

BLESS – S – STORY

John 3:1-21

Hey good morning church. So very good to be with you this morning as we continue our time of worship together. We are finishing a 6-week series through the word BLESS. And just as a reminder – not using this as some kind of slick program – but instead trying to just put language around a lifestyle. The life on mission that Jesus calls all of his follower to.

And everything that we've been looking at is modeled from the earthly ministry of the Lord. If you remember back to the very first week in this series – February 6 – we looked at the call of God to Abraham. How God would bless Abraham, and through Abe all the nations of the world would be blessed. We saw in the scripture that the greatest blessing of God isn't material stuff – the greatest blessing of God is the presence of Christ in our lives if we are believers – and that we're called to bless others as we have been blessed.

Then we transitioned to the acronym with the first letter B – begin with prayer. We looked at the priority of prayer in Jesus' ministry – and 2 specific parables on prayer. Our posture of prayer is to be one of SHAMELESS BOLDNESS, rather than shame-filled timidity.

Then the L – Listen. How Jesus, passing through Jericho, hears the cries of this blind beggar and heals him. How Listening to people shows their value to us – and is an act of compassion.

Then my favorite letter – E – EAT. We looked at Jesus' reputation for eating with people no one else cared about, and everyone else looked down upon. Eating as a way breaking down barriers with people, showing them they matter, regardless of their life situation.

- As a side – when you eat with people – bring out the good stuff for them. However you define the “good stuff” – bring it out for them.

Then last week was S – SERVE. If we are to model our missionary lifestyle after Jesus' – it has to be one of service.

Today – we conclude with the last S – STORY. 3 Key points here as we turn to the Scriptures

- If you are a Christian – Jesus is the centerpiece (main idea) of your story.
 - Not your intellect, your sports, your report card
 - Not your kids
 - Not your grandkids
 - Certainly not your work
 - If you're a Christian – Jesus in the centerpiece of your story
- No one's story is complete until Jesus becomes the centerpiece
- The greatest way to BLESS someone is to share (1) how Jesus became the centerpiece of your story and (2) how He can become the centerpiece of their story

Turn with me, if you have a Bible, to John 3. And I will read a familiar story about this guy that comes looking for Jesus. This guy named Nicodemus.

John 3:1-21

¹There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to him at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him.”

³Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again,^[a] he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁴“How can anyone be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked him. “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?”

⁵Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. ⁸The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹“How can these things be?” asked Nicodemus.

¹⁰“Are you a teacher^[b] of Israel and don’t know these things?” Jesus replied. ¹¹“Truly I tell you, we speak what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you do not accept our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven —the Son of Man.^[c]

¹⁴“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him may^[d] have eternal life. ¹⁶For God loved the world in this way:^[e] He gave^[f] his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will 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. ¹⁸Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

¹⁹This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it,^[g] so that his deeds may not be exposed.²¹ But anyone who lives by^[h] the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

PRAY

I. Nicodemus had a story...(V1)

Ok, so what do we have here. First, we have this dude Nicodemus. This guy, says he was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews.

Up until right now, the centerpiece of Nick's story was religious accomplishment, being important, having some big position of power.

Pharisees - These guys were the dominant force in the practice of the Jewish religion. Remember – there was no separation of church and state in the 1st century. The religious leaders in 1st century Israel were the ruling class of people in Israel. Yes, they were under Roman occupation, but hear me – the ruling class were the super religious people. Interestingly, some of Jesus's harshest words were directed toward these guys – because if they really did study the Old Testament, they should've seen Jesus for who he was and believed – loved – obeyed him.

John tells us that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. We don't know for certain why he went there at night. Was he sent to question Jesus? Maybe. But I don't think that it's a stretch to say he didn't want his buddies knowing or seeing him go to Jesus.

Illustration – Leaving a pickup football game to “go to the Dr.”. I didn't want my buddies knowing I was leaving for a music lesson.

II. As great as Nick's story was, he knew there was something different about Jesus

V2

Clearly you are from God. What you are doing is impossible without the power of God.

And Jesus, well, he doesn't waste any words. He points Nick, and everyone who has ever read the words of John 3, or heard the words of John 3, to the need for a new birth, a new name, a new ending to his story.

III. New Birth – New Name – New Ending

V3

Truly – affirming, or adding weight to what he's saying. Almost like “Seriously” in today's language but even stronger. Or some of my kids would say “LITERALLY”. You'd better listen to what I'm about to tell you. Listen here little Nicky...

Born Again

Kingdom of God – couple of ways this phrase is used – sometimes as the rule and reign of God in a sovereign way over all creation. Sometimes more specifically to salvation. This is how Jesus is using it here – kingdom of God – meaning salvation, meaning new and meaningful life in Jesus.

Unless you've been born again.

Please, don't miss what Jesus is telling Nicodemus here – Nick had spent his entire life committed to a religious system, trying and working hard to earn favor before God. Following all of the rule of the Old Testament, and following all of the traditions of the church.

Now, Jesus is saying – you've wasted your time. Your ability is powerless to save you. All of your rule following? Rubbish. Worthless. Powerless to save you. It's where Paul landed in Philippians 3, where he would write that he counted all of his accomplishments as worthless compared to knowing Jesus Christ.

The reason? Because we can't work our way into the kingdom of God.

Clearly though, Nick didn't quite get it. We see he just doesn't get it. Yet...

As we share the great story of Jesus – with people we come into contact with – a lot of times they just won't get it. Yet. Don't ever give up. Don't stop sharing. Don't ever stop pointing people to the goodness of the Gospel, the good news of Jesus – that He saves sinful people like you and like me.

I could share with you story after story of people that consistently and prayerfully shared Jesus with loved ones – sometimes over the course of decades – and slowly saw the Spirit of God change people they had been sharing with. Sometimes God will in fact save a person the first time you share the Gospel with them, but other times it takes long prayerful patience.

Nicodemus – he didn't quite get it, yet. And he keeps asking Jesus questions, leading to what I consider the climactic point in this story starting in V14

IV. The Greatest Story Ever Told

Re-Read V14-18

V14 – Referring to Numbers 21:4-9 → TEACH THEM HOW TO USE THEIR REFERENCES IN THE BIBLES

Jesus Lifted Up – ON THE CROSS

Now, when we see this word believe – we really need to go deeper in this word. Because how the Bible uses the word believe, and how we use it today are different.

- Anyone know what the capital of Alaska is? Right, Juneau.
- Now, who believes that's the right answer.
- Now, what impact does the capital of Alaska have on your life today? Right, absolutely none.

But when we see the word "believe" in the Bible – God's not talking about like we believe Juneau is the capital of Alaska. **To believe Biblically – is to allow what you know to direct your affection and actions! Head, heart and hands.**

My English translation uses the words Everyone/Anyone 4 times in these verses. Everyone who believes, everyone who believes, anyone who believes and then anyone who does not believe.

And here's the rub – here's why sharing your story – being a BLESSing to people is so critical – anyone who does not believe stands condemned.

- Hell will be filled with “good people”
- I even think hell will be filled with “good church people”
- See hell is real, and it will be absolutely horrifying.

And while hell is real and will be absolutely horrifying – one of the most amazing things about grace is that God chooses to use us – to bless other people – to be His missionaries to our friends and family and neighbors that need to know Him.

V. The Rest of Nick's story

We don't know how Nicodemus' story ends. He's only mentioned a couple of times again after this night. He's mentioned in John 7, and then again in John 19 he is one of 2 prominent men that take Jesus' body after the crucifixion and anoint Him and place Him in the tomb. I think that's an indication that he was a believer.

STORY

See – each of us has a story. And if you are a Christian, you have turned from your sin and are trusting in Jesus alone to save you, Jesus is the centerpiece of your story. And I really believe that no one's story is complete until and unless Jesus becomes the centerpiece of their story. And the greatest way to bless someone – is to share (1) how Jesus became the centerpiece of your story, and (2) how he can become the centerpiece of their story.

SUMMARY of BLESS

- **Who do you need to be a blessing to? And what will you do?**
- **God doesn't need you and me – but he WANTS you and me!**
 - **We're going to make mistakes – and when we do we need to trust in the grace of Christ.**
- **We won't bless people by accident or by chance – we need to plan for it**
 - **What if we simply commit to using 1 of the 5 strategies everyday?**
- **Our actions (how we live) and our words (how we share Jesus) have to match. Not perfectly by they have to match.**

PRAY.