

Gospel John Chapter 3 -- John Karmelich

This week's text... (New King James Version)

- 3:1 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 are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."  
3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, 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? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"  
5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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 marvel 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 cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."  
9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"  
10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?  
11 "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.  
12 "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?  
13 "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.  
14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.  
16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.  
17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.  
18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.  
19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.  
20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.  
21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."  
22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.

23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

25 Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.

26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified; behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

28 "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'

29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

30 "He must increase, but I must decrease.

31 "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

32 "And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

33 "He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.

34 "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.

35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Sermon Notes Gospel of John Chapter 3 -- John Karmelich

1. In Last week's lesson, we had the first miracle in the Gospel of John
  - a) This was the *conversion* of Water to Wine
  - b) This week's lesson is also about *conversion*.
    - i) It is about the necessity of conversion.
  - c) In Chapter 3, the key word in this chapter
    - i) Is the Word **MUST**
    - ii) In most of the translations, the word "Must" is used three times
    - iii) In Verse 7, Jesus says "You **MUST** be Born-Again
    - iv) In Verse 14, Jesus says "The Son of Man **MUST** be lifted Up"
    - v) And in Verse 30, John the Baptist says
      - a) "I **MUST** Decrease and
      - b) He (being Jesus) **MUST** Increase
    - vi) There's the Gospel and our role as Christians in 3 simple statements:
      - a) We must be born-again to achieve salvation
      - b) Jesus must be lifted-up to pay for our sins
      - c) And We must Glorify Jesus and De-Glorify Ourselves
        - (1) i.e. Jesus must increase, and we must decrease!
2. Remember the question I keep imposing "What is the Purpose of the Gospel of John"
  - a) The Gospel of John focuses on Who Jesus is
  - b) The Purpose of the Gospel is stated near the end of this Gospel
    - i) but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:31 NKJV)
    - ii) John wrote only about specific miracles
      - a) John included only specific discourses about Jesus
      - b) John picked just certain events to talk about Jesus
      - c) Why? (Repeat Why?)
      - d) Why is it so important to know Who Jesus Is?
      - e) Why was John so obsessed with proving who Jesus is?
      - f) Part of the answer is that Our Lives depend upon it!
      - g) Entrance into Heaven is EXCLUSIVE
        - (1) Jesus said that "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except **through Me**. (John 14:6)
        - (2) This claim can only be true
          - (a) If Jesus is who he says he is
          - (b) Therefore we must be born-again
        - (3) Jesus had to literally pay the price for our sins
          - (a) Therefore Jesus must be lifted-up
      - h) If we believe, our natural response is to want to show our gratitude
        - (a) Therefore He must increase, and We must decrease
3. With that, let's go to John, Chapter 3...
  - a) Verse 1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.
  - b) Verse 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

- c) For those who don't know, Pharisees are the religious extremists of their day
    - i) They took public vows to live out the Jewish law in minute detail
    - ii) They followed a set of strict interpretations to follow the Law.
    - iii) We tend to think of Pharisees as these hypocrites
      - a) As Jesus criticized them so much
    - iv) But If anybody deserves to go to heaven just for being a good person, It was the Pharisees
      - a) Modern Orthodox Judaism is based on teachings of Pharisees
  - d) Nicodemus came to Jesus by night..
    - i) Nicodemus was a political leader
      - a) He was part of the religious ruling body in Israel
      - b) He probably had to be careful who was watching him
    - ii) I suspect Nicodemus was probably a little bit cynical.
      - a) A Pharisee was a walking expert on Jewish laws & customs
      - b) He probably looked at Jesus as this 30-year-old up-start
    - iii) I further suspect that Nicodemus was just curious about Jesus
      - a) He wanted to find out more about his doctrines and teachings
  - e) Nicodemus said in Verse 2 "No one can do these signs unless God is with him
    - i) First of all, don't let miracles be a sign of validation
      - a) If I declared that Jesus is not God, and I could raise someone from the dead, would you believe me?
      - b) Remember that Jesus said "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. "(Mark 13:22 NKJV)
      - c) Remember also that Paul said in Galation 1:8 8 But even if we, or **an angel from heaven**, preach **any** other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.
    - ii) God wants to come to him by faith, and faith comes by hearing the word of God Romans (10:17)
4. Back to John, Chapter 3, Verse 3... Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- a) Jesus cut right through the flattery
    - i) And got to the heart of the matter
  - b) What Jesus does very well is discover the real purpose for people seeking Him!
    - i) Nicodemus real interest was
    - ii) Is He living the right life?
    - iii) Nicodemus wanted to know that by living the strict life of a Pharisee?
      - a) Is it worth it?
      - b) Do I get a great reward in heaven for being a very religious person?
  - c) Jesus response... with the "Most Assuredly, or I tell you the truth (depending upon your translation), you MUST be born again to see the Kingdom of God
5. Verse 4: Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"
- a) First of all, give Nicodemus a little credit...
    - i) I don't think he was being literal and thinking
      - a) "you had to go a 2<sup>nd</sup> time into a Mother's womb"
    - ii) Nicodemus probably understood the gist of Jesus statement
      - a) To paraphrase what Nicodemus was saying is
      - b) "How can a person change his ways once he is old?
      - c) Or to put it another way "Can you teach an old dog new tricks?"

- b) Nicodemus himself was probably much older than Jesus.
    - i) He was probably wondering about himself
    - ii) How could he, advanced in years ever possibly be a new, spiritual person?
    - iii) To quote Jesus from Matthew 19:26
      - a) "With man this is impossible,
      - b) but with God **all** things are possible."
- 6. Jesus responded with Verse 5: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.
  - a) The commentators debate over what Jesus meant by "born of water"
    - i) Some think it refers to Baptism
    - ii) Other's think it refers to the Word of God
      - a) Ephesians 5:26 says : That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.
    - iii) I take the view Jesus was speaking of the physical birth
      - a) The water sack of the womb...
  - b) No matter what your view, the conclusion is the same
    - i) You must be born-again, in order to see the kingdom of God
- 7. Notice something else... Nicodemus being a Pharisee, is an expert in the Old Testament
  - a) Notice that all of Jesus responses comes from Old Testament references and quotes...
  - b) Turn with me to Ezekiel 36:25, and lets read 4 verses together..
    - i) 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.
    - ii) 26: "I will give you a **new** heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
    - iii) 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.
    - iv) 28 "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.
  - c) Nowhere, repeat, nowhere in the Bible does God ever talk about cleansing your heart
    - i) God always speaks about giving you a **new** heart
    - ii) Why?
      - a) Because our old heart is broken beyond repair...
      - b) "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)
      - c) God is saying we are corrupted by sin
        - (1) It is incurable by our own means
        - (2) This is why, for our salvation, we must be born-again,
  - 8. Verse 6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
    - a) Our bodies are designed to work well with the Planet Earth
      - a) Our physical make-up, our need for air, food, water
      - b) All work well with the environment we live in!
    - b) But our bodies are *not* designed to work in the Spiritual World
      - i) We need to be born once in order to live in this World
      - ii) We need to be born-again, in order to live in the next world...
        - a) To quote the Christian Bumper-Sticker
          - (1) Born Twice, Die Once
          - (2) Born Once, Die Twice!
  - 9. Verse 7: "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

10. Verse 8: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
  - a) In both Hebrew and Greek, (the two original languages of the Bible)
    - i) The Word for "Spirit" and the word for "wind"
      - a) Are the same word!
  - b) Think about the wind
    - i) You can't see it
    - ii) You don't know where it originates
    - iii) You don't know where it is going
    - iv) But you know it's there
    - v) How?
      - a) By the evidence!
      - b) By the shaking of the trees, you know the wind is there
  - c) That is what the Holy Spirit is all about
    - i) You can't see it
    - ii) You don't know where it originates
    - iii) You don't know where it is going
    - iv) But you know it's there
    - v) How?
      - a) By the evidence in our Christian lives...
      - b) By the lives that have been transformed through Jesus Christ
        - (1) We know that Spirit was there!
11. At this point Nicodemus is still confused, In Verse 9... "How can these things be"
  - a) Nicodemus is basically asking how do you know these things to be true?
  - b) Jesus responds by stating his authority...
    - i) Notice the authority of the Trinity in Verse 11...
    - ii) **We** speak what **We** know and testify what **We** have seen, and you do not receive **Our** witness.
      - a) Notice Its "We speak, , We know" , We have seen" , We witness
12. Which leads us to Jesus next big statement of Authority, Verse 13..
  - i) "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.
  - b) Jesus is saying you can't get into heaven WITHOUT Jesus
    - i) He says in Verse 13 **No one, repeat no one** has ascended into heaven
    - ii) Except Jesus who came down from Heaven to rescue man.
13. In Verse 14 Again, Jesus uses an Old Testament example of the Gospel
  - a) Remember Nicodemus is an expert in the Old Testament
  - b) Jesus speaks to Nicodemus on his level
  - c) Next week, we have Jesus meeting a woman at the well
    - i) And Jesus does not quote scripture to her..
  - d) Verse 14 & 15 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.
  - e) This is a reference to the Book Numbers Chapter 21, Verses 5-9
    - i) It's important enough that we take a quick look at this...
    - ii) Verse 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread."
    - iii) Verse 6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

- iv) Verse 7: Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.
  - v) Verse 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."
  - vi) 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.
  - vii) To summarize
    - a) The Israelites sinned against God
    - b) God sent poisonous snakes to them as punishment..
    - c) In order to stay alive, they had to
      - (1) Just look at a bronze snake, put up on a pole!
  - viii) Notice that the Israelites did not have to do any work..
    - a) They didn't have to go out and get a special anti-snake bite lotion
    - b) They didn't have to kill the snakes with the poll
    - c) All they had to do was to have faith
      - (1) That by looking at this pole, they would be healed!
    - d) That is a great picture of what Jesus did for us?
  - ix) So, how can Jesus compare himself to a snake on a pole?
    - a) First of all, when we think of snakes, we think of sin (Garden of Eden)
    - b) Bronze, symbolically in the bible speaks of Judgement
      - (1) Because as a metal, bronze can hold heat
      - (2) The sacrifices were burnt on a bronze alter
    - c) So the Israelites had to look at a bronze snake on a pole
    - d) It's time to remember 2 Corinthians 5:21
    - e) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
      - (1) Jesus didn't just die for our sins
      - (2) Jesus became Sin for Us
        - (a) You & I have no idea what that truly means
    - f) In Numbers the Israelites needed a cure from deadly snake bites
      - (1) Snakes represent sin
      - (2) The "Wages of Sin is Death (Romans 6:23)
      - (3) And how did the Israelites get salvation from Death?
        - (a) Not by works
        - (b) Not by applying anti-snake oil
        - (c) But by Looking at the bronze snake (Numbers 21:9)
  - x) That is why Jesus said the Son of Man must be lifted up
    - a) We must be born-again
    - b) Jesus must be lifted up
  - xi) Jesus said in John 3:13 the Son of Man must be lifted up
14. Which leads us to one of the most famous verses in the Bible: John 3:16
- a) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
    - i) There are thousands of sermons preached on every aspect of this verse.
    - ii) If you haven't, I strongly encourage memorization of this verse
    - iii) I encourage you to mediate upon each phrase or word of this verse
      - a) And the implications of each phrase or word are staggering

- b) I can't imagine anything in life more painful than losing one's children
    - i) Imagine having your only son or daughter die at a young age
    - ii) That would be far more painful than losing your own life
    - iii) Or even the life of your spouse
    - iv) Nothing is more painful than seeing your children die before their time
  - c) Now think about God loving us *so much* He was willing to make this sacrifice
    - i) God trying to tell us what pains he went through , in terms we can understand,
      - a) God trying to tell us what it cost Him for us to be born-again
    - ii) Why?, What's in it for God?
    - iii) Why did God bother, if it was that painful for Him?
    - iv) I know Jesus sacrifice was necessary for us to be acceptable in God's sight
    - v) But Why?, What's in it for God?
    - vi) I submit the following verse for you to think about:
      - a) that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7)
15. Next 2 verses Verse 19: "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.
- a) Verse 20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.
  - b) Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world
    - i) Verse 17 says God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the World.
    - ii) The world is already condemned
  - c) I read a great quote from Pastor Ray Steadman this week:
    - i) I have been preaching and teaching the Bible for almost 50 years, and I want to tell you that the one thing that keeps most people being born again is that they do not want to admit their need....they cling to the idea that there is some good thing about them and God ought to accept them"
    - ii) If a devout religious person like Nicodemus needs a Savior,
      - a) what does that say for us?
  - d) To me there is no greater lie the devil has in his arsenal than:
    - i) "I am basically a good person, and God should accept me because of my good deeds"
      - a) This is a total contradiction to scripture
      - b) And people's belief that they are "a good person" it is the main reason people won't accept the Gospel
      - c) It's their pride keeping them from God!
      - d) CS Lewis once said "The gates of Hell will be locked from the inside"
  - e) Repeating Verse 20...."For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.
16. Let's go on to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Must... "we must Decrease,
- a) Verses 22 through 30 is about John the Baptist
  - b) In Verse 22 Jesus goes out into the Wilderness of Judea and starts baptizing
  - c) In Verse 23, John is baptizing in another location
  - d) A quick note about Verse 23... John the Baptist picked this location
    - i) *quote* because there was much water there *unquote*
    - ii) The Baptist denomination are big fans of this verse, using it as an argument for the necessity of "a full emergion" baptism (i.e. as opposed to just a "sprinkling")



- iii) But I think the point the Gospel writer John was making is..
      - a) John the Baptist went where the Resources he needs are available!
        - (1) John's job was to baptize
        - (2) What does John need?
          - (a) Water.
        - (3) Why this location
          - (a) Because there's lots of water there..
    - iv) Sometimes we have to go to where the resources are available
    - v) Other times, God brings the resources to us..
      - a) "Where God leads, God provides"
- 17. In the latter part of this chapter... John shows his humility..
  - a) Verse 27... "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.
    - i) Verse 28 "I am not the Christ"
      - a) I have been sent before him (that is... I'm just the "messenger")
  - b) Verse 30 begins the final testimony
  - c) "He Must Increase, I Must Decrease"
    - i) That's our responsibility as Christians
    - ii) If we truly Love God, and believe His promises...
      - a) We naturally want to tell others about Jesus
      - b) Like God, we don't want to see people perish
      - c) Like God, we don't want to see people live in darkness
      - d) We can grasp just how much God loves all of us!
      - e) We know the judgement is coming...
        - (1) Because of the Love we have...
        - (2) We want to spread the Good news
          - (a) Not to condemn
          - (b) But to show people The Way!
      - f) St. Augustine once said
        - (1) "Love God with all your heart and do anything you want"
        - (2) If you truly Love God, your focus will be on Increasing Him!
- 18. The last verse is another summary of the whole chapter...
  - a) "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
    - i) John the Gospel writer likes to write in both positive and negative
      - a) If you do this, you will receive your reward
      - b) If you don't, you will be punished.
  - b) Like the saying goes " Born Once, Die Twice, Born Twice, Die Once"
    - i) To those who are only born of the flesh
    - ii) You are condemned by God to judgement
      - a) Not for your sins
      - b) But for rejecting the free gift of God
    - iii) To those who are born-again
    - iv) Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power,
      - a) " Born Once, Die Twice, Born Twice, Die Once"

19. Let's Pray:

Father, the love you have for us is far more than we could ever comprehend. You have given our life purpose and you show us your truth. Help us to abide in your love daily and grow in the knowledge and faith of what Jesus did for us, and what he continues to do for us. Help us to realize our need for a savior. Help us to realize how hopeless it is to gain favor in your site by our own righteousness, and form a deeper trust in you. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.