

God So Loved The World

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Bible Text: John 3:16

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I would like to speak to you for just a few minutes about what may well be the best known verse in the Bible, John 3:16.

Perhaps you have seen on television while watching a football or a baseball game someone holding up a sign between the goal posts or behind the backstop, a bright yellow sign. Sometimes John 3:16, sometimes John 3:3 which is also, of course, in this chapter where Jesus says, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”¹

If you look inside a Bible placed by the Gideons in a motel room, for instance, you are likely to find this verse, John 3:16, printed in several languages.

It is one of the first verses that we learn as children because it is a wonderful summary of the gospel message. It is the summary of the Bible summarized in one verse. It has been called the gospel in a nutshell. Even those who are not able to read to the Bible in their own language or those who have been isolated from the Scriptures by an oppressive government hostile to the message of the Bible can find enough truth in this one verse, should it fall into their hands, to lead them from death to life.

“God so loved the world.”²

Now you may be thinking, well, that is a beautiful sentiment, but does God really love the world? Tornadoes rip through towns. Hurricanes flood devastate our coasts. Floods ravage one nation while thousands die of drought or famine in another. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, viruses decimate whole segments of populations. In any given week you will read or hear of a tragedy somewhere in the world. If God really loves the world, why are there so many disasters?

Maybe you agree with NPR news analyst Daniel Shore who reportedly while referring to the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina said, “If this was the result of intelligent design, then the designer has something to answer for.”

¹ John 3:3.

² John 3:16.

What about the masses of refugees or those who eek out a living in huts of mud or straw without education, with little medical care, without a job, without hope, bathing and drinking from the same polluted river? If God loves this world, why are so many in such desperate straights?

And to bring it closer to home, what about the general course of your own life? Some of us have already begun to experience memory failure, declining strength, weakening bones, declining strength, memory failure.

Some of you have sat beside your dying father or mother or watched a brother or a sister or a child struggle with a terminal disease. If God loves the world why does the general course of this life tend to be towards misery and death?

Well, the answer is actually implied in our verse that whoever believes in him should not perish John 3:16 says, that whoever believes in him should not perish. It introduces this subject, it introduces the fact of our perishing.

Now, listen well. There are some truths which, if they are once rightly understood, will change a person's entire perspective. They are revolutionary in effect.

It was revolutionary for Isaac Newton when he came to understand the law of universal gravitation. It was revolutionary for William Harvey when he came to understand the circulation of blood through the body. It answered previously unanswered questions.

In the same way, when you understand and accept the following truth, it will bring many things into perspective and answer many questions. This truth, alluded to in John 3:16, is very simply that you and I are members of a condemned race. We are, in fact, perishing. We will never understand God's love until we understand that we are perishing.

The fact is, you and I were born into a race of condemned men and women. Something has happened to set this world on edge. Things are out of joint. The whole creation groans together, Scripture says.

What happened? What was the universal cause that preceded this universal effect?

Mankind has rebelled against its maker.

God created us in his image. He created us to reflect his image. And one aspect of that image was freedom, the freedom to choose in numerous ways, but most importantly the freedom to choose to obey God and live or disobey God and die.

When Adam freely chose to disobey God into this world came the horrendous consequences of sin that we see all around us.

“By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.”³

³ Romans 5:19.

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,”⁴ Romans 5:12.

You and I were born into a race of sinners. And the sooner we realize that the better. You may not like it, but you cannot change it.

I was born in Baltimore in the city. I think it was called Memorial Hospital. Is that still there? Probably torn down long ago. There is probably a plaque there somewhere, but it was way back in the last century that I was born.

Now suppose I went to the Maryland Department of Records and I said to them, “You know, for all these years I have been a Caucasian, right there on my birth certificate. And that was ok while it lasted, but it is getting a bit boring now. On this next birthday—coming up soon, by the way—I am switching to one of the newer up and coming races. You know, I need to get more hip in my hop. So please correct my birth certificate.”

“What are you talking about?” The lady would say to me, “You can’t change your race.”

To get your hip in your hop you need more brains in your top.

We were born into the human race, a race of sinners. The Scripture says there is not a just man upon the earth that does good and sins not, Ecclesiastes 7:20.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”⁵ 1 John 1:8.

The whole world lies in the wickedness, is the way John put it in 1 John 5:19.

And Jesus said:

Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things [Jesus said] come from within, and defile the man.⁶

Mark 7:21-23.

Think about it. We can put a child, a child who has a defective immune system, we can put a child in a sterile environment, a germ free bubble to prevent that child from contracting disease. We could conceivably isolate a child from all sinful influences as well, conceivably. But we cannot keep that child from sinning. It is his nature. It is our nature since the fall of man.

⁴ Romans 5:12.

⁵ 1 John 1:8.

⁶ Mark 7:21-23.

Now you may be thinking, ok, how does this answer the question which you raised which is: If God does love this world, why is it in such a mess? Why are we perishing?

Even if we accept that we sinned against God, he is God. Can't he work around the problem?

The answer is the nature of God is such that perishing is a quite natural consequence of our case. He is spoken of in Scripture as a God of truth and without iniquity just and right is he.

“I, the Lord your God am holy.”⁷

“There is none holy but the LORD.”⁸

But you are holy, enthroned in praises of Israel, Psalm 22.

When man sinned he brought this curse and wrath of God upon him.

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake.”⁹

Why is there death? Because the soul that sins must die, the Scripture says. Physical and spiritual death result from the fall.

But you may be thinking, yeah, but God created us. We are, in a sense, his children. We are his offspring is the way the apostle Paul puts it. Surely he will not punish his own children.

Remember, God is not only a loving God, God is also a just judge.

I want you to imagine that I am a judge in a murder case. The defendant allegedly killed his elderly landlady because she complained about his loud music, let's say. The evidence is overwhelming. The jury has found the defendant guilty. And now I must sentence him.

But here is the catch. The defendant is my own son whom I love.

I have a son. His name is Nathan. He lives in Washington state.

So I say to him, “Nathan, the jury has found you guilty. You deserve death according to the laws of the state. Because you are my son, because I love you, I am going to let you go this time. I want you to promise me you will never kill any old ladies again. I want you to promise me you will turn down your music. I am going to let you go.”

⁷ Leviticus 19:2.

⁸ 1 Samuel 2:2.

⁹ Genesis 3:17.

What kind of a judge would I be if I did that? Certainly not a good one, certainly not a fair one, certainly not a just one.

A just, holy, good judge would overcome even the strongest desires of his heart to do the right thing, to do justice.

God is a good judge. It is true he loves you. He made you. He cares about you. But he is also holy and he will punish sin. He says so.

You work for your employer. You receive wages. The wages you receive are a consequence of what you did.

God says, "The wages of sin is death."¹⁰

You sin. The consequence for that sin is death. Death and judgment result from what we do.

Now you may be thinking, well, that's fine. Such tough talk is fine for people who really deserve punishment, people like landlady killers, but I... I have lived a good life. I have lived a righteous life. I haven't killed my landlady.

No doubt you have lived a righteous life when judged by your standards, comparing yourself to others.

I used to think that our grade in life was like those grades in chemistry tests in high school. Those tests, you remember those tests that everybody flunked. And even the smartest kid in the class gets the 62 and so all you have got to do to pass is just be up in that top 30 or 40 percent because the teacher is going to grade on a curve.

I used to think life was like that.

But there are some problems with that view. First of all, your sin account is probably much larger than you would care to know. In other words, your grade is much lower than you imagine. There are a good many points deducted for things that we tend to just shrug off as no big deal: pride, envy, covetousness, gossip, lust, losing one's temper, immodesty, unthankfulness, love of pleasure, love of money, love of self. Need I go on?

And, secondly, there are not as many points added for what we think is good behavior.

"We are all as an unclean thing," the Scriptures say. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."¹¹

¹⁰ Romans 3:23.

¹¹ Isaiah 64:6.

Even the best I try to do, it is tainted. It is tainted with pride. It is tainted with insufficient zeal. It is tainted with improper motives. Over and over again. Even the things I think of as good are not really purely good.

And, thirdly, here is the big problem. The passing grade in this class is 100. How much sin is acceptable to God? None. None. His standard is not like yours, nor is it like your high school chemistry teacher's. His standard is perfection.

When desire has conceived he says it brings forth sin. And sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. The Scripture says God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil."¹² Listen to that. God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil."¹³ He cannot look upon iniquity. He simply cannot do it. It is God's nature to be holy. I have said this before. It is his nature to be holy as it is the sun's nature to be hot.

The sun cannot be anything but hot. God cannot be anything but holy. He is holy. It is his nature. He must punish sin.

He says whoever keeps the whole law yet offends in one point, he is guilty of all. He is a law breaker.

Picture the 10 Commandments written with a magic marker on one of these windows. How many panels we got there? Four, for... there are 12. Ok, take 10 of them and write the 10 Commandment there. And let's say I don't break them all, I just break one of them. What has happened to the glass? Whoever keeps the whole law and yet offends in one point he is guilty of all. He is a sinner and he has manifested the fact that he is a sinner by the evidence of his sin.

To illustrate, I was in a Laundromat in Randallstown the other day and I bumped into Martha Stewart. She was...

What? You don't think I do laundry? I do laundry.

She was washing some clothes. She has been keeping them in a storage facility for several months. But we got talking, you know, about home decorating and things, created a few recipes. And I mentioned. I guess I shouldn't have done it, but I mentioned that I was going to make my famous home made chili that very night and, you know, Martha. Well, I don't want to say it. She is a little on the pushy side. She just sort of invited herself over. Let's put it that way. And, well, Donna was a little surprised when we got home.

All right. I probably should have called. But here is what I want to tell you. The recipe that I used for this famous homemade chili calls for six plump, ripe tomatoes.

¹² Habakkuk 1:13.

¹³ Ibid.

Well, as it happens, I only had five. The sixth one was actually... well, it was actually rotten. It was putrid. It was rank.

Donna said, "Throw it out."

But I said, "Come on. It's ok. The five good ones will overcome the stench of the sixth one. Martha will never notice."

Well, I thought I would never have to say this, but Donna was right and Martha noticed. In fact, she sort of got sick and was maybe one reason I don't see her here.

One day soon you are going to find yourself standing before a holy God whose eyes are as a flame of fire. I know you have done some good things. You gave to Katrina relief. You tried to treat others as you would want to be treated. You tipped your hair dresser even though she botched your hair cut, et cetera, et cetera. But mixed in that bowl of your life is a dash of impatience and a sprinkle of ungratefulness and a full cup of anger and hatred and lust and deceit and selfishness and blasphemy and disrespect and discontentment and worry and complaining and stubbornness and bitterness and lack of love.

Do you really think a holy God will somehow not detect these rotten things? Which is why the Bible says, "By the deeds of the law," that is by trying to keep God's commandments, "There shall no flesh be justified in his sight."¹⁴

Nobody ever could perfectly keep those commandments. The reason he gave them to us was to drive us to his solution. No flesh will be justified in his sight by trying to keep the law of God. How could we ever do it perfectly in thought, word and deed every single day of our lives? You mean to tell me that every single day of your life you are going to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself?

This is why the world is in such a sad shape and this is why, according to John 3:16, we are perishing.

A British newspaper conducted an essay contest on the theme, "What is wrong with the world?"

I believe it was Malcolm Mugridge who won the contest with this essay, "I am."

We are members of a rebellion race. We have sinned against a holy God and what we deserve is separation from him in a place of judgment.

Well, so much for the bad news. All this, you see, is a backdrop which must be in place before we can begin to appreciate the love of God that is declared in this text.

¹⁴ Romans 3:20.

“God so loved the world that he gave...”¹⁵ What? A million dollars? All the wealth on the planet? All the wealth in the galaxy? All the wealth of the universe? No, he gave something infinitely more precious.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”¹⁶

Who is this Son? The Scriptures calls him, the prophet Micah describes him as the one whose going forth has been from old, from everlasting.

Isaiah said, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father.”¹⁷

He is spoken of as the anointed one, the Messiah, Immanuel, which means God with us. He is called the express image of God’s person.

What does it mean that God gave his Son? It means he permitted him to leave glory. He allowed him to be born here through the miracle of the virgin birth. So he didn’t inherit our sinful nature. He sent him here to keep the law that we broke. He kept the law that I broke every single day of his life. He loved his Father with all his heart, soul and mind and strength. Every day of his life he loved his neighbor as himself. He kept the law that I broke and then he went to the cross and paid the debt that I owe which is death, separation from God.

God gave his own Son over to death and judgment.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”¹⁸ Romans 8:32.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [the payment, the atonement] for our sins.”¹⁹

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.”²⁰

The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many, the Scripture says.

Jesus referred to himself, you will remember, as the good shepherd who gives his life for his sheep.

“God so loved the world.”²¹

¹⁵ John 3:16.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Isaiah 9:6.

¹⁸ Romans 8:32.

¹⁹ 1 John 4:10.

²⁰ 1 John 3:16.

²¹ John 3:16.

There is no greater love. There can be no greater sacrifice than this.

When God tested Abraham to see if he loved him supremely and trusted him implicitly he said to him, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”²²

Now God never intended Abraham to get to the point of actually sacrificing his son. God had a plan, but God’s intention here was to see: Does this man really believe me? Does he really trust me?

Well, ask for the thing in all the world he loves the most.

Let me speak to you parents for a moment. If you could save just one of three things, your earthly wealth, your own life or your child’s life, which would it be? Can there be any doubt?

Listen to King David’s pitiable lament over his son.

“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”²³

For whom would you sacrifice your son? For whom would you sacrifice your daughter? For whom would you be willing to die?

Perhaps for a really good man. Romans five says in a modern translation, “In human experience it is a rare thing for one man to give his life for another. Even if the latter be a good man, though there have been a few who have had the courage to do it. Yet the proof of God’s amazing love is this, that it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us. Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God,” Scripture says.

Do you remember how as Christ died the sky grew dark? In the middle of the day the sky grew dark and Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”²⁴ It is Aramaic. It means, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”²⁵

And what he was expressing there, so that we could understand it or at least enter into it, if not fully understand it, was that God the Father was turning away his face from his own Son and allowing him to die alone and forsaken.

²² Genesis 22:2.

²³ 2 Samuel 18:23.

²⁴ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

²⁵ Ibid.

Why? Why would God not comfort his own Son as his Son faced this horrid death of crucifixion? Why would God withdraw his face? Why would God turn away from his own Son?

Because that is precisely what sin deserves. God was treating his Son as if he were sin incarnate. He was treating him as a sinner. God made him to be sin for us, he who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He made Christ, his own Son who knew no sin, he treated him as if he were sin itself, sin incarnate.

Now what could possibly induce the Father to do that? Why would he allow his Son to die at the hands of wicked men? Why would he treat him as a sinner? Why would he turn his face away?

Love for you. That's it.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.”²⁶

Love for you. That is the only explanation for you. Love for you, love for me, love for his sheep upon this planet.

Would we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the sky of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky.

What wondrous love is this, oh, my soul?

Amazing love, how can it be,
That thou, my God, should die for me?

Why would the Father do this? Just to demonstrate his love? No, that you might not perish.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.”²⁷

He did it so you wouldn't perish. Jesus died as our substitute, as a ransom, as a sacrificial lamb. This is the great truth of the substitutionary atonement. He is the one who died in my place. I am the one who should have died. I am the one who should have been on the cross. I am the one who deserves to be separated from God. Jesus died in my place, as my substitute.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

“Father, punish me and let him go free.” That is the gospel.

And how is this redemption appropriated by us? Does the fact that Jesus died on a cross mean everybody is now going to heaven? How is this appropriated by us? What does the verse say?

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever...”²⁸ joins the church should have eternal life? That whoever is baptized should not perish, but have everlasting life? But whoever keeps the 10 Commandment should not perish, but have everlasting life? That whoever keeps the golden rule should not perish, but have everlasting life? Is that what it says?

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.”²⁹

We are reading a translation. This is not written in English. This was written in Greek and the Greek word is πιστευω (pist-yoo'-o) here, translated believe. Whoever believes in him. That word is πιστευω (pist-yoo'-o). It is a Greek verb. It means to trust in, to place confidence upon.

The Greek scholar W E Vine defines it, “To place confidence in, to trust. It signifies reliance upon, not mere credence.”

In other words, believing in Jesus does not mean merely acknowledging his existence. It is not just acknowledging his existence.

I read a newspaper account of a man named Robert Dakich D A K I C H, he was the only passenger in a Cessna 210 piloted by his best friend. His best friend, while piloting the plane, suffered a heart attack. Dakich was not a pilot. His best friend, before he lost consciousness disengaged the auto pilot.

I dare say Mr. Dakich believed in air traffic controllers before that day. He believed that there were such people, that they, indeed, existed. But that day he trusted in the air traffic controllers in Peoria, Illinois to talk him down to a near perfect landing.

There is a great difference between believing that Jesus lived and died and rose again and trusting in him for your salvation. The devil believes that Jesus lived and died and rose again. The devil knows Jesus is the Son of God. The devil knows more about that than you and I do. The devil is not trusting him for salvation. He is not believing in Jesus in the sense conveyed in John 3:16.

Listen now. You may be a member of this church or of some other. You may have known about Jesus since you were a child. But the question is: In whom are you trusting right

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

now for your eternal life? In whom are you trusting to bring you to heaven? Are you still clinging to the illusion that you can simply stand upon your own record? Or have you fallen down before the risen Christ and acknowledged that you are a sinner? You are a sinner in thought, in word and deed. And even the best things you do are still tainted by sin.

Or are you in that cockpit saying to yourself, “Well, I believe in air traffic controllers, but I am going to land this baby myself”?

How foolish.

What is the end result to those who repent and believe, who lay hold upon Christ, who see that they are sinners and can’t save themselves and who transfer their trust to Jesus Christ and rely completely upon him? What is the end result?

They will not perish, God says. They will not perish.

God will not demand double payment. He will not require the sacrifice of you and your Redeemer. They will not perish, but they will have everlasting life.

Now what is involved in that? What does God mean by that? The peace of knowing that you are reconciled to God. That is involved in it.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God,”³⁰ knowing God as our loving heavenly Father.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”³¹

Having the comfort of knowing God is working in your life today.

“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”³²

Knowing not only that he has forgiven you, but he has begun to cleanse you.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you.”³³

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away.”³⁴

God is going to make you new. He is going to change you from the inside out. The blessing of the Holy Spirit to indwell you, to guide you, to comfort you, to sustain you.

³⁰ Romans 5:1.

³¹ Psalm 103:13.

³² Romans 8:28.

³³ Romans 6:14.

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

God will give you a new love for his Word. He will give you a new love for other believers. He will give you a compassion for those who don't know him. He will give you all the blessings of love and joy and peace and gentleness and goodness and faith and meekness and temperance. He will change you. You will have everlasting life and not this life that perishes, that is finite. Everlasting life, a life of joy.

“At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore,”³⁵ the Scripture says.

Untainted by sin. Can you imagine? Can you imagine what this world would be like if there were no sin in it?

Let me close with two stories. The first one involves Auschwitz. Auschwitz, as you know, a town in southern Poland where the Nazis had an infamous death camp. The camp commandant, Rudolf Huss admitted after the war that at least 2.5 million people were killed at Auschwitz.

The Nazi concentration camp in southern Poland, one man whose name was [?] survived with an amazing story to tell. It was July of 1941 and one of the inmates had escaped. It was the grizzly practice at Auschwitz to kill 10 prisoners for every escapee. Would tend to sober the prisoners to keep them from trying to escape, didn't it?

The commandant would order the prisoners into the courtyard then select 10 names at random from the roll book. The 10th name that he called that day was [?]. As he heard his name called [?] began to sob and he cried out in grief over his wife and his children. He was going to be put into a cell without food or water until he died. That is the way the Nazis did it.

Suddenly there was movement among the prisoners. The dogs grew tense. The guards raised their rifles as a prisoner left his row and pushed his way to they front. His name was Maximillion Colby, a Franciscan priest who had only been in the camp about six months, but who had already been nicknamed the saint of Auschwitz for sharing his food, giving up his bunk, praying for his captors.

Max Lucado tells the rest of the story. No fear on his face. No hesitancy in his step. The capo shouted him to stop or be shot.

“I want to talk to the commander,” he said calmly.

For some reason the officer doesn't club or kill him. Colby stops a few paces from the commandant, removes his hat and looks the German officer in the eye.

“Herr Commandant, I wish to make a request, please.”

“That no one shot him was a miracle,” Lucado said.

³⁵ Psalm 16:11.

“I want to die in the place of this prisoner.” He points at the sobbing [?].

The audacious request is presented without stammer.

“I have no wife or children. Besides, I am old and good for nothing. He is in better condition.”

Colby knew well the Nazi mentality.

“Who are you?” the officer asked.

“A Catholic priest.”

The block is stunned. The commandant uncharacteristically speechless. After a moment he barks. “Request granted.”

Prisoners were never allowed to speak. [?] said, “I could only thank him with my eyes. I was stunned and could hardly grasp what was going on, the immensity of it. I the condemned and to live and someone else willingly and voluntarily offers his life for me a stranger. Is this some dream?”

Colby died on August 14th, 1941. [?] survived the war. He made his way back to his hometown, but every year on August 14th he would go back to Auschwitz to say thank you to the man who died in his place.

And in his own yard at his home [?] placed a plaque carved with his own hands, a tribute to Maximillion Colby, the man who died so he could live.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”³⁶

But it may be here that there are some here who are thinking, God is not going to accept me. I have sinned too greatly for too long. How do I know he is going to receive me?

Well, this last story is for you.

A minister was riding on a train. The only other occupant of the coach was a young man who seemed exceedingly ill at ease. The young man would sit in one seat, get up and go to another, take up a book, drop it down again.

The minister went over and sat beside him asking what was wrong.

At first the boy wouldn't answer, but at last the dam broke and he burst forth with his story. He said, “I have run away from home. I have been away for a long time. I have wanted to go back and I wrote my father asking if he would take me back. I told him that

³⁶ Ibid.

I would not wait for a reply, but I would start for home and then if he wants me back to hang a white rag on that crab apple tree near the railroad track so I can see it when the train goes by.

“If the white rag is not there I will understand and go on by,” he said.

“We are getting near now and I am afraid to look. I am afraid the white rag won’t be there.”

The minister told the lad he needn’t look. He said he would look for him. The boy sat with his eyes closed, the hand of the minister resting on his knee and as they drew near to where the tree was the hand of the minister closed tight on the boy’s knee and he said, “My boy, there is a white rag on every limb of that tree. There is a white rag on every limb of that tree.”

Friend, God has placed white rags upon his Son’s empty cross. There are white rags there. He is saying, “Come home. Come home, sinner. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest,” he said. “Come to me. Come to me. Come home.”

Whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

How do you come home? You confess your sins to him. You come home very simply. You confess your sins to him. You can do it right here, right now in your own heart. You can do it tonight at your bedside, but you have got to do it. You come to him and you say, “God, forgive me I am a sinner. I deserve your wrath. I don’t deserve heaven. I know it. But I believe that Jesus lived that sinless life the Bible talks about. I believe he died as my substitute upon that cross. I believe he rose again from the dead. I believe he lives today. I want him as my Savior. I want my sins forgiven, Lord. You say in your Word if I believe you will forgive me. I believe, Lord. Please forgive me and save me.”

If you come to God that way on the authority of God’s Word, as God’s ambassador I declare to you he will forgive all your sins freely. You will be his child, adopted into his family and you will have everlasting life. God says so. Won’t you come to him? Come to him right now.

We are going to sing a song as we close the service and as we do my prayer is that you will right now in your heart, if you have never done it, come to him now.

God, I am a sinner. Please forgive me and save me. I want Christ as my Lord and Savior. I transfer my trust from myself to him.

You come to God that way. He will hear your prayer. He will forgive your sin.

This closing hymn is like all the other hymns we have sung today. It is printed in your bulletin. It is the last one I guess we have printed. It is *Jesus, I Come*. Find it there.