

¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

⁴“How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (NIV84)

OUR TRIUNE GOD GIVES

1. The Father gave his Son
2. The Son gave his life
3. The Spirit gives faith

If you had to summarize the Bible in one sentence, what would your sentence be? Take a minute to think about what you might say, and then I’ll ask if anyone wants to share their sentence. (Allow time and then ask if anyone wants to share). Those are all really good summaries of the main message of the Bible. You came up with some good ones in seconds. Here’s what I came up with having a few days to consider this thought. “People sin, but God saves!” Sin and Grace, Law and Gospel are the main thoughts that you want to share in a brief Bible presentation, right? “We can’t make it on our own, but Jesus makes it for us!!”

In our lesson today, Jesus is the one giving the law and gospel presentation. He is the one that is trying to share a short message about salvation. He helps Nicodemus to see that **The Triune God Gives**. And what he gives is the greatest gift that can be given! He gives salvation!! And in these words from Jesus’ lips we hear some of the clearest and most loving truths that we will ever hear. The gospel is on clear display as Jesus speaks to Nicodemus. As Jesus shows his love to Nicodemus, let’s stand beside and remember the wonderful love that our Triune God continues to show to us today.

John 3:1-17

Today we'll consider how Salvation is ours because **The Triune God Gives**. We'll remember that 1) the Father gave his Son, that 2) the Son gave his life, and that 3) The Spirit gives us faith.

1. The Father Gave His Son

There was a middle aged man who worked for a railroad company. He was the one who was in charge of making sure that the tracks at the intersections were connected in the proper way to keep train traffic flowing. It happened one summer that he would work together with a crew that was fixing a section of the tracks. There was a section of the tracks that had washed away with a mudslide and so they needed to be fixed. Because the tracks couldn't be crossed, the trains had to be diverted onto the bridge that crossed the valley. The man was there at the switch to allow the construction equipment down the tracks towards the broken section, but to make sure that the other trains would cross the bridge. One day the man's family came to visit and eat lunch with him. After they ate, the little boy began to play in the grass near his little hut. The boy was a bit of an explorer and would often entertain himself outside for hours. Like many workers, the end of this man's lunch break was signaled by a whistle, but unlike most it wasn't the boss who would blow it, it was the conductor of the train that was approaching. As he rose from his picnic lunch he was going to kiss his wife and child good bye and then go make sure the tracks were set for the oncoming train, but he couldn't find his boy. He didn't answer his Father's calls. The Father didn't know where he was. But at the last minute he spotted him. To his horror he saw his son playing on the railroad bridge out over the valley. The Father was faced with a decision. He could divert the oncoming train over the broken tracks and risk the lives of all those on board, or he could send the train over the bridge which would almost certainly kill his Son. He loved his son, but he had a love for the people on that train as well. Even though it was the hardest thing he ever did, he permitted that train to continue safely over the bridge and watched as his son was killed.

We all can pray that we are never faced with a decision like that. We ask God that he spare us from such a gut-wrenching decision. A situation like that is a parent's worst nightmare. But it's a situation that our Father faced for us. We were on a "sin-train" speeding towards destruction. We were headed for certain death, and the only way to stop it was if God would give up his Son. But the Bible never tells us that God wavered on his decision. He didn't go back and forth like I'm sure the railroad worker would have. From eternity God had a plan to save us. God knew what it would take to give us heaven, yet he never flinched. ***For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*** God gave up his son to spare the lives of his sons and daughters. He allowed his Son to perish, so that we never would, so that eternal life would be ours.

But it was not just the Father who worked out this plan. It's the **Triune God that Gives Salvation**. The Father gave his Son, but the Son was willing to be given. Jesus 2) gave his life on the cross to work out our salvation.

2) Jesus gave his life

Nicodemus came to speak to Jesus because he had some doubts, some questions. He was a prominent religious leader in Israel. He was a Pharisee who believed that the key to salvation was obeying the law. They followed the all-too-common mindset that "there's no such thing as a free

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lunch.” If a person is going to get to heaven, they are going to have to earn it. The path to glory in the Pharisee’s mind was paved was in his own obedience. To the Pharisee, grace is a foreign concept.

It seems that Nicodemus was a bit embarrassed of Jesus, doesn’t it? He came to him at night. He didn’t want anyone else to associate him with this Jesus. He wanted to keep his profile low and make sure that no one lost any respect for him because of Jesus.

Does that sound familiar? How many of us have shied back from opportunities to witness or to speak for the truth, because we were nervous what others might say. We may not come out and say, “I’m embarrassed of Jesus, but sometimes we are more likely to consider our own reputation over the wishes of our God. Sometimes we don’t speak the words that need to be spoken because we are afraid of the consequences. We are sometimes reluctant to go out on that limb for Jesus.

But Jesus wasn’t reluctant at all. He went out on a limb for us, constantly. He went out on a tree as he gave his life on the cross. ***Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,***¹⁵ ***that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*** He endured pain and punishment. He suffered bitter agony to stand up for us. He died so that we wouldn’t have to die. He paid for our sins so that we could be a part of God’s family. He earned pardon and peace for us by laying down his life. He died so that we could be his.

And on Easter morning he rose again. He earned our salvation by dying and he secures our victory with his resurrection. He’s the first to be raised and we have been promised that we will follow. He reentered heaven as he ascended into the skies and assures us that he is coming to take all believers to be with him forever.

The Father gave us his Son, Jesus gives us his life, but the giving doesn’t end there. The Spirit gives us the faith we need to make this salvation ours.

3) The Spirit gives faith

Jesus gets right to the point with Nicodemus. He directs the conversation where it needs to go. Jesus makes the conversation personal to Nicodemus. He shows him how salvation can be his. Nicodemus is coming to talk about Jesus, but Jesus came to talk about Nicodemus. Jesus says to him, ***“I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.*** Jesus tells Nicodemus that he needs to be converted by the Holy Spirit before he will understand these things. He needs to have faith planted in his heart by the Spirit. He needs the blessings which the Spirit provides through Baptism. And then he gives the reason why: ⁶ ***Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*** ⁷ ***You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’*** People are born into human flesh and into human sin. We are corrupt by nature and doomed to death. Human birth brings physical life, but still leaves a person spiritually dead. People must have the Spirit to be a part of God’s kingdom. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives spiritual life. He gives faith and forgiveness and eternal life. He takes what the Father and the Son have done for the world, and makes it a personal gift to individuals. He takes the love of the Father and the Son and plants it into your heart, into mine. He takes me from a state of death and brings me up to eternal life.

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The Holy Spirit makes us alive through the gospel. He gives us faith as we hear his Word and partake in his sacraments. He provides us with continued exposure to these Means of Grace so that our faith can be strengthened and our confidence made stronger and stronger. The Spirit is the one that gives us faith to believe that the **Triune God Saves**.

Even though our sins are constantly getting us into jams, we can rejoice that **Our Triune God Gives Salvation**. Apart from our worth, apart from our deserving, our God saves. The Father gives us his Son, Jesus gave his life on the cross for our sins, and the Spirit gives us the faith to believe it and to assure us that heaven is ours. This is true and can only be true because ours is a God of love. Amen.