

For God So Loved the World

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the depth of God's love for humanity and the urgent need for individuals to accept that love before facing judgment.

Duration: 51:31

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 11:28, Luke 15:7, John 3:16, Romans 10:9, James 4:8, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 1:9, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Gods Love", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the profound love of God for the world, highlighting the need for individuals to bend their knee, confess their sins, and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It underscores the urgency of coming to the light of God, acknowledging sin, and experiencing the transformative power of God's love through repentance and surrender.

Transcript

Praise God, praise God, praise God. Thank you, Lord. That's why the scripture says, let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Good morning, Times Square Church. Bless God. If you'll go in your Bibles, please, with me to the book of John, chapter 3. John, chapter 3. Just open your Bibles there while we pray.

Father, I thank you, God Almighty. Oh, Lord, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Today, in particular, Lord, I need you to take this word much farther than I could ever take it in my understanding.

You've got to multiply it, Lord. You've got to cause it to explode into the hearts and the minds of your people. Oh, Lord, overshadow my frailty.

God, give me the strength that I need, Lord. I thank you for this with all my heart, God. I praise you.

Today, Lord, let this be a day of new beginnings for many. I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

John, chapter 3. We're going to read together from verse 16 to 21. Message title is, For God So Loved the World. For God so loved--folks, no matter what we preach, no matter what situation we find ourselves in, there is one verse of scripture that will always be the nail, in a sense, in my heart, that keeps me understanding the love of God.

It keeps my focus in perspective as to why I'm here, what is the message, what is the most profound message of God that can be preached in any pulpit to any heart at any time. You'll find it in these verses ahead. John, chapter 3 and verse 16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hates the light, and neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved, or that means discovered. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

And one of the most profound truths in the New Testament through the Apostle Paul is spoken, and it's where Paul says, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Whether these are already believers in Christ, or absolute barbaric heathens, there's a day coming when every person ever created in the image of God is going to be resurrected from the dead, and those who are still living will also be gathered together, and there will be a judgment time. There'll be a time that you and I, every person ever born, stands before the throne of God.

Don't forget this is coming. Don't forget this is a day that is still ahead of us. Every knee will bow.

Hitler's knee will bow. Attila the Hun will bow. Some of the most ruthless characters of all time, they will bend their knee, and their tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Many, many people will be looking at that moment for an opportunity of salvation, but it's passed them by. I think, folks, that perhaps for the first time ever, people, many, many people will be finally aware of the love of God. That's possibly what makes hell even more of a tormenting place.

Can you imagine finally having come to the place where you've understood the love of God? Finally, your eyes are opened, and you see why God became a man over 2,000 years ago, and came to this earth, endured the scorn of a fallen humanity, and went to a cross. Finally, you begin to see it and understand that He did it for you. You are alone.

You are standing before the throne of God, and I can hear and see in that generation, many, many will be saying, Lord, I bend my knee. I'm sorry that I was so resistant to every time you began to try to speak to my heart. I closed my ears, and I pushed away the message you were trying to speak to me, but God, now I acknowledge that you are indeed Lord.

You are indeed Christ. You are indeed the creator of the universe. You are indeed the one who has a lawful right to the reigns of my life.

I bend my knee, and I confess with my tongue that you are Lord, only to have Him say, I'm sorry, but your time of grace is past. There is a day coming, folks. There is a day coming when the door of grace is going to close.

The time will be past. There's a time coming when all of society, that day as in the day of Noah, when the rain began, the scripture says God in the selfsame day closed the door to the ark, and Noah and his family

were saved. They were locked into that ark, and everyone who came thinking they could find their way into that safety found that the door was closed to them.

There is a season. There's a time coming. Now, it can be a collective time in history, but it can be an individual time.

I remember years ago, I was at a gathering, a Christian gathering, and I saw there a man who had at one time a great zeal for God, but something in his heart turned, and instead of being a proponent of goodness in the house of the Lord, he turned to evil and did much harm in the church of Jesus Christ. And I saw this man at the gathering, and my heart was moved towards him. I walked up to him, and I told him words to this effect.

I don't remember the exact words, but words to this effect. I've only ever done this once in my lifetime. I said, brother, your life is coming to an end.

You're soon going to be standing before God. You have only a short season to get your life in order. I said, make wrongs right.

Make restitution with the wrong things that you've done. Get your life right before God. I'll never forget.

We're standing a foot apart from each other. He looked right into my eyes, and his lip rose, and his nose wrinkled. And he was looking at me saying, like, who do you think you are to come and speak to me this way? I've been around a lot longer than you.

I've done a lot more than you purport to have done for the kingdom of God, but yet I knew there was, and I felt nothing but the love of God in my heart. Three months later, suddenly, one day, he died of a massive heart attack. And he died just as vile and violent as he had become.

There were no changes in his life. I can see him one day before the throne of God, bending his knee and confessing with his tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord, only to find that the doorway to salvation closed to him. And this passage in John chapter 3 tells us why.

It says, light came into the world. Now, light meaning, by definition, that which is not kindled and that which never can be extinguished. Light being the voice of God that said, let there be light, and light was.

Light being everything that man needs to be regenerated, brought back into right relationship with God. Light being a pathway that God himself sets before you and I, and says, this is the way, walk in it. Light being hope ahead of us, no matter how dark the hour may get.

If you have light in your soul, thanks be to God, you're seeing beyond the temporary storms and into another time, another place, another kingdom. Light means, in a sense, that the heart cannot be governed by fear. Yes, fear can have its moment, but the heart of a true believer in Christ cannot be governed by fear because there's a truth in the heart that is much deeper than anything that you and I have to face in our time and our generation.

And Jesus said, light came into the world, but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Now, they may not have seen them as evil. They may have justified their deeds.

They may have felt that their deeds were excusable, perhaps in the light of the way that the rest of society is living. And one of the most tragic mistakes that you and I can make is judging our own righteousness in

a sense, or our own right way of living by the standard of what's going on in the world. Folks, that's not the standard.

The standard is Christ. The standard is this word of God. But they wouldn't come to this light because their deeds were evil.

And then they began to hate the light. And they didn't want to come to the light because coming to the light means that our deeds will be discovered. The religious man may find out he's not quite as religious as he thought he was.

The virtuous woman may find out she's not quite as virtuous as God's word says that she can be made into by the truth of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit. And so those who really, it doesn't matter if they come to church. Coming to church is one thing, but coming to Christ is what it's all about.

Coming to the throne of God now, not waiting for a day when it's too late. Coming into the presence of God as David the psalmist said, and said, Oh God, search me, O Lord, and know my heart. Try me, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way of life everlasting.

David is not asking God to validate his direction. He was asking the Lord to come and examine him and prove him. But he that does truth, Jesus says, comes to the light that his deeds might be made known that they have been birthed in God.

If you are a genuine Christian here today, you have to want to know this. I have to want to know this, that the thoughts I'm thinking, the path that I'm pursuing, the things that have become dear to my heart, that these have been indeed birthed in God, in the life of God within me. Because the Bible says, if I delight myself in the Lord, he will give me the desires of my heart.

That doesn't mean the desires of my carnal heart. He will give me new desires. That's the way I've always read that.

He will give me these desires, and then as he gives me the desire for new things, as I ask for them, he will give them to me. The desire for more patience, the desire to be a person of kindness, the desire to be able to walk through adversity and not become bitter. These desires, God says, I'll place them in your heart, and when you ask me, then I will answer the prayers that I cause you to pray.

Ultimately, those that reject light have rejected the love of God. Can you imagine? Now, I'm going to try today to describe the love of God, but you have to understand where I'm coming from. I'm like a man who's walking up to an iceberg that was big enough to sink the Titanic, scraping it with my fingernail, and then with the little bit of ice that's caught under my nail, I'm trying to describe what I've just touched.

I don't know if, I don't think there's a person alive that can fully describe the love of God. When we get to heaven and finally see the great distance that God bridged through his son when he became a man, when it finally hits us how other than God the human race became, how even our best intentions apart from God were filthy rags, as Isaiah said, in the sight of God. When we finally understand that even our best efforts at decent speech, as Isaiah said in Isaiah chapter 6, we are people of, I'm a man of unclean lips, and we're a people of unclean lips.

When we finally see the Lord in his holiness, we finally understand the incredible gap bridged between God and man. The only answer that you and I will ever have is God, you so love the world. Why else

would you have done this? Why else would you have made this journey? Why else would you have bridged this gap? Why else, holy and infinite God, would you have come down into the earth and let fallen creation spit in your face, and let them slap you, and let them scourge you, and let them mock you on a cross when it was within your power to destroy it all and recreate it again in your image? God could have at any moment said enough of this and just annihilated everything.

He could have sent the entire universe into particles smaller than anything that our physicists and scientists have been able to discover, and then he could have brought it back together and recreated it, as he will do one day. The only reason he didn't do it, folks, is for love, because he loved you. From before the foundation of the world, the scripture says he loved you.

He saw you. He knew that you were going to be born, and had he done it then, there would have been no hope for you. There'd be no hope for me.

There'd be no eternity before us. God so loved the world, he gave to it his fullest and purest expression of his form of divine love in the person of his son, Jesus Christ. Paul says in Colossians 2, 9, for in him, that is in Christ, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

John says in chapter 1 of John, verse 14, we beheld his glory. In other words, the fullness of his excellence with his divine nature. We beheld it as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The highest form of love that God could have ever expressed to this earth is to come to this planet as a man and offer us a love and a relationship with himself that can be known and experienced by you and I today. Praise be to God. We have to be fools to turn down this overture of God towards us.

God forbid that anybody hearing my voice today, God forbid that you should end up at the throne and you've never bent your knee on this side of eternity. You've never confessed with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. You held to some thing, some foolish evil thing that you tried to make good, but God put up a barrier of his word to it and said, no, I will not accept this.

This practice does not come into my kingdom. That's why, for example, he said in Revelation, all thieves dwell outside of the holy city. No thief is coming in.

You steal for whatever reason you think you have a right to. I speak to every embezzler that's here today. Most embezzlers develop a very concise scheme in their mind.

I'm speaking, I used to be a cop, so I understand some of these things and they steal from one and then they cheat another to pay back the first one they stole from. That's how an embezzler, it's like the adulterous woman who wipes her mouth, the scripture says, and then says, I've done no wrong. No thief goes into the kingdom of God.

No thief. Go ahead as you fill out your tax forms, cheat all you want. No thief goes into the kingdom of God.

Settle it. This is the truth. This is light.

You either come to the light and deal with God on the ground of truth or put it away and then one day face him and then one day open your mouth and say, now you're Lord, now you're my God. No, he says, no, I'll be your God today and if I'm not your God today, I will not be your God then on the day of judgment. God

so loved the world.

A former paradise hijacked by Satan and set upon a course of its own destruction. God so loved it. You and I would have folded it up immediately and recreated it.

We would never have gone the thousands of years that God has gone. We would have never endured this hijacked paradise and watched mankind pursue a path that's ultimately leading to its own destruction. God so loved the world.

It was a place that he lent to a friend called Adam who in turn formed an alliance with his most vicious and vile enemy. When Adam agreed with Satan, the nature of Satan came into the human race and the human race now began to pursue a course throughout this world that is alien to God. God so loved a place of unbridled and evil ambition.

In Genesis 11 for one of the very first deeds of humankind when they got together as they said, let us build a city and a tower whose top may reach into heavens. Not much changes really over time. Men are always wanting to build a city and a tower to say well we we can we can prosper, we can make a name for ourselves, and we can chart our own courses, and we can build our own images, and we can think wrongly that everything ends up in eternal bliss.

We can do it our way and that's always been in the heart of fallen men from the time of the Garden of Eden is to be as God. To be able to be the one who says no I know what good is and I know what evil is in spite of what God says. I know just as well as God and so I'm going to prosper.

I'm going to build a city and a big big tower and this thing is going to reach up to heaven and prove that I can get there on my own. God loved a place where the lessons of history only lead to deeper spiritual ignorance about the future. Why don't we learn what is wrong with the world, with all the history of wars, all the despair of ethnic and cultural conflict, all of the past lessons of greed and where greed takes humanity.

Why couldn't we learn after 1929 what unbridled greed will do, and how it will hurt multitudes, and how it will set people in tents living in the streets, and how the marginalized and the widows and the poor will be the most deeply hurt by human greed. Why can't, why does it seem that we are insatiably ignorant and unable to stop? Why can't we learn from history? What is wrong with humanity? Peter says in 2nd Peter chapter 3 verses 5 to 7, for this they are willingly ignorant of, willingly ignorant Peter says, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water perished. Peter says they're willingly ignorant of this, that the world was kept by the word of God until God saw that the thoughts of men's hearts were only evil continually, and it reached a boiling point, and the Lord said no more, I cannot let this go on anymore.

There's a time folks where, there's a time where God says no, no more, no more, and we're there again, we've arrived as a world. I don't need to list the litany of sins of how this society is living, what we're doing, we kill our children for convenience folks, it doesn't get any darker than that. I don't, I hardly read anything as dark as that in the Old Testament, and folks we, people, there's no family affection, people just make a commitment, but it's, it means nothing anymore, if I'm not happy I'm out.

That's sort of the norm now of society all around us. There's open rebellion in the hearts of so many people, there's militant immorality all over on every side, and now you can see the country turning folks, we're calling evil good, and we're calling good evil. Everything is changing, and it's changing so fast, and

it's leading to that time where Paul the Apostle talks about just an unimaginable rebellion against God is going to sweep humanity, and we're living there now.

It's days away, it's, it's, it's, you can almost reach it and touch it now folks, but Peter says they're ignorant of this, that there's a cutoff line with God, there's a time when God says enough, and he says in verse 7, but the heavens and the earth which are now, this is after the judgment of Noah, by the same word are kept in store, in other words that the world was kept until God said enough, and he sent the judgment of water, but listen to what Peter says, now the same world is kept in store by the word of God, reserved to fire this time against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Folks, we live on the edge of eternity every moment. You are living on the edge of eternity right now.

You don't know that any of us have tomorrow morning. Tomorrow morning may not come. I remember preaching at one Sunday night an evangelistic message, and folks, that we just got out of the church, and I remember saying you don't know, you've got to get right with God, you don't know if you have tomorrow, and I remember heading out across the road to sitting down in a restaurant, and a man died right on the street, right in front of where I was sitting, right outside the window, within, I could have touched him if my hand would have gone through the glass, a man younger than me just walking down the street, and he died right on the spot, and I was thinking, I was looking to see if he had a Bible under his body.

I was thinking in my heart, God was he in the service tonight? Was he able to hear, and if he was there, and if he did hear, did he respond? Because this man's now gone, he's into eternity. God so loved the world, a place where men and women constantly dishonor the image of God by defiling their own bodies. God so loved this world, Romans 1 32, Paul says, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.

They not only do them, but they have pleasure in them to do them. Oh folks, what an hour we're living in, when certain forms of immorality now seem almost moral to this society. God so loved the world, a place that loves religiousness, but hates that which represents and speaks for the true image of God, Matthew 26 67.

The scripture says, then they spit in his face, and they buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands. Oh, this world loves its religion. Oh, religion is fine, but just don't put the image of God before us.

Take away this image. That would always be the cry of every society in the Old Testament that was about to be judged. Get this image of God away from us, and bring to us now prophets that will prophesy to us smooth things.

Tell us the path we've chosen is going to bring us an incredible liberty, and wealth, and success, and destiny. Tell us all of these things when the society itself is right on the threshold of judgment. God so loved the world.

Second Peter chapter 3 verse 9 tells us the only reason that God hasn't already judged the world is because he's long suffering towards us, and he's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That is the only reason. As you and I look today, and as we read the newspaper, and as you see what's happening in our society, there's only one reason why God has not already judged us fully as this society deserves.

The only reason is because he's waiting for every person to make a conscious choice, or whether they accept or they reject his love. But verse 10 says, but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. The day of the Lord will come.

My day will come. Your day will come. America's day will come.

The world's day will come. As a thief in the night, the day of the Lord will come. Folks we have absolutely despotic people now trying to get ahold of nuclear weaponry in the world.

And if you think Hiroshima and Nagasaki was something, there's weaponry hundreds of times, if not thousands of times more powerful than those weapons that were used back then. We live on the threshold of eternity all the time. Do you realize that? Do you realize that young person that's sitting here today in the sanctuary or in the annex, do you realize that you may not have a thousand tomorrows? You may not have 500.

You may not have 100 tomorrows. Do you realize that the whole of humanity today, we all live on borrowed time. We only live because God loves us.

There's no other reason. We only live because the love of God is being shed abroad throughout the earth. I think of when Jesus Christ came to the earth, the testimony of his love was so compelling.

It was a compelling testimony. There was a lot of people with theological perspectives on virtually everything, including salvation, righteous living, all of these things, all of the history they had. But when the temple officers were sent to arrest Jesus, they came back empty-handed, and they said, never has a man spoken like this.

Now their job was to protect the temple. Their job was to go in, and if somebody got out of order, they would probably forcibly take them, bring them before the religious sorter of the day, and they walked in, and they heard words like they've never heard before. Jesus never minced the truth.

He spoke the complete truth from the beginning to the end. He spoke the full counsel of God, but they'd never heard a man. Now they'd heard men speak.

They probably heard similar words spoken, because Jesus never himself spoke outside of the context of the text of scripture, his own word. But nevertheless, there was something so deep that penetrated their hearts when they heard this man speak. I want to suggest to you today, it was the love of God.

It was God manifested in a body come to the earth. There had to be something of a cry in him for fallen humanity. As a father, a mother who saw a child in a very dangerous position and was pleading for that child to come home, there had to be something in the voice that so stirred them.

They said, we've never heard a man like this. We couldn't touch him. And I want to tell you something, Jesus Christ cannot be taken with the hands of man.

You and I cannot come into this house and try to get him somehow, grab him, and get him to agree with our perspective on things. It doesn't work that way. It's only, there's only real life, there's only real relationship when we agree with God, when our knee bends, when our tongue begins to confess, Lord, you have the rights to my life.

Your truth is the only truth. Speaking to my heart, don't let me hold to anything that is going to obscure that testimony of your love to my generation. I think of him passing through this world, just three years, 33 years, but three years of ministry, just passing by.

Then the apostle Paul say that we are a saver of Christ. Everywhere we go, you and I are to be this saver of Christ. As we walk in truth, as we walk with the heart of God for all men, as we're not walking through this world indifferent to the plight of those around us.

No, we're not blowing into our Kleenex every day, all day at the fallen condition of humanity, but there's something of God in the heart that looks upon people and we don't see them as trees walking. We don't see them in half measure. We see every person that's ever been created as precious to God, as valuable to God, so valuable that God would become a man and die on a cross, even if only one would come to him, he still would have come.

Praise be to God. I think of him passing through and tax collectors getting up from their crooked tables and they became honest men. If ever there was a time for tax collectors to get up from their crooked tables, it's time in New York City.

Matthew was there and no doubt extorting a little bit for himself on the side because that's how they made their living, but Matthew got up. Matthew saw this love of God. Matthew felt this love of God.

Matthew heard this love of God and he became one of the writers of one of the New Testament gospels. I think of Zacchaeus, a definitely crooked tax collector and Jesus came to his house and Zacchaeus suddenly developed a heart for the poor. He saw his own poverty and he saw the one who owned heaven in the universe had come down to him to give him life and Zacchaeus immediately upon embracing Christ embraced his heart and he said, I give half of everything I have to the poor and if, I love that, he said, if I've cheated anybody, he knew full well he had cheated a lot of people.

I restore to him fourfold. Zacchaeus, I tell you Jesus is still changing the hearts of tax collectors today in our generation. I see young men who left family tradition and trade.

The Bible tells us that Peter and Andrew left their nets and began to follow him. Also telling us that James and John not only left their nets, their boats rather, but they left their father and they began to follow him. Compelled by the love of God, compelled by something they heard in his voice.

These young men, don't forget this was a trade, this was a tradition, this is what their family did and this man is just passing by and they hear something in his voice for them and for people and hearing it, I think, I know their father, they couldn't begin to follow Jesus by dishonoring their father. Their father had to hear it too and say, go my sons, go follow this man and they left not knowing where they were going as all who have followed Christ often do throughout history. And then again in Luke chapter 7 and verse 36, the condemned, the cast out and the defiled when they heard this love of God, they pressed in and found out they were allowed to touch him.

The greatest news that you will ever hear is that you can touch God today. You can press through the crowd and sometimes you just have to. The woman who was sick for 12 years, she just had to.

Sometimes the blind man, no matter who's telling you to be quiet, you just have to shout out. Sometimes you just have to press through. The devil would try to tell you, you can't come to God, he's holy and you're not.

But there's a people in every generation that say, no, I might be condemned. I might have been cast out. I might feel defiled, but I hear something in his voice calling me.

I hear something when he stood and said, if anyone thirsts, if you've not been satisfied, if you've not found what you're looking for, even in religious traditions all around you, come to me and drink. Who believes on me said out of his belly shall flow rivers and living water. Not just will you be satisfied, but you will become a vessel through which others will begin to hear the word of God.

They'll begin to hear my voice, the passion that you feel in your heart, because you're hearing the voice of God will come into your heart as well. The drawing that you hear because of his voice will come to others through the voice of God that will be made known through you. God help me.

God help me. God help all of us to be those vessels of his love in our generation. It doesn't mean we'll forsake truth.

It doesn't mean we stick our heads in the sand and pretend we're not facing judgment. No, it means that God so loved the world. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

That is the word. That is the message. That is the call of God's love.

You can touch him. You can touch God in the Old Testament to just see his face meant to die, but through Christ you can touch him, but you have to want him. You have to want him more than the crowd.

You have to want him more than your sin. You have to want him more than your own pathway, your own mental image of what your life is and where it's going. You have to want him more.

And everyone who touched him was made whole, the scripture says. In Luke 7, Jesus was invited into a religious man's house. It says in verse 36, one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meet.

And behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meet in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee, which had bidden him, saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches him, for she is a sinner. But folks, what I want to suggest to you is that is one of the most pure worship services you will ever see in the New Testament.

You talk about a one-person worship service. The Pharisee, with all his religion, couldn't hear, didn't even know who he's talking to, sitting there judging God, because a sinner was allowed to touch his feet. That's what religion will always do.

Religion will always just judge and condemn, and miss completely the mercy of God. And here is a woman having a worship service with Christ. I don't know where she first, I don't know, was this the woman that was once taken in adultery, that was forgiven by him when he said, I don't accuse you, go and sin no more? Is it Mary, out of whom was cast seven devils? I really don't know who this woman was, but I do know something.

She found a love that nothing in this world had ever offered her. She had never found it from any relationship. She found it from no temple.

She found it from no pharisaical religion. She found it from no man. And suddenly passing through was one one day, and she said, My God, everything I've ever looked for is in him.

He wants nothing of me but my heart. And folks, that's the issue today. He wants your heart.

You have to be willing to let go of whatever is holding you back, whether it's a sense of unworthiness, whether it's a sense of pride, whether you're like Nicodemus, you want God, but you're so stuck in some religious practice. But he looks at you even in mercy today and says, You're not far from the kingdom of God. You're not far even though you're ashamed of my name, even though you have to come here at night, even though you don't want your friends to know about me.

You're not far from the kingdom of God. He's telling Nicodemus, Religion won't get you in. You've got to come and have a living relationship with God.

God so loved the world. God so loves you today. There's no prison can hold you.

There's no wound of the past that can keep you. There's no vision of your future and your destiny that is worth losing heaven over. God so loved you.

There's no relationship. There's nothing you can find. There's nothing you can consume.

There's no relationship you can get into in this world that could ever even begin to compare with what you will find with God through Jesus Christ. God so loved the world. There's no sin that can hold you.

There's no prison that you're in that has the lawful right to keep its door closed. The moment you want to come to Christ, every door is commanded to open, has to open in the presence of God. No blindness can keep you.

No deafness can keep you from hearing the word of God. If you are willing to come to the light of God, praise be to God. Bend your knee now folks.

Bend your knee now and confess with your tongue now that Jesus Christ is Lord and you can walk out of this house and you can leap and dance and rejoice on Broadway. You can dance in the subway. You can bubble over with the life and the love of God.

But you have to come to the light. You have to come to the light. You have to come now.

I can just hear Noah on the last day that he preached. My goodness, there had to be a last day. The Bible says that Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

I can see him standing outside the door saying, come now, come now. A place has been prepared, a place of provision and safety come now. And I can see the masses and multitudes.

Some had become so familiar with the message. They just simply didn't believe it was ever going to happen anymore. Others decided to play games and one day I can come back and I know where the ark is and I'll get right with God.

But what they were ignorant of is that there was a day coming when the door just closed and they couldn't get in anymore. My Lord, my God, don't go to hell listening to these words today. Don't go to hell.

Don't make that choice. Don't go to that place. It's a place of darkness thicker than anything you can find in this world.

It's a place of unbridled anguish and uncontrolled passions that can never be satisfied. Folks, don't go there. It is a place of the absence of God and God knew that to reject him would send you there.

That's why he holds back his hand of judgment. Today, if you can hear his voice, the scripture says, harden not your heart. If you can hear his voice, if you are not living for God, you need to get out of your seat and you need to get to this altar and you need to give your life to Jesus Christ.

You need to do it publicly. You need to bend your knee to God and confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is no other name given under heaven whereby men might be saved.

I implore you in Christ's name. I implore you in Christ's name. I implore you.

I was terrified in some measure to preach this this morning because I said, God, I don't want your love. I don't want it dwarfed because it has to come through this human vessel. Somehow, Lord, somehow, don't let any man or woman miss heaven because any frailty in this human vessel.

That's been the prayer of my heart this week. God almighty, don't let anybody miss eternity because I've failed to convey your love. If you can hear his voice, I see prostitutes.

I see thieves. I see the defiled. I see lepers.

I see young men. I see tax collectors. I see temple officers getting up.

And Jesus looked at the religious crowd and he said, all these will go into the kingdom of heaven before you will, because they know they need a savior and they're not going to be ashamed to speak my name. Oh, God, I implore you. Please, my friend, don't end up in hell.

Please don't join the crowd that are going to be at the judgment seat of Christ, trying to bargain their way in, but it's too late. The door is closed. Please, I beg you in Christ's name.

This is the day of your salvation. This is the time to turn to God. We're going to stand in a moment.

I'm asking the orchestra to return and Pastor Patrick to lead us. If you've heard, if you've heard the Lord crying out to you, if you want to confess him as your savior, if you want to bend your knee, believe in your heart that he took your place on the cross 2000 years ago, you deserve death, but God in his mercy so loved you that he took your own punishment upon himself just so that you could go free. If you're willing to accept that freedom and accept the love of God and you're willing to confess him with your mouth, turn from your deeds and begin to live a life empowered by the Holy Spirit that will bring honor to the name of God in the earth.

If that is you, I'm going to ask you to make your way to this altar. Let's stand together, please. If you can just step out of your seat, wherever you are, unashamedly, make your way here, please.

In the annex as well, you can make your way here from the annex. We'll wait for you. Just join these that are going to come.

I'm also speaking to those who are not living right. You go to church, but you're not living right and you know it. I'm speaking to every fornicator in this house.

Do you not know that if you defile the temple, God will destroy that temple? I'm speaking to every person who's a thief. I'm speaking to those who like to dance in church, but you also like to dance in nightclubs as well. I'm serious.

You can't have it both ways, folks. It's one or the other. It's time to bend your knee.

Time to bend your knee. He needs forgiveness, the kindness of the Savior, the hope of nation. Savior, lead them through the mountain.

My God is mighty to save. He is mighty to save. Now, for those that have come to this altar, we're going to continue worshiping for another 10 minutes or so, but there's something I'd like you to do.

Every knee will bow and every tongue confess. This is your time to touch God and let God touch you. Let Him speak to your heart.

You need to confess your sin, whatever it is you've been doing, and you need to let God go deep in that so that you'll see the ugliness of sin. You'll see why it sent the Son of God to a cross and why God's wrath had to be poured out against it. You can just pray between you and God and say, God, I've been a selfish person.

I've been a violator of the biblical moral standards. I have been a thief. I have spoken evil.

And you just get it out. And when you touch God, you're actually putting that, He's taking that on Himself. And then when He looks back at you, He's going to tell you, the Holy Spirit will tell you, I've taken all of that from you now, and I'm now giving you a new nature.

I'm going to change you. I'm going to save you and change you, and you're going to be a new person. I've taken it all upon myself.

So now you've got to acknowledge what you're giving to Him. And I'd like you to do that. And anyone else in this sanctuary today as we worship that you just need to get right with God, just whether you do it in a whisper, whether you speak out loud, that's your choice.

But do that. Get right with God today. If you don't want people listening, just put your hand over your face and speak into your hands, I guess, so that the person beside you can't hear.

But just get it all out now. In the next 10 minutes, just get it all out. Everybody at this altar, get it all out.

Talk to God. Talk to God now. This is not a formula.

This is a relationship He's inviting you to. You talk it out with God for the next 10 minutes. When you have come and fully touched the Son of God, your heart will change.

Remember Zacchaeus, he said, immediately, instead of robbing people he wants to give to the poor, and he wants to make right past wrongs, there's an immediate change in the heart. Yes, there's other things

that will grow in you gradually, but there's an immediate change because a new life has come into your heart. Praise be to God.

Praise be to God. Praise be to God. Lift your hands, please, at the altar with me, if you will.

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for forgiving my sin. Today, I'm sorry for my sin, and I don't want to live in sin, in disobedience to God any longer. Thank you for loving me and for letting me touch you today, for touching my life.

Jesus Christ, today, I bend my knee. I declare you to be my Lord and my Savior. I trust that you will guide me.

You will strengthen me and help me to understand that you didn't come to condemn me. You came to save me, and so I open my heart to your sacrifice that you paid for my sins, and I thank you for forgiving me and receiving me. Jesus Christ, Son of God, I give you the rights to my life.

From this day forward, from this day forward, lead me, guide me, help me to live in a way that will be a blessing to others and bring glory to your name. Thank you that when I get to your throne one day, I will already have made the decision, and you will look at me and say, welcome, my beloved. Enter into the joy of your Lord.

Thank you for receiving me. In Jesus' name. Praise God.

Thank you, Jesus.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18810.mp3>

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/fks2aacvotc.mp4>

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