

Father in heavens, we come to  
your word this morning. We pray for the help and ministry  
of your spirit. Lord, help, send help from the  
sanctuary. Grant your servant clarity of  
mind and utterance that I might speak as I ought to speak with  
boldness and clarity and conviction and courage and compassion. The word will spread  
rapidly  
here, and particularly, oh Lord, If there are people in this sanctuary,  
as I'm quite sure there are, who have yet to close with Christ,  
we pray today would be a day of salvation for them. They would  
see Jesus in the light and see themselves in that same light,  
and they'd come out of the darkness to see Him and to embrace Him  
as their Savior and their Lord. For Christ's sake we pray, amen. Please take your  
seats, and if  
you would, turn with me in your copy of the word of God to John's  
gospel. Chapter three, I'm gonna read  
from verse 16. Down to verse 21. This is the word of God, please  
take heed how you hear. 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. Whoever believes in him  
is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned  
already, because he's not believed in the name of the only Son of  
God. And this is the judgment. The  
light has come into the world, and men, people, loved the darkness  
rather than the light, because their works were evil. For everyone  
who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to  
the light, lest his works, his deeds, should be exposed. Whoever  
does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly  
seen that his works have been carried out in God or by God. Another way to take the  
Greek  
there in that last verse. The grass withers and the flower  
falls off, but this is the word of God and it endures forever. Please take heed how  
you hear  
this morning. So the question that meets us  
in our sermon this morning is how can a God of love send sinners  
to hell? I was last week's sermon, you  
remember, God loves the worst, he loves the world, a world of  
darkness. He gives the most, his only begotten  
son, and he asks the least that you might be saved. You put your trust in him. And  
John tells us, while God  
could have condemned the world, he could have sent his son into  
this world to wipe us all out, and justly so. And the angels  
would have sang, holy and righteous are you, O Lord, and most just  
and wonderful in your judgments. If he'd wiped out every mother  
son of us, God didn't do that. He did not send his son into  
this world to condemn the world, but that  
the world might be saved through him." So maybe you're wondering  
this morning, if God loves the world and God sent his son into

the world not to condemn the world, how can God allow people he loves to end up going to hell? Maybe you find yourself wondering that question this morning. Maybe you're a college student here, and your professors are addling your brain a little bit, and you begin to think that, I know these people, and they're living in sin, whether it be heterosexual sin, homosexual sin, but they're great fun, they're the life and soul of the party, and I like them. Is God really gonna send them to hell? I mean, they're kind, they might do charitable deeds. Will God really send them to hell and why? It's a common question. It was a question that Jessica Alba, the actress, was asking back in December of 2015. She was giving an interview on Vanity Fair about her life story. And it might surprise you to know that Jessica Alba's young life was marked by two things. First of all, illness. She had repeated sickness and illness that required multiple hospital admissions. And secondly, there was a yearning for purpose and meaning. And in her teenage years, she satisfied that yearning for purpose and for meaning by attending a conservative evangelical Christian church. And she thought she trusted Christ back in those years. But that all came to an end when she was 17. She said she was turned off by the boundaries and labels that the Christian church places on people, like saved and lost, and things like that. And that year, she attended, she said, an acting workshop up in Vermont, and there she fell crazy in love, by her own testimony, with a cross-dressing ballet dancer who had a baby and was bisexual. And she said to herself when she was in love with this person, I'm trying to figure out was he a man or a woman, it's not clear to me in the testimony, I'm not trying to be funny, I'm serious. But she said, I was like, there's just no way he's going to hell, she said. And the world of acting opened up to her, a creative world of community where she felt she belonged. And she said, I felt like at the end of the day, God is love and we are human. Human. So there's just no way God is sending this guy to hell, because she loved him. And that's really her philosophy. She loved him. She liked him. She couldn't understand how he would be going to hell or that God would send someone she loved to hell. Do you see what her fundamental thought is? God thinks about other human beings exactly the same way that I do. God is a bigger version of me, maybe a slightly better version than me, but not a radically different person than me. And in that, there is a profound miscalculation. We are made in God's image, but sin has spoiled that image. And when it comes to our moral and spiritual sense and sensibility, we are as different as salt and sugar from God, and more different. Remember how the Psalmist put it, or God puts it in Psalm 50, when he's speaking to the wicked

among Israel. To the wicked, God says, what right have you to tell of my statutes and to take my covenant in your mouth? For you hate discipline and you cast my words behind you. You have a bad attitude towards God's discipline. When you see a thief, you're pleased with him and you associate with adulterers. You keep bad company, God says. You let your mouth loose in evil and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother. You slander your own mother's son. You have a bad mouth, God says.

But the greatest problem was they have bad theology. These things you have done and I kept silence. You thought that I was just like you. They kept silence. God kept silence. He didn't act in judgment. And so the wicked confused God's patience for his indifference. And they thought, because God has done nothing yet, he'll do nothing ever. And God must think about life the way I think about life. And God says, no, you make a fundamental mistake. You think I am just like you. And nothing could be further from the truth. I will reprove you, God says, and state the case in order before your eyes.

Now consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you in pieces, God says, and there'll be none to deliver. He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors me, and to him who orders his way aright, I shall show the salvation of God. Well, that's about as subtle as a brick through a plate glass window. How can God, a God of love, send sinners to hell? Because it's right for him to do so. God doesn't view this world, he doesn't view you or me or our actions outside of Christ in a favorable way. And in our text this evening we see, or this morning, sorry, we see three reasons why God, notwithstanding the fact that he is a God of love, notwithstanding the fact that he loves this world, notwithstanding the fact that he sent his son into this world not to condemn it but to deliver it if they would but look to him in salvation. The three reasons God is quite just to condemn this world if they continue in their sin and if they reject his son is because firstly, they embrace darkness. Secondly, they hate the light. And thirdly, they give God no choice because they reject their only hope of salvation, his son. Let me be personal this morning. If you're here this morning and you're not yet a Christian, whether you can see it or not, this is you. The question is not, why does God send people he loves to hell? The question for you to consider this morning is, why will God send you to hell if you don't come to Christ? And the reason is because you embrace the darkness, you hate the light, and you reject his son. And I plead with you this morning to stop doing that. Let's walk through the text this morning. First of all, God says, you embrace the darkness. Verse 19, this is the judgment, that the fact that God sent his son into the world not to condemn the world, and yet this is the

judgment. The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds, their works were evil. The light has come into the world. The light has come into the world in and through Christ. In him was life, John says in chapter one, and life is the light of men. The very fact that there's life on the planet, you remember, points to one who was originally alive. You've never, ever, ever seen life come from non-life. It takes life to beget life. Where did life come from in the universe? It didn't come from nothing. And it didn't come from the deadness of matter. It came from one who was originally alive in the power of an endless life, Jesus Christ. He is the life behind all life. And that light, that life shines as light into this world. He comes to you also through the light of conscience. People sometimes ask, well, how can God condemn people who have never heard the gospel to hell? Well, God never sends people to hell because they haven't heard the gospel. God doesn't even send people to hell because they don't believe in his son. The reason God sends people to hell is because they love the darkness and they hate the light. And that says everything about the kind of person they are. But even those people who have never heard the law written in Scripture, Paul says they've heard the law written in their heart. Remember how he puts it in Romans 2, middle of the chapter? For as many as have sinned without law will be judged without law. And as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law. For not for when Gentiles, Paul says, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having a law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts between themselves, accusing or else excusing them in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus, according to my gospel. And what Paul is saying there is, there's really no one in this world without the law. Even the pagan in Ombubungaland who eats his neighbor for lunch. I saw there was a CNN reporter once some years ago, I saw this this week on YouTube, and he was interviewing this cannibal tribe. And he was talking too much, as CNN reporters are wont to do. Fox News too. But he was talking too much, and the chief of the cannibals said, shut up, or I will cut off your head and eat you. And there's this awful moment where the CNN guy realizes he's not joking. And he looks at his cameraman and goes, can you distract them? I'm going to leave quietly. But those men may do that, the cannibals, but in their heart of hearts, they know it's wrong too. Just like you, maybe you're here, you're an atheist, and you say there's no truth. You don't really believe that. Like, if you work for, I don't know, an employer, and he covenants to give you \$48,000 a year, which is \$4,000 a month, and he gives you \$3,995, you're not gonna go, well, you know, what's \$5? And, you know, what's it

matter?

There's no truth, it doesn't really matter. No, you're gonna go, that \$5 is mine, and you promised, and that's not fair. This week, my daughter scored

the winning goal in a lacrosse game against Ravenscroft. Our school, GDS, hasn't beaten Ravenscroft in 10 years, ever. Actually, they've never beaten them. We've been playing them for 10 years. And every year, they gloat. And the boys' team and the girls' team The boys' team crushed them, and the girls' team beat them. We were one goal ahead, and the last second, the winger, or whatever you call the person in lacrosse, out to the side, fires the ball across. He catches it and launches it into the goal. And just before the ball crossed the line, the buzzer went. But the referee was from Raleigh, which is where Ravenscroft is. He didn't call it. The moment the game was over, they wiped the scoreboard. Those things bother us when the rules aren't followed or when the ref ignores the rules. And it eats at us because justice

matters to us as human beings. And the very fact that you have a conscience shows you have a standard, a law written on your hearts that you, unlike dogs and baboons and gorillas and whales, you know that you ought to behave a certain way. That's the light of God in your heart witnessing to you. And it's amazing, isn't it, when your conscience bothers you, you tell a lie, and nobody knows but you and your conscience, and you can't placate your conscience. Jordan Peterson was saying this week it's one of the strongest evidences he knows that there's a God. The voice of conscience points forward like a bony finger, a dark bony finger pointing forward. You may think this is a secret thing between you and your conscience, nobody else knows, but God knows and you know, and one day everybody will know when it's shouted from the rooftops, what you kept in secret is made known. And the light has come into the

world. But men love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. And the word evil means diseased or degenerate, morally, spiritually, socially reprehensible. That's evil. And we love the darkness rather than the light because our deeds are evil. It's a choice, this love of the darkness that we make with our minds and with our hearts. We love it, the darkness. We embrace it. Hello, darkness, my old friend. That's the first reason. We embrace, we love the darkness. The second reason God will send you to hell if you don't come to Jesus is because you hate the light. Verse 20, it's not just that you love the darkness rather than the light. John goes on, or Jesus goes on, for everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. The word exposed in Greek means elencho, showing up for what they really are. I wasn't much for disco dancing

when I was younger, but occasionally I went roller skating, similar thing, in a disco kind of arcade. It's really cool in the darkness, all the lights flashing, music playing. Ever see a discotheque or a nightclub when the lights are on? Grubby, grimy, dark place. And the reason people outside of Christ hate the light, and the reason they love the darkness, is because the darkness affords them the luxury, a passing luxury, of a place to hide who they are and what they've done. We think in the darkness no one can see us, and we feel better about ourselves. Pogoing about like some crazy teenager in the darkness. Nobody can really see us For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his work should be exposed There's a website called The Experience Project. It was closed down a few years ago because there were too many subscribers. I never visited the website, I just read about it. But it was a place where you could answer questions and give your testimony of life. And some of the questions were simple. What does loneliness feel like? Who do you enjoy as friends and why? How do you like to spend your time? Simple questions. Some of them were more perverse. One of the questions I read about, it said, I didn't read the answer, but the question on Google said, I slept with my sister, what did it feel like? Perverse questions. Well, there were 67 million testimonies by May 2016, which is why I believe they shut the website down. But here's the reason I'm quoting it this morning. In one post, readers were asked to respond to the following statement, I prefer darkness over light. A young woman going by the screen name Beyond Repair, which is suggestive, offered a particularly honest and insightful response. I prefer darkness over light because the darkness allows me to hide. to hide who I am and what I truly feel. In the light, all things have a chance to be revealed. Darkness makes it easier to hide. In the dark, you cannot see what is coming next. The darkness is a place where you can lose yourself. Lost in the dark is a great place to be because then you are free from what you were and can be whatever you want. The darkness is bliss. If you're here this morning and you're not yet a Christian, I want you to consider, is that not the reason why you're resisting the claims of Christ? It's not a lack of evidence. You don't look at the universe. It's ordered complexity and intricacy and beauty. You don't look at the universe and go, oh, it's obviously the product of a mindless, meaningless explosion. In your heart of hearts, you really do know, and one day God will make you confess it. Every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world will become guilty before God. On the day of judgment, you will have to confess that you've always known. that this universe was the product of a scintillating genius, a spiritual intelligence beyond the minds

of angels and men, and that you are responsible to this God. to give him thanks. He gives you every breath that you breathe. Every beat of your heart is a gift from his. He marks out the beginning of your life and its end. And every day in between is a blessing. And he's not dealt with you according to your sins, nor rewarded you according to your iniquities. And therefore, your whole life should be a song of thanksgiving and of worship. But even though you know God, you will not honor him as God, Paul says, nor are you thankful. You suppress that truth. You hold it down in unrighteousness. You say, I don't want to know. I want to hide in the darkness. Want to pretend I don't know

what's coming next? And I want to tell you this morning, what's coming next is final judgment. It's appointed once for men to die, and after that, the judgment. The darkness is a temporary fleeting thing. When Christ comes around, If all the darkness of the world can't extinguish the light of a candle, what hope will you have of finding an inch of darkness when the sun of righteousness comes with healing and judgment upon his wings? To cleanse the world of all sin, to banish wickedness and evil and those who practice it from the face of the planet and to bring in a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. And what hope will you have if your sins remain and haven't been forgiven when you stand before Him with His face shining like the sun in its strength, His eyes like a flame of fire, His feet like burnished bronze ready to trample the winepress of the fury of God? And He looks into your soul and He sees who you are and He knows what you are. What hope will you have? Darkness, your old friend, will flee from that day, and you'll be left standing as a naked sinner in the light, without a Savior, standing before the judge of all men. And in that day, when God says to you, why didn't you believe? You'll have to say, because I loved the darkness, and I hated the light. When my father shared the gospel with me, When my friend at work shared the gospel with me, when my wife or my husband shared the gospel with me, I resisted it. I tried to deflect the conversation. I would try to think about anything else. I'd bring up arguments. I didn't really believe that the arguments were true. As long as I could find an argument to bring against them, I felt better. Like that man I heard of in the

Bush Mills, it's a fictitious story, but the son's writing back to his mother from the Bush Mills plant where he was working, and he said, Uncle Ted fell into the vat of whiskey this morning. His workmates tried to save him, but he fought them off bravely. And as your family and your friends try to save you, you fight them off bravely. And the reason is because you love the darkness and you hate the light. Maybe you're here this morning and you're sharing the gospel with someone. Maybe

your dad or your mum or your sister or a friend. It's like wrestling a greased pig. You can't get a hold on them. Every time you think you've nailed them down, they slip out. And even when you demolish all of their arguments, they still will not believe. And you might think to yourself, I'm just terrible at sharing the gospel. The problem is not you, it's them. They love the darkness and they hate the light. And that's why God will be quite just in sending them to hell. They love the darkness, they hate the light, and you give God no choice because you reject the Savior. His love sent Christ into this world to save this world. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he's not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. The only hope, the only way to escape getting what you deserve, getting what you don't deserve, you deserve wrath, and God is offering you life, mercy. There's a story from the days of Napoleon where this widow lady came up to Napoleon. Her son had been caught stealing again or some, ran away from the lines again, I think was the problem. He deserted the lines for a second time and Napoleon sentenced him to death. And the mother came to him and cried out and said, have mercy on my son. And Napoleon said, I can't, he's guilty. And the woman said, if he wasn't guilty, I'd ask you for justice. It's because he's guilty that I'm asking you for mercy. And God is offering a guilty world mercy, mercy purchased at his son's expense. That's the only hope. If that's the only answer God can give for your sins and mine, and you walk away from it, Don't you see you're walking not just away from life, you're walking to death, you're walking away from heaven, you're walking to hell. And if Christ, the Savior, won't save you because you won't come to him, then you will not be saved at all. That's John's point. Verse 21, but whoever does what is true, comes to the light." Not everyone is hiding from the light. Some come to the light. Why? So that it might be clearly seen that their works, their deeds have been carried out in God or better by God. That not all the world is loving the darkness not all the world is fleeing from the light and hating the light there are some of us coming to the light and we come to the light when we come to the light our sins are exposed and they're confessed and they're forgiven and the spirit of God comes into our hearts and makes us new from the inside out And anything that we do that is good is really produced by God, and we'd love to come to the light of Scripture to show that. And people praise us for being decent human beings. We don't go, oh, glory be to me. We say, glory be to God. It was God who did this to me.



I was once blind, but now I can see. I was once lost, but now I'm found. To God be the glory, great things he has done. And I want to encourage you this morning as I close this sermon, oh, the light, the light of conscience, the light of creation, nature, that all the stars in heaven, the blackbirds that sing are all pointing you to God, unbeliever. Come follow those little sparks of truth you see out in the world. They're all designed to lead you to God, that sense of your conscience that you are not what you could be or should be or even would be. You can't even live up to your own standards, much less God's standards. All of those are little rays of light designed to lead you to God. One of my friends in ministry was a senior enlisted, he was a gunnery sergeant in the Marines, and whenever he would be on a ship flying over the water, it had to go into those dunk tanks where they take you in a helicopter and they dunk the helicopter into the swimming pool. It spins around upside down, you're disorientated, and you come out and you swim to the surface and it's all, and you do it again, and again, and again, and then before they certify you, they put a helmet on you so it's total blackness. Can't see anything. and they dump you into the water and spin you around. And in that moment, he said, you often actually don't know which way is up. And many men will swim down rather than up, which in the ocean has predictable and disastrous effects. So how do you know which way is up? Well, he said, you follow the bubbles. You breathe out a little bit of your air and you put your hand and you feel which way the bubbles are going and the bubbles always go up. And likewise with your soul, all of the truth of God. that you hate because it condemns you, you hate because it shows you up as a sinner and you feel, oh, I hate being, feel as if I'm being criticized by God and judged by Him and I hate seeing that my life's a mess and my heart's a mess, I'd rather live in the darkness. No, all those little glimmers of light aren't meant to condemn you, just condemn you, they're meant to point you to Christ who can save you from that condemnation by receiving that condemnation from you and for you upon the cross. God isn't pointing out your sin. He's not dragging you to the light to make you feel bad about yourself full stop. He's dragging you to the light that you might feel bad about yourself so that you will find and feel your need of a savior. And then, quick as a flash, God will bring that savior to you. He's my son. You have this great need. You are a great sinner. But I have provided for you a great Savior, who's just the Savior you need. And if you will trust Him, He will save you, whoever you are, and whatever you have done. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your Word. It's truth. And we need your grace, O God, not to walk in the darkness, but to walk in the light. that

we'd be real with you about ourselves and about our sin, and that you would take your son's blood and cleanse us and wash us and sprinkle us and save us. For Jesus' name's sake, we pray.  
Amen.