Pulpit Curriculum

The Story of Salvation: That You May Believe

Main passage: John 3:16

- John 3:16 is the story of salvation in ten words: God, Loved, World, Gave, Only Son, Whoever, Believes, Perish, Have, Eternal Life, grouped into five categories.

1) Generosity of God	2) Undeserving Recipients	3) Mission of Love	4) Eternity of Difference	5) Hands of Faith
God, Only Son	World, Whoever	Loved, Gave	Perish, Eternal Life	Believes, Have

1) The Generosity of God: God and Son

- **God, the Father gives:** All good stories start and end with God. He gave Adam and Eve everything except the tree of knowledge. His generosity is His law.
- The Father did not spare His own Son (Romans 8:32). He gave the Son the cup of suffering so that we could be given the cup of salvation (John 18:11). This is inner Trinitarian generosity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all give.
- **God, the Son gives:** Jesus drank our cup of wrath to the bitter dregs so that grace and forgiveness could be offered to us. He paid a price we could never pay, out of passionate love.

A. Why does it matter that both the Father and the Son give? _____
_____

B. How has God been outrageously generous to you? _____
_____

2) The Undeserving Recipients: World and Whoever

- **The world is called:** The world (cosmos) hates the light and loves the darkness (John 3:19-20), and this is the world Jesus came to show love to. The world stands against God's purposes (1 John 2:15), sin runs deep (Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9), and no one seeks after God (Romans 3:11). The world has the wrong direction, desires, devotion, and destination. God calls the world His object of love.
- **Whoever wills can come:** The world's fundamental problem is wrong appetites, and when God works in someone He changes them and their appetites. God is the initiator of salvation. He draws people (John 6:44) and makes the dead alive (Ephesians 2:1).
- Belief is a sure sign of His work, and Christ will not turn away whoever comes (John 6:37). Whoever means any class, income, ethnicity, or age. What is in our hands is our willingness to respond to His call, on Christ's terms and not a Christ of our own making.

C. What does the word "world" teach us about who God loves? _____
_____

D. Where are you tempted to want a Christ of your own making? _____
_____

3) His Mission of Love: Love and Gave

- **His expansive, dynamic love:** A love that offers a cause. Jesus' purpose was to die so that we could be saved (John 12:27, 33). Agape is self-sacrificing love, and no sin can outrun God's love.
- **Love gives sacrificially:** God is love. We must also love and sacrifice for others as God has loved and sacrificed for us (1 John 4:7). As believers, the love of Christ controls us and from this we love others as he loves us and we desire deeply that others do not perish.
- God is not on good terms with those who do submit and obey His commands (John 3:36). In fact, whoever does not believe is condemned already (John 3:18). Belief is salvation from not only sin, but also from His wrath. Obedience is our joy as believers.

E. Is it ever difficult to show others sacrificial love? What are some encouraging verses to meditate on in those moments? _____
_____

F. Who needs to see sacrificial love from you this week, whether or not they deserve it?
_____

4) An Eternity of Difference: Heaven and Hell

- **Do not perish in eternal torment:** Revelation 14:10-11 tells us that the world is headed toward an eternal torment forever. We are all perishing (John 3:19), and we cannot be a better person on our own to prevent this torment. We need to submit to God.
- **Receive the gift of eternal life:** We have this gift now, not just after death: every believer has already passed from death to life John 5:24). Eternal life means knowing Christ deeply, which is the great joy of heaven (John 12:3), and being with the Lord always (1 Thessalonians :17).

G. How does God's wrath help us understand the gift of eternal life? _____
_____

H. What would it look like to live today and someone who has already received eternal life?_____

5) The Hands of Faith: Believe and Have

- **Believing is confidence in Christ:** Believing is trusting all that Christ has said and done (John 20:31). John calls this belief receiving God Himself (John 1:11-12). It means acknowledging these truths and entrusting ourselves to Christ's rule and authority.
- **Holding the treasure of eternal life:** The word "have" in John 3:16 means to clutch and cherish. God is impressed not with those who own a Bible but with those who *have* one, who treasure it. Hands full of sin, lust, pride, etc. cannot receive Him, so we empty them first. This is repentance.

I. Do you know that you are born again? Has your life shown a change from death to eternal life as you have emptied your hands to receive God? _____
_____

J. What do you need to empty from your hands today to receive Him? _____
_____