

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

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# Encountering Jesus

Full Transcript

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*Duration: 41:51*

## Welcome and Personal Context

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- 0:00 Well, good morning, everyone. My name is Michael. I'm the young adults pastor here at Highlands Church. So I oversee 18 to 35 in a ministry called The Porch, which has been really, really fun and super happy I get to do it. But hey, I hope you had a good Christmas. I hope you enjoyed your time. But I also understand that it could be also difficult for some people during that time. So man, if it was a hard Christmas for you, maybe it was the first without something in your life. Or just maybe Christmas in general has always just kind of been tough with you and your families. But I'm glad that you're here. I'm glad that you came to service tonight.
- 0:35 Or maybe this is your first time here. Maybe you came to one of our Christmas Eve services this past week and you go, man, the party and zoo was great. Maybe we'll go check it out on Sunday and see if they have it again. But we don't, sorry. But I'm glad that you're here, and I hope you get to get plugged in and kind of be a part of what we have going on. But hey, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, we're going to be in John chapter 3, verse 1. You can go ahead and flip open. They're now. And as you do, I'm going to share a story with you.

## Missing the Experience: The Palace of Versailles Story

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- 1:01 My wife and I, when we got married, I was in charge of the honeymoon. So she said, hey, you can pick where you go. You could pick what we do. You just got to plan it all. So I chose Paris. I said, man, we're going to go to Paris. We're going to go all out there. And we did. And we missed our honeymoon flight because of me. And that's a story for another time. But if you ever want to know the importance of communication in just two days within your marriage, miss your honeymoon flight. And you'll know communication is everything. But we got to Paris, eventually got there, and we're hanging out. We did everything you could imagine, right?
- 1:34 Went to the Eiffel Tower, went to the Louvre, went to the Arc de Triomphe, went and jumped on a train, went to a little town south, went back up. And two weeks go by, and we have one more free day left. And we look at each other like, man, what do you want to do? I've ate so much baguettes and macarons. I don't know what else to do. And so she's like, hey, why don't we just kind of Google what's going around? Cool, so I pick up my phone, top things to see in Paris. This place called the Palace of Versailles popped up, number one. It's like, OK, cool. Well, let's go do it. Call an Uber, get in the car, go to the Palace of Versailles.
- 2:14 And we get there. And let me tell you this, it is magnificent. It's beautiful. You pull up kind of outside of the city, and it's this three -story building, like super huge. As far as east is to the west, like this building is massive, gold trimmings, white, like eloquent. The fencing line is all around it, like just the fence looked beautiful with like gold trimmings on it. There's over 200 marble statues on the outside and surrounding areas of the Palace of Versailles and these really amazing grass fields and different places you can walk around. So my wife and I, we get in there like, man, this is like incredible. This is beautiful.

And we're kind of walking around,

- 2:56 Looking at different statues of, I don't know who this king is or who this poet is, but it looks cool. And we're walking around, and about three, four hours kind of go by. And I look at my wife, and I'm like, hey, I'm kind of bored. Like, you all kind of want to get out of here? And she goes, hey, yeah, you look like you're getting a little sunburned. So let's call an Uber, get in, and we'll get on out of here. So that's what we do. We get on out, we go home, go back in, spend the rest of our last day. We get home. And what happens when you get home from a trip, especially your honeymoon?
- 3:28 Everybody wants to hear about it. Like, tell us all about your travels. So that's what we do. My family's in town. We're hanging out and telling them all about what Paris was. And I have a conversation with one of my brothers and was like, yeah, I went to this place. It was kind of boring, the Palace of Versailles. It looked cool. I feel like I could have just all Googled it, but it was cool. And he goes, well, did you go inside? I was like, wait, what? Did you go inside? He goes, you're telling me you did not go inside? I was like, no. I walked around this grass field for three hours. He goes, dude, you missed it.
- 4:06 You missed everything. You missed the Hall of Mirrors that has all these mirrors lined up with these diamond chandeliers. It's beautiful. You missed where the king and the queen's headquarters were, where they lived and they stayed. You missed the battles, like the paintings of all these French battles that these guys, you even missed where the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I You missed it. Are you kidding me? So I go on my phone, I Google it. You can go inside. It's like my biggest regret of my honeymoon. I could have gone inside one of the most magnificent places, one of the most top rated palaces ever, one of the most beautiful places that you can go and see in Paris.
- 4:49 I missed it. Now, why do I tell you that story, not only to let you know to never book me as your travel agent, because not only would you miss your flights, but you're going to miss the experiences, but also to let you know I feel like a lot of us are like that with our spirituality with God. We miss it. We just miss the whole thing. Honestly, we get kind of close. You come to church. You're here. Maybe you read your Bible every once in a while. Maybe you're kind of trying to figure this whole thing out. But we miss the core essence of everything. We really never step in. We miss the core essence of the life that God is not only offering us, but extending to us with open arms.
- 5:30 And that's exactly what we're going to see in John chapter 3, is a man named Nicodemus. And we're going to kind of break it down section by section and go through it together. And I'm really excited to do so, because it's an awesome story. Maybe some of y'all have heard it before, or maybe you're like me and kind of like really dive into it for the first time in a long time, or maybe the first time ever.

## Proximity Without Depth: Meeting Nicodemus

- 5:53 But we're going to do it today. So go ahead and bow your heads, close your eyes. I'm going to pray before we go into God's word today. Dear Heavenly Father, God, thank you again just for today. Thank you for this time that we're able to come and worship you freely, Jesus, and open up your word, and find maybe a community that we've been longing for. But more importantly, Jesus, I pray that when we go through your word today, God, I pray that it is your words being heard, that your spirit, God, soften

someone's heart today, soften someone's hardship, and they answer in a relationship with you, Jesus, as we look into this individual named Nicodemus, and we see how his life was transformed by your gospel, God.

6:33

**John 3:1-3**

*Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 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." Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

7:07 Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. So just stop in right there. John, the author, has kind of given us a lot to already unpack. Who is Nicodemus? He's a Pharisee. You may have heard that term before. Maybe you have not. He is a religious leader at that time. Right? It was a privilege and an honor to be able to read and to know God's word, because majority of people could not read. So they relied on the Pharisees, the religious elite, to teach them the Torah, otherwise known as the Old Testament to us, the beginnings of God's word, the major and the minor prophets that were said in the Old Testament.

7:40 So now we know that he's a Pharisee. He knew scripture very deeply. Like he was an intelligent man who was highly moral. He's pretty respected in the community. But not only that, he's a ruler of the Jews. He's a member of the Sanhedrin, which is the highest, most religious court you could be a part of. So not only did he know God's word, he had a very high position in this role. And he had a lot of wealth within this role. In other words, he can go to Chipotle, buy the guac, and not think twice, right? Like it's good. The guy had money. The guy had power. The guy was respected, knew God's word. And I'm going to kind of jump the gun just a little bit, but I think it helps us understand more importantly, Jesus is going to call him the teacher of Israel, not just a teacher, because you had this group of Pharisees that taught God's word.

8:29 No, Nicodemus was the teacher. He was the one who taught Israel about God's word, meaning he was a theologian at heart. He knew God's word. People would come to him with questions, concerns, comments, and he would give them what he thought. But here's the twist. He's so close with God. He's so close with Jesus, he misses everything, which leads us to you could be in close proximity with Jesus, but still miss the life he offers. Like you could be right there with him having a conversation and still miss everything, miss it all.

## Curiosity in the Shadows: Nicodemus' Secret Visit

9:09 But what's really cool is that he came and he asked questions. Now, I kind of looked and tried to kind of figure out why did he come at night? Did he kind of sneak away in there to be at night? Or is it just a continuation of the early years? Earlier passages just before us that were taking place at night. It was kind of like a 50 -50 split. So if you're going to come down and ask me my personal opinion, why did Nicodemus come at night? This is what I would say. Because of his high establishment as a Pharisee, as a theologian, as someone well -respected, I think he came at night because he was curious.

9:45 He's cautious. He was really well-known, but he was really interested in what Jesus had to bring. So I think he did come at night. To not necessarily not be seen, but not to draw a large crowd along with them. But he's here at night. He's curious. He's cautious. He's interesting, but he's kind of hiding a little bit. He's drawn, but maybe he's a little self-conscious of what other people would think because of his religious and political platform. And truthfully, that's some of you guys here today.

## Religion vs. Surrender: The Rebirth Requirement

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10:17 You believe, God. You feel like something is stirring, so you came to service tonight. You're drawn to know Jesus more. Maybe you've come here 1,000 times, and the reason why you keep coming back is because you're drawn to deeper your relationship with God. Or again, maybe this is your first time after a Christmas Eve service. You come in, I want to hear a little bit more about this Jesus. So you're drawn here. Or maybe someone tricked you to get a great donut, and it was like, hey, by the way, there's church. So you got a donut, and now you're here. You're drawn in to hear about Jesus. Like something brought you here today, and you're curious of what is going on.

10:53 You're curious of what this book has to say. You might be seeing other people's lives being radically changed by their relationship with God. And you're kind of like, hey, can that happen to me too? Or why hasn't that happened to me? But you're going to kind of come to this conclusion that maybe you haven't fully surrendered your life to Jesus. And we're going to break this down again. Fully surrendering your life to Jesus does not mean life is butterflies, rainbows, and unicorns, right? Does not mean prosperity gospel, which we will never preach. Like that's not going to happen. Following Jesus, you're going to see in Nicodemus is this outward transformation that happens with an inward belief that he eventually has.

## The Insufficiency of Achievement

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11:32 You're close. But if there's anything we can learn about Pharisees at all in the gospels, because we read about them a lot. If you go through any of the gospels, you're going to read a lot about Pharisees. It's this. Religion can get you near Jesus. Man, it could get you to have a conversation with Jesus. It could get you here to talk about Jesus. But only surrendering your life brings you into life with Jesus.

11:58 And if he knew about God, again, he was a theologian. The guy knew the old, what we call now the Old Testament, probably like the back of his hand. But I don't know if he truly knew Jesus. And this is where we see Jesus' response. His response is to, hey, you have to be born again.

12:18 You have to be born again. Now, my wife and I, we're going to be born again. My wife I, we're going to be born again. My wife and I had a baby, our third child, on, holy cow, Thanksgiving. Whoa, baby moment right there, right? On Thanksgiving, right? So I got to see this whole thing for the third time, what it's like to be born again. And Nicodemus is like, wait, I have to do that? I go, no. Like, no, not at all. You don't have to do that. And we're going to kind of go into it. Jesus is saying, when you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. What I believe he is saying to Nicodemus is your knowledge is not enough, Nicodemus.

## Spirit-Powered Transformation: Born of Water and Spirit

- 12:51 You're smart, but it doesn't matter. Your morality isn't enough. You're the teacher of Israel, but guess what? Great, awesome, but not enough. Your position in the Sanhedrin, like, good job. I've lifted you in that position. Not enough. It's just not. You don't need improvement. You need rebirth. And I kind of think a little bit of like, man, where does that leave me? Right? I mean, how do I interpret this? Well, a couple of things. Maybe you were born in the church, meaning like you've done this your whole life. You did the Awana group. You did youth camps group. You gave your life at maybe Young Life one day. And you're like, man, this is the greatest thing.
- 13:36 You grew up in the church. However, and you know every worship lyric, but however, if you're honest, maybe you truly never surrendered your life to Jesus. You just started kind of going through the motions because it's just all you know, right? It's like one of those things that a lot of people have told me. I was born a Christian. No. You still came to know Jesus, but because you are so influenced in this Christian world, which is amazing, you're still missing the mark of what it looks like to surrender your life to Jesus. Maybe you're a morally successful person. You're like, hey, I'm not sleeping around. I'm not getting drunk. I'm not stealing. I have an honest, good working business.
- 14:17 Jesus is telling you, you being a good person, not enough. It's just not enough. Maybe you're someone that's like you accomplished a lot, right? You worked really hard. You built a super successful building. You're very generous with what God has given you, and you're generous with your money, and you're generous with your time. You're generous with all these things. God is saying, great, I've given you these things, but it's not enough. And lastly, maybe you're the check the box believer. You just come here on Sundays, but Monday through Saturday, nothing has changed in your life.

## Foreshadowing the Cross: New Life Through Resurrection

- 14:48 God is saying, man, that's not enough. And if you want to be honest, I sometimes feel just about all those things. Following Jesus can be very difficult and sometimes very hard to know where you even start, right? But do you understand what's happening?

15:05

### John 3:4-9

*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?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"*

- 15:30 So let's read 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 room and be born? There's one of those questions that he's asking. Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear it sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit.
- 16:08 Nicodemus said to him, how can these things be? Man, Jesus is clarifying to Nicodemus. He's like, man, how do I do this? I'm already old. I did that once. Do I have to do it again? No. He kind of hits him with this really interesting response that I love that is usually what Jesus does. He clarifies. This isn't self-reformation, nothing that you can do on your own. I'm not telling you you have to get born again. I'm telling you that the spirit brings rebirth, because what do I produce? Any time I try to take things in my own hand and I try and follow Jesus my own way or try to interpret things my own way, or like when Nicodemus is saying, so yeah, I got to go do that again.

## Head Knowledge vs. Heart Transformation

- 16:50 So he's trying to do it his own way. It brings death and destruction and nothing. But Jesus is saying, no. When the spirit comes, the spirit's going to produce life, and I'm going to give you that life. I really love this wind analogy that he does in John 3 .8. You can't see the wind, but you know what the wind changes.
- 17:14 So this is where I said earlier that following Jesus, it transforms you. It transforms you. It transforms It transforms your life. You can see when someone's following Jesus. When someone has truly surrendered their life to Christ, you can see the transformation in their life. You can. You see, maybe some addicts find freedom in Jesus. Shame-filled people find a new identity. They rip off the old and put on the new in Christ. Selfish people start to love sacrificially. Fearful people become bold in their faith. We can see it. We see marriages that were on the brink of falling apart get rebuilt around the gospel. We see husbands and wives looking at the spouse and going, hey, we maybe need to redo this thing and bring Christ back in the center of it all.
- 17:58 You could see when someone has fully given up their life to Jesus, because it brings you into a time that just you look around and go, I know nothing other than to give Jesus my all. You start to meet those individuals, you start to then know that, man, they are truly surrendering it all to Jesus. Because Jesus, right here, when he's talking with Nicodemus, he's not describing a religion. He's not describing perfectionism or behaviorism. He's not saying, hey, do these five things, and then everything's going to be great. He's describing his resurrection. He's literally giving him his foreshadowing of what's to come. And I'm going to die. I'm going to die for your sins, and I'm going to conquer that death, that this rebirth that you're talking about, that's my spirit coming into you.
- 18:44 He's foreshadowing it all. That salvation, yes, is about change. It's about trust in Jesus, but our transformation is about walking with Jesus, about surrendering things to Jesus. But Nicodemus still struggles. I love that in verse 9. I love that it doesn't just click right away, because you know what? It doesn't just click for me. I still struggle with a lot of things. And I love that he even said, hey, how can I

do these things?

19:12 Remember, this is a theologian of the time. This is the teacher of Israel. This is a very intelligent man. This is a guy. Again, that knew the Torah, the major and the minor prophets, all of the prophecies of the Messiah to come. Yet he's talking to the Messiah and doesn't even know it. And his answer is like, how do I do these things? So often do I find myself in those times of like, God, just give me a sign to open a door, but yet I'm not willing to look what's in front of me, and I decide to run straight into the wall instead. The answer is right there. It's right in front of him.

## The Gospel Unveiled: John 3:16

19:47

### John 3:10-15

*Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."*

20:25 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. That whoever believes in him may have eternal life. Again, it kind of hits them that religion gives knowledge, but Jesus gives new life. There's a large difference between head knowledge and heart transformation. You can know God. You can know the Bible. You can give me any Bible verse to quote any situation.

21:05 Great, I'm glad that you have studied God's word. But it's the difference to knowing God's word and being transformed by God's word. Vastly different. Nicodemus knew God's word. But he's like, man, I'm telling you these things that you should know, but yet you don't even understand them. How are you going to expect to understand anything I tell you, especially the heavenly things that have been revealed to me?

21:28 And what does he do? He brings it right back to something Nicodemus should know. He brings out an Old Testament passage, something that a theologian of the time should know like the back of his hand. He mentions Moses. A quick context to that, if you want, we're not going to go into that. We're not going to flip through it at all. But it's Numbers 21. In Numbers 21, Israel is dying from the rebellion. And God tells Moses, hey, lift up this bronze serpent. And anyone who looked at it in faith will live. Not earned, not achieved, not deserved. Nothing that you can do, but you will live if you just look. Jesus is foreshadowing his own death on the cross.

- 22:07 It's nothing that you can do. Nothing that you can do to get reborn. On your own being, nothing. No matter how good, successful, wealthy, whatever it is, nothing. It is only because of the death and the resurrection of Jesus. So he is saying, look to me lifted up and alive.
- 22:26 And then here is when maybe the most memorized, quoted Bible verse of all time comes into play. Remember when Tim Tebow wrote it on his cheeks during the football team and became the number one Google thing of all time? It's John 3 .16. Now, I kind of looked. You know, is Jesus still talking to Nicodemus at this time when it goes into John 3 .16? It's kind of like an even split, saying yes, he is, or no, he's not. Again, if you're going to come down here and ask me personally, is Jesus talking to Nicodemus, I would say yes. I think he is continuing his conversation with him. I think it's just a break in the scripture for us to kind of see the two different subjects that is happening, if you want me to be honest.

## From Curiosity to Commitment: Nicodemus' Journey

23:10

**John 3:16-17**

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*

- 23:55 It's there. But yet, we miss it. The most simple thing that we could ever hear, we miss. It's the most important question you're ever going to answer in your life, is who do you say Jesus is? Not where you're going to live, where you're going to go at lunch after this, or who you're going to marry, or what job you're going to take. It's who do you say Jesus is? It is by far the most important question you will ever ask and answer in your life. Why? Because it affects the afterlife. Jesus says, there's two things.

## From Seeking to Worshipping: Final Act of Faith

- 24:32 Perishing, meaning you are eternally separated from God for all eternity. There is no life without God. You will perish or everlasting life with your creator. That is the only options. It's one of the options. It's one of the or. But let me tell you this, Jesus loves and God loves you so much that he at least came to tell us the options and then to die for us. That we may be received this goodness and this grace. We see God's heart, his action, his invitation, just with his interaction with Nicodemus at such an early stage of the gospels. We see that God's heart is love. He loves you. He desires you. 1 Timothy 2 .4, God desires all to come to know him.
- 25:13 1 Timothy 2 .4, God desires all to come to know him. You are 2 .4, God desires all to come to know him. You are desired. He already knows you. He created you. But he desires you to know him and to be a part of his family and to experience his goodness and his grace, not to sit on the sidelines just on the outsides and experience him from afar, but to experience him within. You see God's action. He gave his son. He gave Jesus to die a death that I deserved. And then we see his invitation. Man. God believes. That's a clear -cut invitation that God died for the world.

25:50 His desire is for all people to come to know him. That is God's heart. He desires to be known by you. But the door into the kingdom is not achievement. It's not you being a good person. It's not what you've done. It's not. It's just not. It's not having every answer in the Bible because you're not. Man, this is a mystery. I have no idea half the time what I'm doing. Like, I'm in seminary right now, and Thomas asked me to preach. I'm like, are you sure? Like, I know nothing. I don't know anything about this thing. Like, you sure you want me up there? All I do know is, like, I just got to follow Jesus one day at a time, and I'm just going to try my best to be the best husband.

26:28 And I mess that up every single day. I'm going to try to be the best dad, and I mess that up every single day. I'm just going to follow. I'm just going to give my life. I'm just going to surrender and say, God, you're in control then. But the story of Nicodemus is not over. It's over after this one interaction. We actually see it two more times. It's really cool. They're really brief, and we're going to kind of flip into him in a moment. But he took time. He wrestled, and he processed.

## Personal Application: Where Are You in This Story?

26:56 But playing it safe can keep us from being changed. Just coming to God is not the answer, because then we like to play it safe. So if you have your Bible, flip with me a little bit to the right to John chapter 7, verse 50. That's where we're going to go. John chapter 7, verse 50. This is the second time we see Nicodemus in the Gospel of John. And John always has to kind of clarify, like, hey, this is the guy back in John chapter 3.

27:29

### John 7:50-52

*Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."*

28:11 And here's what they say. In response, they replied, are you from Galilee, too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee. Man, he speaks publicly in defense for Jesus. So the first time, his interaction is seeking. He's curious. What's this all about? The second time that we get to see, he's publicly defending Jesus. A little bit of a heart shift, if I were to kind of look at it myself, because

28:41 Our faith doesn't just grow in shadows. It doesn't just grow on a Sunday, and then we put it in our pocket for the rest of the week, right? But some of us, and myself included, I fall under this trap of believing privately, never confessing publicly my faith for Jesus, loving him quietly where it's comfortable and I don't ruffle any feathers.

29:06 I'm maybe sometimes afraid of what other people would think. Sometimes I don't tell people I'm a pastor because I'm like, I don't want to get that label. So I kind of put it privately. But you know what following Jesus is calling me to do? It's to put Christ on display on all aspects of my life. At the psalm we just said, to have him be magnified.

29:28 Because following Jesus, man, it's going to cost you. And it does. And what it costs you? Your pride. It's going to tell you to die to yourself and put Christ in the front. Die in your marriage, meaning quit being so prideful. Bring Jesus in the middle. To die at your businesses. To die to maybe some altercation that you have with someone. To put yourself aside. Following Jesus is calling you to die to your pride and put Christ in display. It might even cost you your reputation, but for a good reason.

30:05 Maybe you're known as the guy that is hooking up and drinking a bunch with all your friends. Well, guess what? That's not your reputation anymore. Why? Because you're made new in Christ Jesus. So it's going to cost you that. Put that aside and follow Christ. And hopefully, and it should, cost you your comfort. Think about it, man. You look at where we're at. Following Jesus can be very comfortable.

30:34 But sometimes we ask God, going, hey, God, whatever you want, I'm going to do it. Are you sure about that? Like, you're going to do whatever God's called you to do? Because we tend to be so comfortable. But following Jesus costs me my comfort. But if you wait until your faith feels safe, man, you're never going to know what it truly looks like to follow Christ, to have your life radically transformed. We're not promised an easy life, but we are promised an eternal one with or without Christ. That is what we are promised. And God's desire is to be in eternal life with you.

## The Irresistible Grace of Christ: Closing Invitation

31:14 And walking with Jesus, man, it can give you so much joy is that circumstances can't take you away. Because marriages can crumble, relationships could end, bankruptcy could happen. But you know what can never take away your joy is when you know the goodness of the faith of Jesus Christ. Because it radically transforms your life. You start to see and finally realize that these things, it's just not about you. It's about putting Christ in the middle of everything, which leads us to a real encounter with Jesus, eventually shows up in real life.

31:45

### John 19:39

*Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.*

32:01 Jesus is getting buried. He just died on the cross. He just bore the weight, the sin of mankind on his shoulder. He just bore all that weight and died. And let's see what happens. Verse 39, Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night. Came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

32:24 My mind goes, that dude must have been jacked, carrying 75 pounds of this stuff. But he came. He came in the middle of the day at his burial. Know what I don't see? Other Pharisees necessarily doing this. I see other Pharisees offering things up to Christ. This is an act of worship.

32:51 That's literally an act of going to who Jesus is and going, God, I'm going to give this stuff to you.

- 32:58 Now, again, I can't really stand on this. You know, at the end of John, it does say so many more things took place that if you were to write it all down, it would cover every book in the world. I like to hope maybe Nicodemus and Jesus had more interactions together. I don't know. We're only given these three. But what I do think. I know is that you see transformation in Nicodemus. Comes from night, curious, publicly defending with his peers, to attending his burial with his worship. So if, again, you were going to come down here and ask me, did Nicodemus ever come to know Jesus? I would tell you, based on this, I think so.
- 33:41 I think he did. I think it finally clicked in him that this is the Messiah that he so well knew about. That he would teach Israel about. That he was the teacher of the Messiah to come. And guess what? He had an interaction with one, with him, with the Messiah. So yeah, I do. I think he came to know Jesus. But this is not nighttime curiosity anymore, man. This is like full on faith. This is full blown public declaration of who he thinks Jesus is.
- 34:16 From curious faith to courageous faith, to committed faith. That's what we see intertwined with Nicodemus through the Gospel of John in this three very short interactions. So I have to think, where am I in this story? Who am I in this story?
- 34:34 Maybe, again, some of you are here just curious. You're wondering. You came to a Christmas Eve. Maybe you Googled churches in Scottsdale and this popped up. Maybe someone invited you. And you're just kind of here trying to figure out this whole Jesus thing. Can I truly believe in this? Is this truly Jesus? Is this truly the inerrant word of God, no air, God's spoken word through mankind, inspired by his spirit? Is this truly what it is?
- 35:03 And you know what I want to tell you? You are being drawn to knowing who Jesus is. And you've made the step to either watch online or to step here today. You're curious. But so was I. Someone told me the Gospel. I didn't quickly go, yeah, cool, let's go. I was curious as well. I had questions. And you know what? I still have questions. But don't do what I did at the Palace of Versailles and see the beauty of everything that there is and miss out on the whole experience because maybe you're caught up on something that's going to be labeled the mystery of the Gospel.
- 35:39 You could come down here. I'll be right here after service. You could hit me with any question you have. I may not have it. You know what? Majority, I probably won't have all the answers. Might have some. But you know what I'm going to tell you? That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, died for your sins, resurrected. Resurrected three days later because God loves you. And that is the most important thing you need to hear. This other stuff, and we can work through that. But the Gospel, you're missing out.
- 36:05 You're missing out. I want to see your life radically changed. So maybe that's you. Maybe you're at the very beginning stages of where Nicodemus was. It's curious. You're kind of just here, sitting in the back, ready to dip on out when worship starts. I would encourage you not to do that. Just stay. Or maybe you love Jesus. You've loved Jesus for a long time. But you know what? Your planet's safe. You come in. You check a box. You come in. You lift your hands up. And then Monday through Saturday, we just kind of, this collects dust.

- 36:38 Come back in. All right, ready to go again. And you know what I want to say to you, encourage you to do?
- 36:46 Surrender everything to him. You already believe that he is your Lord. You already believe that he is your Lord and Savior. Surrender now your life to him. Everything, give it to him as an offering. And say, Christ, I am now going to be the man after your own heart, a woman after your own heart. And all aspects of you, Jesus, from this moment on, it is you. I'm putting you on display. My marriage, maybe you're going to look at your spouse and go, honey, we need to rework our marriage because I want to bring Christ back in the center of it.
- 37:13 Maybe it's looking at relationships and going, man, we shouldn't be together. If you're dating someone, man, maybe we shouldn't be together because we're living together and we're doing things that we shouldn't be doing and reorganizing your life around the gospel. But here it's going to go, man, I'm going to now surrender everything to Jesus because I already love you, God. I'm going to stop admiring you from a distance.
- 37:36 I'm going to step into deeper obedience. Or lastly, maybe you're in here and you're kind of like, man, I'm ready to find my Nicodemus. I want to disciple someone. Look around you. There are people sitting to your left and to your right waiting to be disciplined. Look at them and say, hey, let's grab coffee after this. Let's continue this conversation. I got questions too. Can you walk through this with me?
- 38:05 But I'm going to go ahead and call the band up as we close right now. Man, I made the silliest mistake I feel like I could have made when I went on that honeymoon trip. I missed something so beautiful. I looked at it. I admired it. But I missed it.
- 38:24 Man, don't do that with Jesus. He loves you. God desires to be known by you. And you might look at me and go, but Michael, you don't understand what I've done. I am so sorry you went through that, but Christ died for that.
- 38:38 Michael, I get it. Like, they're good, but I'm just terrible. I'm terrible too. Let's do this together. But God died for that. So you might want to look at that. He may want to look at that. He may be known, his true fulfilledness of his intimacy and his love that can set you free. Because again, this is not about coming to know Jesus and life is this amazing things and you're going to get everything you want. No. You're going to follow Jesus and realize I am nothing, and I always was nothing without him.
- 39:11 And that is where the true freedom comes, is where you start to release it. And if you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your life, your your Lord and Savior, I would encourage you to do so today. Because the gospel has been written out to you so clear as day that you have looked at it as if you were looking at the Palace of Versailles. But it is up to you to take the first step in,
- 39:33 To be met with such irresistible grace that the next thing to do is to confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, that you will not have it all figured out. But I tell you this, Christ died for you, desires you, and wants to be known by you. He knows you, and he died for you.
- 39:51 Worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow. Tomorrow. But you have an opportunity to spend eternity with the one who created you.

40:03 And if you could bow your heads, close your eyes, and we're going to end this off in prayer.

40:08 Dear Heavenly Father God, thank you for today. Again, Lord, thank you that we're able to just open up your word and praise you, Jesus. Thank you for the story of Nicodemus, that we see a highly intelligent individual ask questions that doesn't make me feel so bad about the questions I ask. But God, you meet my questions, my curiosity with answers. You meet my curiosity with truth. You meet my curiosity with your grace. So Lord, I pray that today that if there's anyone in here that is just curious about you, Jesus, that they jump all in, that they decide to follow you for the first time, Lord, because they see that it is truly your grace and your love that's been calling them to this place, that has called them here to sit down this morning all along.

41:00 God, I pray for those in here that love you, Jesus, but are comfortable. I pray that you shake their world up so much that they become so uncomfortable that they then have to rely on you, Jesus. But I pray that this church becomes one that makes disciples, that we try to find our individuals like Nicodemus, ones that are asking questions, and that we're not afraid to go answer those questions. And sometimes with the answer of, I don't know. But we trust in you, Jesus. So I pray that you put someone in front of someone today or at some point in their life for them to disciple, and that we can be a church that truly is living on mission, that is spreading your gospel, and is making disciples in your name.

## Welcome and Personal Context

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41:46 God, we love you. We pray this in your son's name. Amen.