

John 3:9-15

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[0 : 00] When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atherim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them.

Then Israel made this vow to the Lord, If you will deliver these peoples into our hands, we will totally destroy their cities. The Lord listened to Israel's plea and gave the Canaanites over to them.

They completely destroyed them and their towns, so the place was named Hormar. They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea to go round Edom, but the people grew impatient on the way.

They spoke against God and against Moses and said, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread, there is no water, and we detest this miserable thing.

Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them. They bit the people, and many Israelites died.

The people came to Moses and said, We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you.

[1 : 14] Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us. So Moses prayed for the people. 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, he lived.

May the Lord bless that word to our hearts. Thank you. This text we're going to read is the very famous account of Jesus speaking to Nicodemus, the member of the Sanhedrin, one of the Jewish teachers of the law, about the new birth.

And one of the things that Jesus does in this chapter is he tells Nicodemus how the new birth happens. And that's our theme for this morning, how the new birth happens. Maybe it's a question you've often asked yourself. How does the new birth happen?

How does it come about that people get born again? Well, Jesus gives us the answer in this chapter. And we're going to read verses 1 to verse 16. But we're going to look closely at verses 9 to 15.

[2 : 27] And let's start with John's Gospel, chapter 3 and verse 1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God.

But no one could perform the miraculous signs you're doing if God were not with him. 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's old? Nicodemus asked. Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born. And Jesus answered, I tell you the truth. No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he's born of water and 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's going.

So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. How can this be? Nicodemus asked. You are Israel's teacher, said Jesus. And do you not understand these things?

[3 : 41] I tell you the truth. We speak of what we know. 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, no one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came down 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 everlasting life.

And so reads God's word. How the new birth happens. I don't know whether you've spotted this, but on those emergency medical vehicles, ambulances, and on the uniforms, I think, of some of our paramedics, you see a symbol.

[4 : 46] I don't know whether you've seen it. It's an international symbol. It's a symbol the world over. And it's a blue star. It's got six points. And it's an interesting symbol because down the middle of it, there is something that, frankly, if you didn't know what it was, you would say it was completely weird.

It is a pole with a snake wrapped around it. It's called, the symbol's called the Star of Life. And it's an international symbol of healing. Why?

Why is that? The answer has everything to do with what we've read in the text. The text has five things in it.

There's a question. There's a mask. There's a mindset. There's an answer. And there's a challenge. I'm going to look at each one in turn. A question.

There's a question to consider. Verses 9 and 10. Let's have a look at verses 9 and 10 first, shall we? How can this be, Nicodemus asks. There's the question. And Jesus' answer is this. You're Israel's teacher, said Jesus.

[5 : 50] And do you not understand these things? Another question. The question is, how can these things be? How can this be? A better translation might be to say, how can this happen?

Or how can this new birth happen? There's the question. There's the theme. How does the new birth happen? It's Nicodemus' question. How does it happen? So, he's the recognized expert in the law.

A teacher in Israel, says Jesus. He's the kind of person, is Nicodemus. Who, if you were, if you, he's the kind of person. You know how it is on the BBC when they want to comment on some issue.

And they bring in some sort of learned person. He's that kind of a person, is Nicodemus. He's the reverent professor, doctor person. And Jesus is saying to him, you're that kind of an expert in the Jewish law.

And yet, you don't understand these things. Why? Why doesn't Nicodemus get it?

[6 : 56] You see, Nicodemus has taught this for his entire life. He's an old man. He's getting on in years. We can get that from the context.

He's not a young whippersnapper of an intellectual. He's a learned, older, stately gent. He's thought things through for a long time.

And he doesn't get it. Because he's taught all his entire life. That the conditions for entry into the kingdom of God. Are obedience to the commands of God.

And here's Jesus facing him down with this statement. No one can see the kingdom of God. Unless he's born again.

You must be born again, Nicodemus. It's not obedience to the commands of God. That brings you into the kingdom. It's being born again.

[7 : 58] And that's why Nicodemus is completely puzzled. And completely flummoxed by what Jesus has to say. And the thing is. Some of us still think like Nicodemus.

We have the idea. That if my public prayers are not too short and not too long. That if my attendance at meetings is impeccable. That if I'm a good Christian man or woman.

That if I, you know, maintain a morally upright life. That if I keep my nose clean. And if I keep my hand out of the till. And if I honour my family.

If I do the right thing. You hear it all the time, don't you? Doing the right thing. And God's bound to love me.

He's bound to accept me. It's not true. You know, we're like the son. Who when leaving home promised his mother.

[9 : 02] He'd be sure to act honourably and do the right thing. To remember to tell the truth. And always to give something to the poor. And he went off to university. Found a good job. And did exactly what his mother told him to do.

He always acted honourably towards others. And he always told the truth. And he always did the right thing. And remember to give to the poor. Never once thanked his mother. For that advice.

You see. The great flaw in being moral. And doing the right thing. Is to forget. The one who gave us the moral compass.

In the first place. Morality. Moralism. Is all about me. And my achievements. I don't want you to go away today.

To think that the good news of Jesus Christ. Is that if I love God. And keep his commands. He's going to accept me. That's bad news. The good news is.

[10:04] That there is a God. Who has loved me. And accepts me. When I believe on him. And he puts a new life in me. And empowers me.

To live a life of joyful obedience. It's that. We can love him. Because he first loved us. And you see. That's why. That's why Jesus is so sharp. With Nicodemus. That's why. At the beginning there. Jesus is so. So. Strong. No one can see the kingdom of God.

Unless he's born again. Jesus is so direct. It's like shock tactics. At the beginning of the text. And it makes Nicodemus think. Again. Because after this.

Question here. In verse 9. Nicodemus doesn't say another thing. In the discussion. Does he? Jesus all. He just has to listen.

[11:02] To what Jesus has to say. The conviction. Nicodemus. Makes him quiet. And silent. And maybe you're thinking.

Yeah. And I can understand this. You know. Maybe you're thinking at this point. Well. You know. I. I. I. I would like. To know. How the new birth happens.

Maybe that's a question. That you've been asking yourself. Maybe you've not expressed it to anyone else. But maybe it's an important question. That's been on your mind. And you'd like to know. How the new birth happens. And you're.

A little bit anxious. Now I've talked about Jesus being so straightforward. And direct. With Nicodemus. And maybe you're thinking. Is this how Jesus is going to respond to me. If I ask that question. Well let me.

Let me. Let me. Reassure you at this point. That this isn't the only way. Jesus responds to questioners. If you were to turn into chapter four. Of John's gospel. You'd find there. A woman.

[12:00] Who. Whom Jesus deals with. Very very very tenderly. And gently. Who's kind. An understanding of. Predicament. And gently draws her to himself.

Really to understand that he is. He is the Messiah of God. The. The. The. The son of God. Who has come to earth to save her. You know I.

I might be. A kind of person. Who answers questions. In just one sort of wooden way. Jesus understands us. And he adapts his approach. Towards us.

Yes he's the shock tactician. With. With Nicodemus. But he's very gentle. With. With the woman of Samaria. And he's lovely. With the children. Suffer the little children. To come unto me. For of such is the kingdom of God.

And forbid them not. He said to his disciples. Didn't he. When they pushed away the children. He's the perfect pastor. That's the point. He said he welcomes people.

[13:01] With questions. He welcomes those. With an. Inquiring mind. He welcomes those. Who are searching. And seeking for him. He loves that. He loves to see people.

Coming to find. And to seek him out. One of the reasons. This church. And our church. Have those small groups.

That were mentioned in the notices. Those house groups. Those fellowship groups. We call ours. Is that it's a place. Where you can ask those questions. And reflect on God's word. And come to terms.

With what God. What Jesus is saying. And I would encourage you. To be part of a. Of a fellowship group. Or a house group. Or whatever this church calls them. And not be afraid.

Of asking those questions. That are on your mind. About the Christian faith. After all. Didn't many of us. Come to. Jesus Christ. Through a forest of questions.

[13:55] Didn't you. Find that it was. Those questions. That were answered. That brought you. Probably to faith in Christ. Churches like this one. Are ready to listen.

Not to talk you down. And to talk you out. And okay. Let's be honest. We have to admit. In the church. We don't have all the answers. I don't have all the answers.

And neither does this church. But we do know this. That there is a God. Who cares for us. And loves us. And is prepared to accept us. As we are. So.

A question. And then there's a mask. Look at verse 11. Look at verse 11. Truly. Truly. I say to you. We speak. Says Jesus. Of what we know.

And bear witness. To what we've seen. But you do not. Receive our testimony. If I've told you. Earthly things. And you don't believe. How can you believe. If I tell you. Heavenly things. He says to Nicodemus. Well it's very interesting.

[14:55] Jesus replies. Isn't it. Look at. Look at how he phrases it. Look at the pronouns in it. Look what he says. He begins to speak. In the plural. He says. We speak. We know. We testify. We have seen.

And what's he doing. Why is he. Why is he using the plural there. What's he getting at. And he's being sardonic. He's. He's aping. What Nicodemus has said. At the beginning of the. The discussion.

When Nicodemus used. As it were. The royal we. He said. Rabbi. We know. You are a teacher. Come from God. We know. And Jesus says. Look. Listen. Nicodemus.

We speak. We know. And what we testify. Is what we have seen. It's as if he's saying. We know. You know. Nicodemus. One or two things as well. Just like you do. You see.

The point is this. Nicodemus's incredulity. And his questions. Are a mask. A smoke screen.

[15:49] To a deeper fundamental issue. That's been. With Nicodemus. All through this discussion. And Jesus is bringing Nicodemus. To face up to.

Who he really thinks. Jesus is. He has him down as a teacher. You're a teacher. Come from God. Verse two. And his view hasn't shifted. In verses eleven and twelve. He's not even begun yet. To appreciate who Jesus is. And Jesus says. It's not a failure of intellect.

But it's a failure of belief. It's a failure of trust. You people do not accept.

Or believe our testimony. Verse eleven. You see. The one thing. The one thing. You cannot say.

[16:45] About Jesus. That he's just a teacher. Even a teacher. Come from God. N.T. Wright said this. Christianity.

Isn't about giving the world. Fresh teaching. But about God himself. Now clearly. If the Christian claim is true. We do indeed need to learn. A great deal about.

Who God is. By looking at Jesus. The point about. The Christian faith. Is not so much. That we're ignorant. And need better information. We are lost. And need someone.

To come and find us. We're stuck in the quicksand. Waiting to be rescued. We're dying. And in need of new life. Jesus is no mere teacher.

He is the son of God. He is the light of the world. The bread of life. The door to heaven. The resurrection and the life. What this shows us here. Is the darkness of our own human hearts.

[17:43] Like Nicodemus is. And the deadness of our spiritual senses. Like Nicodemus is. To the truth of the gospel. We're darkened in our understanding. We're separated from the life of God. Just like Nicodemus was here.

Our hearts are hardened and resistant to the truth. Many of us. Many of us. Have been going through life. Trying to hide behind a mask of incredulity. And questions. Not facing up to who Jesus really is.

And it shows us that becoming a Christian. Being born again. Must be a supernatural act. Of the living God. For only God. Can transform that resistance to the truth.

The new birth. The new birth happens to us. Without any contribution from ourselves. That's what's being said here. That's how Jesus penetrates the smoke screen.

Of Nicodemus' questions. You know. Let me ask you this. Does a baby choose the day of its birth? Does a baby bring itself into the world?

[18:44] Did you choose the day of your birth? Mine's March the 23rd. No I didn't. 1954. A long, long time ago. But I didn't choose that day. Did you bring yourself into the world on that day?

No I didn't. And neither did you. I'm no expert on births. There might be a midwife here. Who is. But I'm no expert. I've only seen two live births. Because I've got two daughters.

And I was there for each birth. But I'm sure of this. When you come into the world. You come into the world. Through the pain. And the pushing.

And the efforts of someone else. You come into the world through the suffering of someone else. You come into the world through the blood. Of someone else.

And I think if you were going to be born in first century Palestine. You might have come into the world through the death of someone else. Your mother. Because of the kind of. Neonatal. The kind

of birth mortality in those days.

[19 : 46] That's how you were born. That's how I was born. And Jesus says if you're going to be reborn. You're going to be born a second time. You're going to be spiritually born.

And you. That's going to be through the pain. And the suffering. And the blood. And the death of someone else. Jesus himself. He likens. In John 16 verse 21.

He likens himself. To a mother giving birth. He does. You can look it up. Here's the verse. A woman giving birth to a child has pain. Because her time has come.

Her time. Her hour. Has come. But when a baby is born. She forgets the anguish. Because of her joy. That a child is born into the world. And you know when Jesus always says that verse. That phrase. My hour.

My time. Here he is again. A woman giving birth to a child has pain. Because her time. Her hour has come. He's speaking of his death. To his disciples. And he's alluding to this woman.

[20 : 42] Who's giving birth. And he's saying my time has come. Yes. Jesus is the one who brings us into the world. Into the new world. The new creation. Through his pain.

His suffering. His death. And his blood. That he shed on the cross. And of course the point of verse 12 is this as well. Isn't it? Look at verse 12 again. I have spoken to you of earthly things.

And you do not believe. How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? You know the final point here is that Jesus is saying. I've got unique teaching. But it presupposes the new birth.

The obvious meaning of earthly things in verse 12. Is the new birth itself. Because it happens on earth. It's what Jesus has been telling Nicodemus about. And what he found so incredulous to the point of unbelief.

That Jesus is saying. What is the point Nicodemus of me telling you of. Heaven. And the age to come. Heavenly things. When you're not even in the kingdom. When you don't even believe in the possibility of new birth.

[21 : 45] You know in life you have to walk before you can run. And you have to be born before you can walk. And it's the same in spiritual things. You have to be born again. Then you can walk with God.

And run with God. So we've got a question. We've got a mask. We've got a mindset. Look at verse 13. No one has ever gone into heaven.

Except the one who came down from heaven. The son of man. No one has ascended into heaven. Says the RSV. But he who descended from heaven. The son of man. Now there's a problem with this verse isn't there?

Because in the Old Testament. There were two people who ascended into heaven weren't there? Enoch walked with God. And was not. Because God took him.

That's in Genesis. And what happened to Elijah? He didn't die did he? He was taken up to heaven. By God.

[22 : 45] In a chariot of fire. So what's Jesus saying? No one has ascended into heaven. Is he contradicting the Old Testament? What's he getting at?

Have you ever thought about that? Have you ever thought about that? What's he mean? Jesus says to Nicodemus. No one has ascended into heaven. But he who descended from heaven. It makes better sense you know. He's not contradicting the Old Testament isn't Jesus. No, no. No. It makes better sense if we realize.

I'm following Don Carson at this point. If you want to know where this comes from. It makes better sense. If we realize that in the Judaism of Jesus' day. There were untrue myths and stories circulated amongst the Jews.

About Old Testament saints. Who had ascended into heaven. So it was supposed. They were stories. Not true. And the Jews thought that in heaven. These saints received special insight into God's ways and plans.

[23 : 45] Many fables. They were fables. They're not true. Focused on Moses. And this is the mindset of Nicodemus. This is what he thinks. Jesus is refuting such inventions.

He's clashing with the mindset that Nicodemus has. He's insisting no one has ascended into heaven. Like you believe in those stories, Nicodemus.

And the implication is this. This is the point. Jesus means no one has returned from there to talk about heavenly things.

As the Jews thought they had. No one has done this. Not Moses. Not Elijah. Not Daniel. Not no one. Not no Old Testament saint of God. But, says Jesus, the point is this.

No one has ascended into heaven. But, there is one who has descended from heaven. Jesus, the son of man, can speak of heavenly things. Why? Not because he ascended from a home on earth. [24 : 49] And then into heaven. And then descended to tell others about his experience. That would be to make him less than God. Like these Old Testament Jewish myth figures. No. Jesus is unique. In a different league to all the other Old Testament saints and heroes.

Jesus is the only true revelation of the father in heaven. And what Jesus is seeking to do here is change Nicodemus' mindset. To bring him to repentance.

To overturn his thinking. And to convince him to believe in him as the only one who came down from heaven. He's the only true revelation of the father is Jesus.

He's the one who shows us the heart of the father in heaven. He's the one who went to the far country and brought us home to the father. And brought us back to the father. That's what Jesus has done.

He's the son of man. The bringer of new life and new birth. John had already said it in chapter 1 and verse 18, hadn't he? No man has ever seen God but the only begotten one himself.

[25 : 52] God has made him known. God has made him known. God has made him known. God has made him known. And your mindset is what Jesus is seeking to change, you know. Your mindset.

The way you think about Jesus. The way you think about faith and the Christian faith. You may think that Christians overplay that difference between faith and all the other ones.

Making Jesus out to be unique. You may think that that has been overplayed. And I've overplayed it in my sermon. Maybe it seems to you unfair.

That millions of people in other religions say they've encountered God. And have their lives changed by an experience of faith. Only for us Christians to come along and insist.

That it's only Christians, not them, who go to heaven. That their religion is the only one that's right. Our religion. And it's the only one that's right and true. And that theirs isn't.

[26 : 49] You may be here thinking that this Christianity thing is all just too exclusive and narrow. You know. You hear people say this, don't you? No one should insist. That their view of God is better than all the rest.

Every religion is equally valid. All roads lead to God. We're climbing, all climbing a mountain to the same God on the top. You know, if that were true.

It could only be true. If there was no God to care what people believed about him. Or God was some impersonal thing.

Which, who really didn't care. What you and I believed about him. But you know, all the religions of the world have a God who cares what people believe about him.

And if you're thinking no one view is better than all the rest. Then you're assuming a special view of God.

[28 : 00] That you deny to everyone else. And you can't have it both ways. You can't criticise in Christians what you do yourself.

Hold a special view of God. And actually, put it bluntly, all religions are equally valid. It's a very white, western, fair play, English gentleman's view of God.

So why should we favour that kind of view, eh? If you go to the Middle East or to Asia, they don't think like that at all. We are so culturally bound by the land we live in.

Jesus is seeking to change your mind about him. And for you to turn and believe that he alone is the true revelation of the goodness and kindness of our Father in heaven. And how's that happen? How's this new birth happen? Look at verse 14. There it is. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, says Jesus. He turns Nicodemus to a story that he knows full well.

[29 : 07] It's in Numbers chapter 21 that Richard read to us. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have the life of God.

Eternal life. What's the story? The story is this. That in the journey of escape from Egypt to the Promised Land, the people of Israel are always murmuring against Moses and against God.

And it gets to the point where God punishes them by sending these snakes, these venomous creatures, fiery serpents in the old versions it used to be.

And if an Israelite gets bitten by one, they suffer convulsions, arranging fever, insatiable thirst and they die. And nothing, but nothing can be done for them.

And the situation becomes so serious that the people come to Moses and confess that they've sinned against him and against God. And they repent very deeply.

[30 : 09] And Moses calls on God for them and God tells him to do something that is strange. If you read this for the first time, this is weird. Moses must take a bronze snake, make a bronze snake.

And the image of that which is killing them is the snake he's got to fashion it after. And he must put it on a pole. Huge, tall pole. And those Israelites who look at the snake, catch a glimpse of the snake, will be healed.

They live. And that's how it works. And do you know that's why, you know that blue star of life that I talked about at the beginning? That's where that snake on a pole comes from.

It comes from Numbers 21. The medical people are picked up on the snake on a pole, looking at it and living. Across the world. Whether you're in Beijing, or you're in Barcelona, or whether you're in New York, or you're in Nairobi.

It's the same symbol. A universal symbol of healing. They looked at the snake and lived. And Jesus says, just in the same way, I'm going to be lifted up.

[31 : 22] But not on a pole, on a cross. And my death for you on that cross is going to bring you new life. That's how the new birth happens.

You see the image on the pole? Do you know what it is? It's the image of the very thing that's killing you. And bringing your death. And when Jesus dies on the cross, what is he?

He's the sacrifice for the very thing that's killing you and me. Sin itself. He's not made a sinner. But he's made sin. And an offering to God.

So that we might become the righteousness of God in him. It's a great exchange is the cross. Jesus lifted up on the cross. Takes my sin. And he grants me pardon.

He takes my condemnation. And he grants me freedom. He takes my eternal death in sin and hell. And he gives me eternal, everlasting life. He takes the disease of sin into himself.

[32 : 22] He heals me. He takes the foulness and filthiness of sin. And cleans me up. He takes all my enemies to himself. Kills every one of them.

That I might enjoy ultimate freedom from sin and death and hell and the grave when I believe on him. And all I have to do is look.

All I have to do is hold out an empty hand and take his gift. Look unto me. Isaiah 45, 22. Look unto me.

Be ye saved. All the ends of the earth. For I am God. And there's no other. He's holding out salvation. And all I do is come with empty hands and accept it.

There was a boy. He was 16. Who went to church in a snowstorm in around about 1850. His name was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. And this is what he said.

[33 : 25] About how he went to church that morning. In Colchester. And what happened to him when he was in that church. While I was going to a certain place of worship.

I could go no further he says. I turned down a side street. And came to a little primitive Methodist chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or 15 people. I'd heard of the primitive Methodists.

I wanted to know how I might be saved. And if they could tell me that. The minister didn't come that morning. He was snowed up in the snow. At last a very thin looking man.

A shoemaker maybe. Or a tailor or something. Went up into the pulpit to preach. He was obliged to stick to his text. For the simple reason he had little else to say.

Look unto me and be ye saved. All the ends of the earth. My dear friends. He said this is a very simple text. It says look. Now looking don't take a great deal of pains.

[34 : 25] It ain't lifting your foot or your finger. It's just look. Well a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You might be the biggest fool. And yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year. To be able to look. Anyone can look.

Even a child can look. But then the text says look unto me. Hey. He said in Broad Essex. Many on you are looking to yourselves. But it's no use looking there. You'll never find comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No look to him by and by. Jesus Christ says look unto me. Some on you say we must wait for the spirits working. You have no business with that. Just now.

Look to Christ. The text says look unto me. And then the good man followed up his text in this way. Look unto me. I'm sweating great drops of blood. Look unto me. I'm hanging on the cross. Look unto me. I'm dead and buried. Look unto me. I rise again. Look unto me. I ascend to heaven. Look unto me. I'm sitting at the Father's right hand. Oh poor sinner. Look unto me.

[35 : 19] Look unto me. And when he'd gone on about that length. And managed to spin out ten minutes or so. It was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery.

And I dare say with so few present. He knew me to be a stranger. And just fixing his eyes on me. As if he knew all my heart. He said young man. You look very miserable.

And you'll always be miserable. Miserable in life. And miserable in death. If you don't obey my text. And lifting up his hands he shouted. As only a primitive Methodist could do.

They were called the ranters by the way. Because they shouted so much in their services. Young man. Look to Jesus Christ. Look. Look. Look. You have nothing to do but to look and live.

And he says. Says Spurgeon. I saw at once the way to salvation. I know not what else he said. I didn't take much notice of it. I was so possessed. With that one thought.

[36 : 17] Like when the bronze snake was lifted up. The people only looked and were healed. So it was with me. I'd been waiting to do 50 things.

But when I heard that word look. What a charming word it seemed to me. Oh I looked until I could have almost looked my eyes away. Yeah.

Look. And live. Then lastly. A challenge. But you see. You see everyone that believes in him may have eternal life. You know.

What happened to Nicodemus? Do you know what happened to Nicodemus? If you go to John chapter 7. You find there that he. He attempts a defense of Jesus. And then you find him again in John chapter 19.

After the crucifixion. He goes with Joseph of Arimathea. To Pilate. Despite their fear of the Jews. To ask for the dead body of Jesus.

[37 : 20] It was incredibly brave. And incredibly courageous for him to do that. They were both remember. Members of the Sanhedrin.

The Jewish ruling council. The aristocracy. The elite. Part of the establishment. And for them to associate with Jesus even in his death.

After his death. Was highly risky. And they obtained the body. They carried the body of Jesus. And they did a very humble thing for Jesus.

They did actually what was women's work in first century Palestine. They took about 75 pounds of spices. And they washed. The body of Jesus.

And embalmed it. And laid him. In that new tomb. In the garden near Golgotha. Where on earth did they find the courage to do that?

[38 : 21] Where on earth did they find the humility to do that? Where did they find the compassion? To do what they did for Jesus? I'll put it to you.

That they looked. To him. In those three hours. As he suffered. On the cross. And found in him. The new life. And power. And grace. That he promised them. To do the courageous thing. To do the humble thing. To do the compassionate thing.

And you know. Some of you. Need courage. To be the salt and light in your community. To stand for him.

For Jesus. At work. And at school. And at college. In the neighborhood. Among your family. Some of you need the courage to resist. And stand against that temptation.

[39 : 19] That keeps getting you. And some of you need the courage to face the future. What it's going to bring. You're only going to find that courage.

You're only going to find that strength. In a look. At a bleeding. Dying. Saviour on the cross. And some of you think you need humility.

To take on a very difficult task. And if you think you need to grow into a better. A more gracious husband. Or a more understanding and considerate wife. If you need. Think you need that humility.

To be a better listener as a daughter.

Or to be a more supportive son. To be a more understanding church officer. Or to be a kinder church worker. Or to be a preacher. With a greater heart of compassion and warmth. Then you too.

Will only find what you need.

When you look. To the humility. Of the bleeding. Dying. Compassionate Saviour on the cross. We love.

[40 : 19] Because he first loved us. And that's how it always is. That's how it always works. It starts with him.

Not with us. Nicodemus began. In verse 2. Saying Jesus was a teacher. He finished.

John 19. Verse 38 to 51. I think it is. Seeing him. As the Saviour. Lifted up.

So what about you? Is that how you see him now? As the Saviour. Lifted up. Let's pray. Jesus. Jesus. We thank you for your grace.

In coming down to us. From heaven. Being prepared to go to the far country. To fetch us back to the Father. Jesus. We thank you for your humility.

[41 : 16] In giving yourself to the suffering of the cross. We thank you for your love for us. We thank you for your grace towards us. Jesus. We thank you Lord Jesus.

And we pray. Lord Jesus. That you would grant us. The grace to believe in you. To move from just thinking of you as a teacher. To believing you.

In you as our Saviour and Lord. This we pray in your name. Amen. Let's stand and sing.