For God So Loved — John 3

Opening Hymn — To God Be the Glory

To God be the glory, great things He hath done;
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done!

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done!

Bible Reading — John 3:1–17 (New International Version)

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

[3] Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they
are born again.”

[4] “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they
cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

[5] Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless
they are born of water and the Spirit. [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.’
[8] The 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?
[11] Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. [12] I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?
[13] No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. [14] Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, [15] that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

[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. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

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Reflection — For God So Loved

A man came to Jesus in the dark. *(pause)* His name was Nicodemus. He was a respected teacher, an important man — and he was no longer young. He came at night, quietly, with a question in his heart.

Jesus said something that surprised him. He said, *“No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”* *(pause)*

Born again. Nicodemus could not understand it. “How can someone be born when they are old?” he asked.

Perhaps that is our question too. We have lived long lives. We carry our years, our memories, and our aches. How could we possibly begin again now? *(pause)*

But Jesus was not speaking of being born as a baby a second time. He was speaking of something God does within us — a new life of the Spirit. A fresh start on the inside, which God himself gives, no matter how many years we have lived. *(pause)*

And that is good news for every one of us. It is never too late. God has not finished with you. Even here, even now, God can make something new in a human heart.

Then Jesus told Nicodemus why. He spoke the best-loved words in all the Bible:

"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."

(pause)

God so loved. Not the world far away — but you. Each one of you, by name. God loves you. *(pause)*

He loved us so much that he gave his Son, Jesus, so that we could have a life that never ends — eternal life, and a home with him for ever.

And Jesus said he did not come to condemn us, but to save us. He does not come with a pointing finger. He comes with open arms.

(pause)

So if you are weary today, he loves you. If it feels as though the world has hurried past you, he has not. And if you ever wonder

whether your long life has mattered — it has. You are precious to God.

The new birth that Jesus spoke of is really very simple. It is to trust him. To say, quietly — as Nicodemus came quietly — "Lord Jesus, I believe. Thank you for loving me." *(pause)*

That is a prayer anyone can pray. At any age. From any chair, or any bed.

For God so loved the world. God so loved you. And whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

May that love hold you today, and every day, and for ever. *(pause)*

Amen.

Closing Hymn — Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.