

Theme: GOD'S GIFT AND MAN'S RESPONSE

Introduction: On Calvary three men were crucified. The one in the center, Jesus, died for sin. One, on one side was also crucified but came to faith in Jesus. He died to sin. The other, too, was crucified. He died in sin. The crucifixion of Jesus, God's gift to all men, divides all people into two groups: the believers who are saved and the unbelievers who are lost. That's what our text is all about.

I-HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON AS A SACRIFICE.

- A-This sacrifice paid for our sins. It was the fulfillment of the whole O.T. That's why Jesus used the type of the serpent in vs. 14. The Israelites (Num. 21:8ff) deserved to die from the bite of the snake. But the lifting of the serpent on the pole saved them. The death of Jesus removes God's condemnation, vs. 17, His judgment on man's sin, vs. 18. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. I Pet. 3:18; Is. 53:5; I Pet. 2:24; Jn. 1:29; II Cor. 5:21.
- B-This sacrifice brought life to man. Natural man is dead in his sins. Eph. 2:1; Lk. 15:24; Col. 2:13. That's why natural man must die. But vs. 16 of our text tells us that through God's only son man has life, eternal life. Read Jn. 5:24. He has led us out of death into eternal life. That's what He promised the thief on the cross. Lk. 23:43. That life begins in this life already so that the believer comes to the Light, Jesus. That new life causes the believer to do good works. He admits that these good works are gifts of God, vs. 21 of our text. See also Eph. 2:10. These good works have been prepared by God and are gifts to the believer. The believer is like a tree planted by the waters of life. This tree bears fruit. Ps. 1:3. The believer's living works are like fruits on the vine. Jn. 15:1-8.
- C-This sacrifice brought light to man. Vs. 19-21 speak about God's gift as a light. The light came into a world which was dark and dead in sin and death. Mankind gropes for the way in the darkness of sin but cannot find it. Jesus, the Light, enlightens the soul, is a light to his path. Ps. 119:105. Jesus calls Himself the Light of the world. Jn. 8:12. He says that He gives the believer the Light of the Life. There is only one Light. Jesus. There is only one Life. Jesus. His Light, the Gospel, gives Life.

II-MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S GIFT, vss. 18-21

- A-Like the saved thief on the cross, many believe. Vs. 18 tells us that the believer is not condemned. "There is no condemnation to those who (believe) in Christ Jesus" says Paul in Rom. 8:1. "You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free" says Jesus at Jn. 8:32. "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made you free" says Paul at Gal. 5:1. The believer is a person of life. He confesses that he will live forever because Christ gave him eternal life. Old things have passed away. He knows that all people have been saved and promised eternal life. The believer is a person of light. He loves the light of the Gospel. Vs. 21 says: "The one who does the Truth comes to the light so that his works may be revealed as having been worked by God." He knows and confesses that his works are not his own but gifts of God. See Mt. 5:16; Php. 2:15. The believer gives all thanks and glory to God as did the angels. Lk. 2:14.
- B-Like the lost thief on the cross, many refuse to believe. Mk. 16:16 says "He that does not believe shall be lost." It is his own fault. He's like an earthworm that lives only in darkness. He refuses God's offer. Like some in Israel (21:8ff) who refused to look up, they are lost. They are condemned already. Text, vs. 18. They love darkness more than light because their works are evil, vs. 19. They hate the light of the Gospel and refuse to come to it, vs. 20.
- Conclusion: II Cor. 13:5 says "Each of you must examine himself whether he is in the faith, each of you must test himself." and at Gal. 6:4 "Let each one test his work."

Sermon Notes on Jn. 3:16-21, Pentecost II

1. Jn. 3:1-21 contains the whole of Christ's teaching: Vss. 1-10, the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus about second birth or conversion; Vss. 11-13, who Jesus is; Vss. 14-17, what He came to do; Vss. 18-21, the result of His coming.
2. Vs. 16 is perhaps the best-known vs. in the Bible. How much did God love mankind? He gave His only Son to die for all so that all could have eternal life. God wants all to be saved. I Tim. 2:4. God does not will man to die. Ezek. 33:11. But He willed Jesus' death. Heb. 10:9-
3. All men deserve to die. Rom. 6:23. Vs. 17 of our text tells us that God condemned His Son instead of mankind. Jesus came not to judge but to save mankind. That is the good news, the Gospel.
4. The person who believes what God did for him through Christ is not condemned, is not judged, vs. 18. But the person who does not believe this good news is condemned already, vs. 18. Why? He has not come to believe in the name, the revelation, of God's only Son. "Name" here means the same as "good news". Jesus' name means good news. The angel told Joseph: "She will bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins." Nothing could be clearer than the meaning of Jesus' name. Most peoples' names mean little or nothing. Jesus' name means everything forever.
5. On the last day there will be a public judgment of all people. That is described at Mt. 25:31-46. But already in this life there is a constant private judgment of all people individually. The judgment depends on the attitude of people toward Jesus, the Light. At Jn. 8:12 Jesus says: "I am the Light of the world. The one who follows Me, will not walk in darkness but will have the Light of Life." Read Jn. 1:4-5. Jesus is THE Light. Jesus is THE Life. Apart from Him the world lies in darkness and death. Why do people love the darkness more than the Light, the world more than Jesus? Because their deeds, their whole life, their thoughts, their words, their deeds, are evil, of the devil, Jn. 8:44. The believer in Christ clings to Jesus, the Light, and does good works. But the unbeliever, who does not love the Light, remains in darkness and does evil works. This is God's judgment of individual people constantly already in this life. This implies that we must examine ourselves according to God's Word. I am a sinner but do I believe in Jesus and do good works result from this?
6. Doing useless deeds, hating the Light and refusing to come to the Light go together and are inseparable. Such a person fears that the true nature of his works will be revealed. Therefore, he avoids the Light. Why don't people want to hear the Gospel? Because it will reveal the true nature of their dead, evil works. They make excuses. They blame the church with various reasons. But the real reason is that they fear that their works will be revealed. They love their evil works more than the Light and its good works. Such people are condemned now already. The Baptist told the unbelievers: "The axe is already at the root of the tree. Therefore, every tree which does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire." Mt. 3:10.
7. However, the believer is not afraid of the Light. He comes to the Light. He goes to church. He hears the Gospel. He comes to the Light so that his works might be revealed for what they are, products of God Himself. Jesus describes him as the person who does the Truth. He practices his faith. Faith without works is dead and useless. Jas. 2:20,26. Faith shows itself through love. Gal. 5:6. Two things are very important: Faith toward Jesus and love toward our neighbor. Read Eph. 2:1-10. The believer is not saved by his works but his faith produces good works which God Himself prepared for him. Read Jn. 15:1-8. Jesus is the Vine. We are the branches. The branches cling to the Vine. The Vine causes the branches to produce much fruit. If they refuse to produce fruit they are cut off and burned. The Bible is very clear on faith in Jesus and good works toward mankind.