

There is a story that's been told of a little orphan boy. He was sitting on a park bench, crying his eyes out. He had been there all day; nobody paid any attention to him. Late in the afternoon, a little old man was walking in the park. He saw the little boy crying. He went over and sat next to him, put his arm around him and said there there son, what is the matter; why are you crying? "I'm just a little orphan boy; nobody wants me" the boy responded. "Now son that is not true" the man said. "I know somebody who wants you". "You do" the boy asked. "Yes I do" the man replied. Then he gave the boy specific directions to a specific house. He told him knock on the door and tell whoever opens the door John 3:16. Then the old man wiped away the little boy's tears, patted his head, wished him good luck and went on his way. The little boy sat and thought about it for a minute, then deciding he had nothing to lose, he got up and followed the old mans directions. Soon he came face to face with the most beautiful house he had ever seen.

It was a beautiful 3 story brick mansion surrounded by a black, rod-iron fence. He just stood there and stared at it for a while. Soon he gathered up his courage, opened the gate and went inside. Dutifully he shut the gate behind him. He walked up the brick sidewalk, past the well manicured lawn and hedges. He stopped and smelled the most perfect rose he had ever seen. Eventually he made it to the front porch. He climbed the steps and he had to stand on his tip-toes to reach the brass door knocker, but he grabbed it & knocked. Then he stepped back and waited to see what would happen. The butler answered the door. He stared down at the young man. He said yes? The boy stammered JJoohhnn 3:16, yes that is it John 3:16. The butler smiled and said won't you come in.

As the boy entered the house, the butler said my but you are a dirty young man. Would you like a hot bath and some clean clothes? The little boy said that would be nice. The butler said follow me. He led the little boy up the winding staircase and down the hall to the bathroom. He drew the little boy a hot bath, handed him a brand new bar of soap and a wash cloth and said don't forget to wash behind your ears. Then the butler left and closed the door behind him. The boy took off his filthy rags, placed them neatly in a pile and sank down into the warm water and began to wash. Soon he noticed he was clean! Wow! He thought John 3:16; I don't know what that means, but it sure makes a little dirty boy clean. Soon the butler was back. He brought the boy a big, fluffy, warm towel and some new clean clothes. You done he asked. Yes the boy responded. Are you hungry? The butler asked. I'm starving the little boy replied. Ok then, when you've dried and dressed come on down to the kitchen and I'll see if we can find you something to eat. Ok the boy answered but how do I find the kitchen he asked. Just follow your nose the butler responded. The little boy quickly dried and dressed. When he stepped out into the hallway, his nose was filled with the pleasant aroma of food. He found the kitchen. The butler motioned for him to set at the table. Then he brought him a plate filled with roast beef, ham and turkey. Another one filled with mashed potatoes and green beans; a bowl filled with tossed salad and placed in front of him a piping hot loaf of homemade bread. The butler cut him a big slice and smothered it with homemade grape jam. Then he brought him a huge chunk of chocolate cake and a tall glass of cold milk. He said eat up son and if your still hungry when this is all gone, we will find you some more. The boy ate &ate &ate. He ate like he had never eaten before. Soon he

was full. John 3:16 the little boy thought. I don't know what that means, but it sure makes a hungry boy full.

Did you get enough to eat the butler asked? Oh yes sir, the boy replied. Thank you sir. Again the butler said follow me. He led the boy to the living room and motioned for him to set in this big overstuffed chair. The boy sank right in; it was the most comfortable chair he ever sat in. He looked around the room at the marble floor, the crystal chandelier, and the original oil paintings on the wall. The butler was stirring up the fire in the fireplace. He noticed the little boy could hardly stay awake. He said you tired young man? Yes sir the boy whispered. Would you like to go to bed now the butler asked? You mean I can sleep here tonight the boy asked. Yes, we have a guest room for you. That would be wonderful, thank you sir the little boy responded. Then he got up and followed the butler once a gain. They went into the guest bedroom. The butler turned down the bedding and laid out some clean pajamas for the little boy. He said good night young man; I will see you in the morning. Good night sir and thank you. The little boy was a sleep in no time. Soon there was a knock on the door. The little boy awoke and said yes come in. the door opened and it was the little old man from the park. Hello son, I see you found the place. Yes sir thank you sir. What do you think of my humble abode the old man asked? Oh sir you have a marvelous home; anybody would be honored to live here. Really the old man replied. How would you like to live here the old man asked? Excuse me sir the little boy replied. In the park today you said you were an orphan. Yes sir I am. Well, the man continued, how would like for me to adopt you and you be my son and of course, get to live here with me and the butler. I would love that! That would be super! The little boy exclaimed. Ok then, it is settled. You get a good nights sleep and tomorrow we will go and take care of all the paper work. Goodnight son. Then the old man left and shut the door. John 3:16 the little boy though. I still don't know what that means, but it sure gives a little orphan boy a home. John 3:16 has often been called the gospel in a nut shell. Let's see if we can help the little orphan boy figure out what John3:16 means. (Pray

V1-2) John begins chapter3 by telling us that there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus who came to see Jesus at night. The Pharisees were a conservative group who believed in eternal life and emphasized strict observance of the laws and morals of God. They above all other people should have known the Messiah when He came, but they didn't; the Pharisees viewed Jesus as their enemy, not their Messiah. Why did they not recognize Jesus? They had lost their focus of being spiritual leaders. They were more concerned about political matters and more interested in praise and honor for themselves than they were concerned about doing God's will. They were confused; they expected the Messiah to be a political leader and free them from Roman rule; but that was not the messiah's job when He came the 1<sup>st</sup> time. The 1<sup>st</sup> time He came, He came to free people from their sins.

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin; the governing body of the Jews. Nicodemus was an important man in his day; so why did he come to see Jesus at night? Was he afraid to be seen with Jesus? Are we afraid to be seen with Jesus? Are we afraid to be identified with Him? Was

Nicodemus seeking the truth? Did he come to find out for himself if Jesus really is the Messiah? Did he have a hidden agenda? Do we? Did he just want some alone time with Jesus? We all need some alone time with Jesus; it's very good for our souls; it was very good Nicodemus. We are not told why he came at night, only that he did; and it changed his life. Has meeting Jesus changed our lives?

V3-4) Jesus told Nicodemus that you must be born again. What does that mean; being born again? Nicodemus asked how can a person be born again when they are old. (V5-8)

Jesus is talking about being born spiritually. We get this spiritual rebirth when we ask Jesus to come live in our heart. Have we experienced this for our selves? Are we new creatures in Christ?

The little orphan boy said John 3:16 makes you clean; it does that by this spiritual rebirth. In order to mold and shape us, God cleans us up. How can a filthy, dirty sinner get clean; by bathing in the blood of Christ. As the songs say, what can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus? What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus? There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains. When we get washed in the blood of Christ, we get cleansed from all our sins. So are we washed in the blood, the soul cleansing power of the blood are our garments spotless are they white as snow are we washed in the blood? Hebrews 9:22 tells us that "Without the shedding of blood there can be no remittance of sin." The blood of Jesus was shed for us. Through Him anyone and everyone can all find salvation. When we receive Christ into our heart, we get filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to the wind. It goes where it wants and no human can control it; but we can see evidence of it and feel its power. Can we see evidence of the Spirit's work in our lives?

Nicodemus did not understand (V9-13). Do we understand? It is ok if we don't because ours is not to understand, ours is to do. Do we let the Holy Spirit work through us? Do we

testify to what we have seen? Do we tell what we know? What do we know? The little orphan boy said John 3:16 makes a little hungry boy full. How does it do that? Jesus said in John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." God promises to meet not just our physical needs but our spiritual needs as well. Every time we read the bible we feed on the word of God. Jesus is the word of God; He became flesh. When we read the bible we ingest Christ and feed our spirits. Do our souls enjoy well balanced meals or are they dying of malnutrition? Then we are to share this knowledge of Christ; beginning with His mission.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus why He came to earth. (V14-15) Jesus was sent to earth from Heaven with a specific mission; He was to die for the sins of the world. He takes Nicodemus back to Numbers 21 where it tells about the time in Jewish history when the Jews were wondering in the wilderness for 40 years because of their lack of faith. Their 40 yrs were nearing completion. Yet again the people began to grumble and complain against God & Moses. God sent fiery serpents to bite the grumblers; people died from these snake bites. They went to Moses for

help. They confessed their sin to him and repented of it. Moses prayed for the people. God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole and lift it up for all to see. God said anyone who is bitten and looks to the bronze serpent shall live. Jesus tells us that He must be lifted up like that bronze serpent was. He is telling us about his death, that he would be crucified, lifted up, for all to see. And just like the bronze serpent, if we look to him, we will be saved. Jesus says whoever believes in him shall have eternal life. Just like the healing in the wilderness, r salvation can only be found if we believe in what we are looking at. The Israelites not only had to look at the serpent, they had 2 believe that they would be healed. We must not just look at Jesus, we must believe in him; when we look to Jesus we must believe that he will save us.

Both thieves on the cross looked at Jesus, one to ridicule him and the other looked at him with eyes of faith; that one found salvation, today Jesus told him, you shall be with me in paradise. The other was condemned to eternity separated from Jesus. Do we look at Jesus with eyes of faith?

Then Jesus tells Nicodemus the gospel in a nut shell, John 3:16. This is one of the most famous verses in all the bible. Perhaps it was the 1<sup>st</sup> verse we ever memorized. This verse tells us first and foremost that God loves us. That is why he sent Jesus into the world in the first place. God loves everyone. Every person is created by God himself. He has a plan for each one of us. God loves each one of us. The word world here is not rocks and trees, mountains, seas and deserts; it is people. God loves the people of the world. All people, each and every person. God is love. The question is not, does God love us; the question is do we love God?

God shows us just how great his love for us is. He gave his only begotten son as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus came into the world for just 1 reason, to die for our sins. He did it willingly. He obeyed God even unto death. Would we obey God even if it meant dieing for him? Jesus tells us in John 15:13 “greater love has no one than this, than to lay down his life for his friends.” Jesus loved us enough to die for us; do we love him enough to live for him? Dieing for a cause is easy; it is the living for it that is hard. Jesus was born to die; we are born to live, preferably to live for Jesus. Are we doing that? Just as those who believed and looked to the bronze serpent were healed and lived, those who believe and look to Jesus shall also live, in heaven for eternity. Jesus heals us from sin’s deadly bite. All we have to do is look to Jesus with all our heart.

V17-18) God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. God had plenty of reasons to condemn the world didn’t he? Mankind was and still is pretty rotten. God showed his love towards us by not sending Jesus to condemn us but to save us. We need a savior because we can not save ourselves. Human nature goes against God. God cares about others; most people just care about themselves. God is love. Love means putting the other person 1st. Humans are selfish, we generally put ourselves first. Because of his great love for us, God accepts us as we are. We don’t have to be perfect to come to Him. Romans 5:8 “God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we where still sinners Christ died for us.” After we come to God, he will mold and shape us into what he intends for us to be; if we let him.

Going to heaven is our choice. We either choose Jesus or we don't. God is a gentleman, He never forces Himself on anybody; it is always our choice. Failure to choose Jesus is choosing to reject Him. Rejecting Jesus condemns us; accepting Him gives us a home. The little orphan boy said John 3:16 gives us a home. How does it do that? Jesus said in John 14:2-3 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." Do we really want to be with Jesus? In John 14:6 Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life, nobody comes to the Father but by me." There is no other way to heaven; it cannot be bought, earned or inherited. It can only be received as a free gift. Jesus is the only remedy for man's sin. If we refuse the cure, the disease will kill us. Those who did not look to the bronze serpent died because of their snake bit. The unrepentant thief is spending eternity separated from God.

We all have a decision to make; what are we going to do with Jesus? The little orphan boy had to get off the park bench and follow the directions to the house; then he had to follow the butler. He had to say yes when the old man asked if he wanted to be adopted.

Have we been adopted by God? Do we have an eternal home in heaven with Him?

Are we willing to share Him with others? Are we willing to help other little orphans find a home?

Then we need to tell them about our Jesus; we need to show them our Jesus. Remember, our lives are the only bibles some people will ever read. Let's not keep the faith; let's pass it around! Let's share the gospel in a nut shell. Amen, let's pray.