

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with Praise

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God Sent His Son

December 7, 2025

Sermon Text: John 3:14-21

Scripture Reading: John 1

We now enter the Christmas season in which we are reminded of the indescribable gift given us by the Father. The Son entered into this world, and as the Confession puts it:

The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with Him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things He has made, did, when the fullness of time was complete,

take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities of it,⁹ yet without sin;¹⁰ being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures;¹¹ so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

This really IS indescribable – and it is a GIFT. The Son given to a fallen world. No one in the entire

history of the human race has ever received a more valuable gift than that baby in Bethlehem's manger. And yet, man in his sin loved the darkness rather than the light and in fact hated this Child with a murderous hatred. The world still does so to this day.

What I would like us to do in the coming weeks is to take a much closer look at this one and only mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. We cannot look at Him enough, even though for now we just see Him with a kind of blurred spiritual vision.

There is much talk about "god," among people. Many professing Christians claim that they love God and that He loves them – and everyone else. But much of this talk is just that – talk. Empty words. Because the god that the majority of people talk about is an idol fashioned with their own hands and imaginations. Typically the name of Jesus Christ is left out of such discussions. And yet, Jesus, the Son of God, is Gift of such value that Scripture tells us this:

Mat 13:44-46 "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (45) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, (46) and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

So we cannot look at Jesus too much. People drive down the highway and a billboard about the mega-lottery coming up instantly engrosses their minds. What will we do with such money? And that train of thought rushes along.

But what happens when we hear the name Jesus? Or when we read scriptures like these:

Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Joh 3:17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the

world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Sin has made things go terribly wrong. Here is this greatest gift, absolutely free! You don't even have to buy a ticket! It is not just for some lucky person whose number is drawn against all odds. No. This Gift is without cost, without price, and yet it is priceless treasure. Salvation. Freedom. Deliverance from hell. A mind put right so that we think and see as we were intended.

Think of another illustration. How much would a man pay for a cure from a terminal disease? Even though that cure would only be for the rest of his earthly lifetime – what would he give? Probably everything.

Or this – how much would a man pay for eternal life, for being put right with God?

Mar 10:17-23 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what

shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (18) And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. (19) "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" (20) And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." (21) Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (22) But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. (23) And Jesus, looking around, *said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

Now, this brings us of course to personal application. If we read God's Word we never truly read it if we fail to apply it to our own selves. Therefore –

What has it cost you, what has it cost me, to follow the Lord? As that hymn asks – “What will it cost me to follow the Lord, what is the price of a life that’s restored?” And you recall the answer – everything.

Therefore, we must ask – God’s Word backs us right into a corner from which no one can squirm out – the question must be answered – what has your claim to be a Christian cost you? When is the last time you paid the price required to obey and follow Christ? Many people who claim to be Christians have never, ever paid any cost at all. They are still quite popular with everyone. Their chosen career always is given priority. That rich young ruler who refused to pay the price, to die to himself and take up his own cross to follow the Lord – where is he right now? Where has he been these 2,000 years? I can tell you. He is in hell. He traded eternal life and heaven for trinkets.

What might you be clinging to that is standing in the way of your full obedience to Christ?

Therefore, this Christmas season and in weeks ahead, let’s look at God’s indescribable gift and pray that He will show us more of Himself.

Joh 3:14-21 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

(15) so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. (16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

(17) "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (18) "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

(19) "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

(20) "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (21) "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Now, what is the context here? It is Christ's interaction with Nicodemus, so let's listen in:

Joh 3:1-13 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; (2) this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

(3) Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (4)

Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

(5) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (6) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

(8) "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

(9) Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" (10) Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? (11) "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. (12) "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if

I tell you heavenly things? (13)
"No one has ascended into heaven,
but He who descended from
heaven: the Son of Man.

NOTE: In this series I am going to be helped – for my benefit and for yours – by John Brown who was a faithful minister in Edinburgh, Scotland from 1829-1858. Beginning in the summer of 1807, he labored for more than 40 years in the study of the Gospels in particular, and produced three volumes which are expositions from the Gospels, first published in 1850. Reverend Brown always was guided by this conviction – *“Vital, living, and influential Christianity consists much more than is ordinarily understood, in an intimate and personal acquaintance and friendship with our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The title of his 3 volumes is Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord, and thus he focused upon those portions of the Gospels which contain most of the major sayings and discourses of our Lord. C.H. Spurgeon said of these

volumes, *“They are of the noblest of expositions. Procure them.”*

It is my opinion that when we can utilize the fruit of faithful saints of old like Pastor John Brown, we should not hesitate to do so. Too many pastors somehow think that they must be “original” in all that they do in preaching and teaching. That is wrong. Nothing we preach or teach is to “originate” from ourselves – God’s Word never changes. He has given pastors and teachers to His church, and we are very foolish if we fail to hear them. Beware of the preacher who is always claiming some “new” insight.

Alright then, the context. Jesus, along with Peter, Andrew, John, Philip, and Nathaniel had come up to Jerusalem. He has expelled the merchants from the temple and turned the water to wine at Cana (John 2). So word had spread and He was given some notoriety, some people concluding that He must be a prophet or messenger from God.

However, and this is vital for us to understand, all of these people

shared the prevalent ideas about God's plan for their own nation. In their thinking – and they were certain of this- the goal of the Messiah and the nature of His kingdom was to restore the earthly nation of Israel to its former glory. The kingdom of God, in other words, was seen to be an earthly , worldly kingdom.

Now, in this mindset, here comes Nicodemus. He is not only a Pharisee, but a “ruler of the Jews” and thus a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest governing body of Israel. He was a teacher of the Law, and his teaching would have been that the Messiah would bring a temporal deliverance, a national deliverance from Rome.

Now, did Nicodemus believe that Jesus was the Messiah? Probably not because after all he held to the common idea that the Messiah would certainly not come from Nazareth, as Jesus had. Nicodemus was conflicted because here is this apparently lowly, humble, poor man from Galilee who to anyone's knowledge was surely not a descendant of David's royal house.

However, as I said, Nicodemus was conflicted because Jesus' miracles and His exercise of authority could only mean that He had been sent from God.

Joh 3:2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

In concluding this, Nicodemus was at least more correct and honest than so many people today who will call Jesus a “good teacher” but deny that He spoke for God as the Son of God. Having concluded this much, Nicodemus comes to Jesus “by night.” Why? We are not told but in John's gospel “night” and darkness imply spiritual blindness. The lights had still not gone on for Nicodemus.

Now, here is where we begin to hear and see the Lord Jesus, and to learn more about Him – to know Him better, which is our goal. Here is His response:

Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Jesus' response to shows several things. First, Jesus knew that Nicodemus was curious (and wrong) about the kingdom of God. Both Jesus and John the Baptist had said that the kingdom was at hand (Mat 3:2; 4:17,23). But Jesus's response also showed that He knew Nicodemus' idea about the kingdom was entirely wrong.

1. You did not enter the kingdom of God by simply being a Jew
2. Entry was by being born again, born of water and the Spirit (vs 5).
3. In other words, the kingdom of God is spiritual – it is created by the Holy Spirit
4. And later, Nicodemus would learn that the kingdom would also include Gentiles who were born of the Spirit.

So everything Nicodemus and the Jews believed with certainty about the kingdom of God, *was wrong*.

Now, what else do we see in Jesus here as revealed by His response to Nicodemus?

Jesus did not thank Nicodemus for his flattering remark that Jesus was a messenger from God. Instead He immediately confronted him with the truth. Jesus did not and does not return flattery for flattery. He speaks truth.

Listen to John Brown on this:

"Instead of showing himself flattered by Nicodemus' recognition of Jesus' divine mission, or thanking this man who was of high rank and influence in Israel, Jesus in effect said that Nicodemus was completely mistaken on the subject about which he had come to speak about with Jesus, and that without an entire change in his mode of thinking, and in his mode of feeling too, Nicodemus could never become a partaker of the privileges of the new order of things to be established by the Messiah, nor could he even understand the

things of the kingdom.” [John Brown, Discourses, Vol 1 p. 3]

Nicodemus’ response was, as expected, confusion – *how can a man be born when he is old?*

Here then, we see a central beautiful quality of the Lord Jesus – *He is the truth*. He shows us truth. He speaks truth. And He does so to people who are blind to the truth and who actually hate the truth. In everything we see Jesus say and do, we see *truth*. It is light shining in this dark world. Men, typically, would have merely thanked Nicodemus and recruited this high-ranking official as an ally in Jesus’ mission. But Jesus spoke truth to him - truth which revealed just how lost he was.

If we, if anyone, are ever going to understand the kingdom of God, if we are ever going to enter into it, we must hear and receive and believe, *the truth as it is in Jesus*.

Eph 4:20-23 But you did not learn Christ in this way, (21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been

taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, (22) that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, (23) and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

Nicodemus was not brought face to face, literally, with the truth as it is in Jesus. It was not what he wanted to hear. It was not what he had been taught and what he taught to others. It revealed that everything he had been living for was a lie. And it revealed that *as he was the moment he was born, as he was even as a Pharisee and teacher of Israel, would never qualify him to enter the kingdom of God or to even understand it*.

Christ’s truth is not only powerful, it cuts right down into the most hidden recesses of our minds and hearts, it shows us ourselves in contrast to the holy, holy, holiness of God. And man in his sin does not want to hear it. This above all else was why Jesus was crucified at the hands of sinners.

Many, many people who claim to be Christians, who regard themselves as a sure thing when it comes to entering the kingdom of heaven, hate the truth which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus.

“You must be born again. You must not only repent by making a change of mind such as those did who were baptized by John, you must be born of the Spirit. That is, you must actually undergo a change of mind which is produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The only thing you are capable of is flesh – the production of more fallen human nature. A fallen man can only have a son in his own likeness. But it is only by the working of the Spirit that a man becomes a child of God. A man’s inward views and feelings and mindset must be radically changed.”

THIS is truth. But man in his sin hates it. As Paul wrote to the Romans –

Rom 2:14-15 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law,

these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, (15) in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

The Law of God, you see, is written in the heart of the sinner. He has a conscience. He knows what is right and what is sin. But it is his fallen nature to pursue righteousness with God *by the work of the Law. By his own doings.* He creates idols and false gods. He sets about to appease his god through his offerings and works. This is who and what Nicodemus was. Even after Jesus explains it further, his response was still, *“How can these things be?”*

Do you see the beauty of Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life here? This is truth and real love in action. He is showing a sinner exactly what he needs to hear to be saved, even though the words are not easy to hear nor are they words which flatter and compliment.

The beauty of glory of Christ was shining before Nicodemus. But he was blind to it (see 2 Cor 4:3-4)

We know that at some point the Lord graciously regenerated his eyes because -

Joh 19:38-39 After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. (39) Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

But it was only because the Lord Jesus had spoken truth to him –

Joh 3:10-15 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? (11) "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. (12) "If I told you

earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (13) "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. (14) "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; (15) so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

Hard words – “*Are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?*”

This was to imply that Nicodemus should have known from the Old Testament Scriptures which he claimed to teach that the kingdom of God was entered only by the new birth, this mighty working of the Spirit.

Eze 11:19 "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

(also see Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31).

And the admonishment with truth continues- *you do not accept our testimony...you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"*

Let's close this morning with personal application of these things.

Do we believe Jesus? Do we want to hear His truth? Do we want what the Psalmist prayed for-

Psa 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

Psa 51:1-3 For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my

transgressions. (2) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. (3) For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

Psa 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; (24) And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

Because Jesus IS the TRUTH and if we know Him and love Him, we will love truth – even when it exposes our sin.