you have to go through special places and you're going to have to be screened, but you just can't come however you want, whenever you want. That's something that the government does to stop an epidemic from spreading.

[13 : 14] You can't just come here. You just can't come here from there. The door is shut. And Jesus is saying the door is shut. You are carrying a disease that is not allowed into heaven.

The gate is closed. So do you think your sin lightly? No big deal. Well, your sin has shut the doors of heaven in your face.

One of the most horrifying things that have probably ever happened in all of history was when God drove Adam and Eve from the garden and put that cherubim with a flaming sword there so that you can't come back.

Just think about who Jesus is telling this to. Nicodemus, we read about him. He thought he was doing all right. He really did. He thought his sin was just the sniffles.

And he said, you know, I'm drinking lots of OJ. I'm doing lots of the things I'm supposed to do. I don't feel that bad. I'm doing lots of good things. My sin is little. My sin is manageable.

[14 : 34] It's certainly not such a big thing that God would keep me from heaven, from the kingdom of God. And Jesus, the one who is from heaven, who knows about heaven, and he says, Nicodemus, unless you are born again, you are not coming in.

You cannot enter the kingdom of God. The door is locked. You are barred. But it's not just Nicodemus. Nicodemus was the most religious person.

And his religion wasn't just some sort of out of left field, weird, cult, made up, man religion. He had the law of God. He was part of the historical people of God.

From infancy, he knew the scriptures that were able to make him wise. He was serious. He was serious. Jesus calls him Israel's teacher. You don't get to that position without being serious about religious things.

And he was very serious about this. More serious than probably anyone here. And Jesus said, the way is shut. The way is shut.

[15 : 46] So we're blind and we're banned. Remember the simple truth. You need saved. Well, why? You're blind and you're banned from heaven.

And Jesus goes on. He says, a deadly, poisonous, venomous snake has bitten you, has bit you. And you are going to die.

That's how Jesus begins to wrap things up with Nicodemus. Jesus goes back into history, into a story that Nicodemus knew very well and probably many of you know very well.

And he says, just like that snake in the desert had to be lifted up, so I have to be lifted up. The Son of Man has to be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him and me may have eternal life.

Now, that, Jesus is saying, you remember that story, Nicodemus. You remember that story. Israel was complaining. They were complaining against God. They hardened their hearts against him. [16:48] They didn't trust him. And so, God sent venomous, poisonous snakes into the camp to bite the people.

So, one was making the bed. One was gathering sticks. One was going to the bathroom. One was talking to her children.

One was making dinner. They were going about their everyday normal lives in this camp and bite, bite, bite.

And everyone who was bitten died. Not a single one made it. And the people cried out to God and God said, make a bronze snake, lift it up so everyone can see it.

And if they are bitten, all they have to do is look and they will live. Wherever they are in the camp, lift it up nice and high so everyone can see. If they look after they have been bitten, just look and they will live.

[17:54] And Jesus says to Nicodemus and to us, that's the situation. You aren't just blind. You aren't just banned and barred. You've been bitten.

Deadly venom is running through your veins. Has anyone here been to Australia?

Anyone? No one? I've never been there. If I go, I'll probably be on edge the whole time. I don't know what Australia ever did to deserve this, but Australia has the most venomous spider in the whole world.

The Sydney funnel spider lives in darkness. So, and you can take it by its name that it likes to live in cities in darkness. The most venomous spider in the world has the most venomous jellyfish.

So you go swimming out in the ocean and the box jellyfish, most venomous jellyfish in the whole world, has the most venomous water snake. So you're out there looking at the coral reef and the most venomous water snake has the top three most venomous land snakes in the world.

[19:08] And then I'm reading about this and then I'm doing a little research and then I find out even the duck-billed platypus is venomous. So, wherever you go, dangers abound.

Now, different venoms work different ways. Not all venom is the same. Some work on the blood. Some work on the neural system, your nerves.

And some just straight out begin killing cells. sin is the same. sin is the same. sin is the same. sin is the same. And as nasty and as dangerous as all of that is, sin is a far nastier venom.

It destroys the conscience. sin is the same. sin is the same. So now, I can't tell right from wrong anymore so much.

I get right and wrong mixed up. And then it destroys your love. We were made to love good things and hate bad things, but sin actually twists that so around that now I love bad things and I hate good things.

[20:26] and it destroys your mind. It destroys your understanding. And so now you're confused and darkened.

It's so confusing and so dark you can't see things for what they are. It wreaks havoc on your will.

And now instead of wanting and being able to will what is good, now all I can do is will what is evil? that's what my will can do now? Is when it's in its full power and complete strength it does what is evil. But what is good I find that I can't do it.

It cuts you off from the light. This venom. It cuts you off from God. And you know what? Finally and worst of all it brings God's wrath down on your head.

God's love So just think about this venom that is sin. This poison that is sin. Sin leaves you a shell of what God made you. You've seen.

[21:35] You can go. You can do the research. Go to YouTube. Look at people who have been bitten by venomous animals. Snakes. Well, sin leaves you a shell. A wreck of a human.

And then finally, it makes your own maker so angry with you. He would destroy you. And Jesus says, Nicodemus, that's what's happened.

That's you. And friends, that's me. That's you. Now, a bite from an eastern brown snake in Australia may kill you.

But sin's bite will land you in hell forever. So you're blind. You're barred.

You're bitten. You need saved. That's the first simple truth. You can ignore me. You can belittle me and call me a religious fool.

[22 : 39] But that's the plain truth. You need saved. You need saved. The second plain truth is this. You can't save yourself. You can't save yourself.

Remember, we have three very simple truths. And this is the second. And that's clear right on the face of this verse. You've got to ask yourself, if you could have saved yourself, then why in the world would God send his son into the world to save the world?

Why? You have to ask why God would do something like that if it was unnecessary. Why would Jesus take on flesh? Why would he leave all the joy and the bliss and the felt, established love and experience of heaven and God?

And why would he take on all the limitations of the flesh? So now, instead of never knowing pain or joy or sorrow, now he is tired and he is sweating and he is hungry and now men are hurting him. why would he humble himself if it was unnecessary? If you could just do the job, why would God plan this mission?

[24 : 04] Why would God predict this mission? Why for years and years and years would he prophesy this mission if it was just a side bar, side show, if you could save yourself?

why would Jesus be lifted up? Why would he go to the cross? Naked, literally naked, mocked, abused, assaulted, if you could save yourself.

And before that, why would he be in that garden, agonizing and sweating? And why would he finally on the cross and abandon, in a sense of total abandonment, cry, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

If you could save yourself. Again, we need to give God some credit. You think he would do all that? You think Jesus would do all that if he didn't need to? Fools waste their time on things that are unnecessary. You see someone doing something completely unnecessary, we say, what's the point of that?

[25 : 20] Why are you doing that? God is no fool. No, this is the only way. Now, Nicodemus thought, like all of us, he was a Pharisee, and we're all like this to some degree.

We think, you know what? Okay, if I have a problem, I can fix it. I can save myself. I can do the good things I need to do. I can go to church. I can do what my parents have asked me to do. Nicodemus thought he could make it to heaven on his good works, on the things that he was doing that was good, on his faithfulness. So, I'm one of God's people, so I'll be faithful to my God. But here Jesus is coming clear out of left field in Nicodemus' world. Clear out of left field and saying, all of that won't do you any good. It's completely useless.

You need God. You need me. You need to be born again. You need to look to me. I'm the answer. I'm what you need. You need to trust me.

[26 : 22] I'm your only hope. You can't save yourself. Nicodemus, you can't save yourself. You're blind. You're barred. You're bitten. It's too far gone. You're dead. You're condemned. How can you save yourself?

A blind person can't will themselves to see. And if you knock on the door of heaven, are you really going to talk God into changing his mind about who's in and who's out?

Like he'll change his mind and all the laws of heaven to make room for just you on your terms. And when an Australian eastern brown snake bites you, you don't say, I can fix this.

Who does that? You need a doctor. You need a doctor right now. That's when you need a doctor. You don't go to your first aid kit and say, well, I have a band-aid and I have aspirin.

No, you need more than that. You need to go to the doctor now. You can't save yourself. And you say, you're right. I do need to turn over a new leaf.

[27 : 35] I need to start again. I need to start doing better. I'm in trouble and I need to do better than I have been doing. And I guess the answer is sure you do. But that won't save you. A murderer needs to stop murdering.

But that's not going to save him from the electric chair. Or put it like this. Suppose I take my credit card card and I go out and I spend and I spend and I spend.

Sometimes I listen to Dave Ramsey on the radio and people call in and they have \$45,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 in credit card debt and it's like so much I can't even breathe.

Let's suppose that's me. And I do that. And one day I wake up and I I'm like I'm in trouble here. I'm in real trouble.

I'm in deep trouble. I need to stop putting things on my credit card. From now on I'm only spending the money that I have. Does that make my debt go away? Not at all.

[28 : 47] Does that fix my problem? No. You already have a mountain of debt. And so turn over a new leaf all you want and it won't make your debt go away.

You're already bitten. You're already blind. So I guess I want to stop getting bit. Yeah, that's good, but that won't save you.

The venom is already in your veins. That's the truth. You can't save yourself.

You can't turn over a new leaf. You can't impress God with your obedience. Any more than me paying my credit card bill to Citibank every month impresses them.

That's what I'm supposed to do. You're supposed to obey. That's not an amazing feat. He's God.

[29 : 49] You're not. God told you what to do. You're supposed to do it. And at the end of the day, if you obey perfectly from here on out, you've only done what you should have been doing all along.

You only have done what you should have done. Your obedience isn't going to impress God. And it's not going to undo everything else that you've done.

So turning over new leaves and obeying really good won't do you any good. You're too far gone and anything you could do won't help you at all.

Again, I'm not talking about mysteries. I'm not talking about super hard things to understand. These are plain truth. You need saved.

You can't save yourself. Thank the Lord that's not where this verse ends. God is very willing to save you through Jesus.

[30 : 53] God is very willing to save you through Jesus. It's been all bad news up to here, but I'm glad I'm not a bad news preacher. Here's the good news.

God is very willing to save you. That's the amazing thing. Why is Jesus having this conversation with Nicodemus? Because he wants to save him.

And he is going to save Nicodemus. Why all this bad news? Because it's getting you ready for the good news. The good news is that here is completely away from ourselves, out of ourselves.

Here is this good news that God is very willing to save you through Jesus. Again, he sent his son into the world not to condemn it, but to save it, to save you.

Again, he sent the son into the world to save the world not to condemn it. He didn't need to send his son into the world to condemn it. It was already condemned.

[31 : 56] It was already condemned. Verse 16, John 3, 16, that most famous verse. In the whole Bible, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

God loves this world of sinners and so he gives a son. And you don't need to be a Sherlock Holmes to say God is willing to save them. He loves this world of sinners and now he's saying here's my son.

Believe in him and you'll live. That's the good news. God is very willing to save any sinner, all sinners, whoever believes, whoever believes in his son. So just believe.

Believe. Trust yourself. All that is true. All that bad news is true. And so what you do is say, yep, that is true. I need saved. I can't save myself.

But you don't stop there. You say, okay, but God is willing to save me through Jesus. So there I go. I count on him. Just believe. Now is that really a sincere offer?

[33 : 01] Is God really being serious about this? And verse 17 is saying, yes, this is a very sincere offer. All you need to do is look and believe.

That's it. Yes. Well, how can you know? Well, because that's why God sent his son into the world to save it. Verse 17 is saying the offer is good.

God means it. This is why he sent his son to save. And so what do you need to do? You look to the one who was raised up.

I'm blind. I'm barred. I'm bitten. But he's sight. He's the key.

He is the medicine. He's life. It's him. It's Jesus. It's not you. It's not what you can do.

[34 : 01] It's not what you've done. It's not what you will do. It's just him. What he's done. What he'll do. And the gospel is not, you know, so these good news tickets come and they fall into everyone's pocket and if you want to be saved, you take it out.

And it's not the good news tickets float down into the elect's pocket and they take them out and they're saved. You know what? There's no tickets. They don't float down. There's Jesus.

God gives us Jesus and presents him to us. He's the ticket. And he didn't float down. He humbled himself and he came to us.

And that's the good news. Jesus for us. It's him on the tree, on the cross, paying for sin, dying for sinners, taking their agony for them, becoming sin for them. And then throwing his arms open to us and saying, now take me. Later on in John, Jesus is going to say, he who has the son has life.

[35 : 14] And he who does not have the son does not have life. He's saying, take me. I'm the life you need. So get him. Take him.

Look to him. Hold on to him. Cling to him. Put all your eggs in that basket. Count. Put all your weight on him. Look completely away from yourself. And with joy, you take him.

With joy, you take him. With joy, you believe him. And those are these three plain truths. You need saved. You can't save yourself. But God is very willing to save you through Jesus. Now, that leads to a very plain question.

And then with this we're going to be done. A very simple question follows, what are you going to do? what are you going to do?

That's how the rest of this conversation plays out. Nicodemus, what are you going to do? Everyone else who hears this, what are you going to do? Will you believe?

[36 : 18] Will you believe what I'm saying? Whoever believes in him, you can read this, verse 18, whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already.

He's saying you have to do something and you better believe. What do you need to do to be condemned? Nothing. What do you need to do to go to hell?

Nothing. What does someone who has jumped out of an airplane need to do to die? Nothing. Gravity will do the rest. You just fall. Spiritual gravity will take you to hell.

You don't have to push. You don't have to pull. You don't have to dive. You just have to fall. He who believes lives.

[37 : 22] He who believes is, but he who doesn't believe is already condemned. No need to do anything. So what are you going to do? He says light has come into the world.

Now some people are coming into that light. And he says, but others are shrinking back. They're going into the darkness. Jesus is that light.

And you know what? Every day people are sorting themselves out. they're sorting themselves out. Jesus is the light. And some sort themselves into the light.

And some sort themselves into the darkness. Because darkness hides the truth. It hides the truth from themselves. It hides the truth they think from God.

It hides the truth. I'll believe a lie because the lie is better. The lie covers over my sin. So I think darkness hides the truth. And so what are you going to do?

[38 : 22] Right now you're either loving the light or you're retreating into the darkness. You're living in the truth.

Or it's more truth or it's more lies. What are you doing? What are you going to do? Are you going to come into the light or are you going to retreat into the darkness?

You can't do nothing. You can't stay where you are. You know life is not like you're just standing there. Have you ever been to a really big airport and they have those moving sidewalks?

And there you are. You're standing on it but you're moving. You're not walking. You're just standing but you're moving. That's life. You can't stay where you are.

You have to deal with these truths. These very simple truths you need saved. You can't save yourself. But God is very willing to save you. That's the truth.

[39 : 22] It's bad news. It's good news. Whatever it is you have to do something. You can't sit and do nothing. So take Jesus. let me tell you I'm not indifferent to your choice.

On the day of Pentecost Peter says he with many words pleaded with the people save yourself from this evil generation. Save yourselves.

Don't perish. It's so pointless to hear the truth and then perish. so bad. Life is soon over and there is a hell to escape and there is a heaven to win and Jesus is life.

Ignoring him is death. death. What are you going to do? Let's pray.

Lord I would plead with you that you would have mercy. And I know there are some here who are living in the darkness and yet here they are in church hearing the gospel and living in the light and yet living in the darkness.

[40 : 45] Pray that you would like you did at Saul of Tarsus and you burst into that dark night and you shone with brilliance. Lord Jesus do that even this day.

Pray that this truth would have real hooks and claws and would not let people go. until they come and fall down and cling to the feet of Jesus and put all their hope and trust in him.

Lord Jesus save for your own glory. Show yourself magnificent. Show yourself mighty. Even in this place and in our hearts.

Pray this in Jesus in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen.