

The Gospel in a Nutshell

- Ever heard phrase “in nutshell”? I’ve used in in sermons before. Means: summarizing big concept in just few words. So instead long, drawn out explanation: summarize what trying say, in nutshell. Idea comes from little bitty nut (peanut) – packed with nutrients, protein, goodness – that’s so small, fits into little nutshell. Bible, big book, many stories, many ppl, over many generations; packed with history, prophecy, will/God. But all can be summarized into one simple, holy msg: Gos, msg God’s love & plan save world from sin thru Son JC. Everything in Bible, every story, character, poem, prophecy, epistle, page – all communicates one singular message: Gos. You can spend entire lifetime studying Gos – think we should. I wish you’d all keep coming ch every wk; I wish all come Bible study – so learn to grasp all fullness of this sacred truth. But lifetime wouldn’t be long enough, which why we all are always students of word. But in Jn 3, we have summary; God summarizes all fullness of his word/will into one little sentence – Jn 3:16, which has been called Gos in nutshell. Open folder, say out loud w/me – vs. 16. Today we’re going walk thru this verse, word/word, unpacked this psg, crack open this shell, and enjoy goodness inside – Jn 3:16 – Gos in nutshell.
- **God.** Who is this God, and what know re him? This is the God of Bible; only true God; all other gods are man-man fabrications/imagination. But God, Lord, is Creator God. Think back to Gen, where God tells us how created hvns & earth, everything in universe, all ppl, you/me. Bible is where he tells us what he did, where we learn re him. He is the God who: created all things; made man in his image; governs world; gave us his law; expects obedience from creation; threatens punishment for rejecting him; dwells on high, over all things. This is God.
- Jump: **World.** Doesn’t mean planet but ppl. Pretty often in Bible, word “world” is bad word, bec ppl of world are wicked. **Jms:** if friend/world, enemy/God (4:4). **1 Jn:** if love world, love of Father not in you (2:15). World: bad. If go back very beginnng, when A&E fell into sin: rebelld vs God and passed that rebellion onto their children, onto us. Means that we, all ppl, born with sinful nature that rebels vs God. Why “world” filled with: murder, adultery, theft, lies, hatred, godlessness, & wickedness of every kind. And not just out there, also in here/hearts. We, too, too often, act like wicked world.
- Which makes next word so surprsng, amzng: **Loved.** Rebelld-vs-Creator loves wicked, rebel creatn! Why, do that? What’s there to love!?! Think of your deepest, darkest sins, most shameful things you’ve thought, said, done; that make you look no diff from wicked world – God still loves you! Loves all people; loves world. Remarkable?! Unfathomable! When we think love, think: falling in love, married, V-Day; it’s emotional, sentmental. God’s love for us: not just sentmntl. It’s intentional, decisive, unwavering, not based on our behavior (bec if was, could never love us!); it’s a holy, perfcet, divine love (untainted by sin & fickle emotion). God’s love: love in action. Looks like:
- **Gave.** Gave a gift, w/o any strings attached, w/o any expectation of getting anything back in return. A gift like that is called grace. It’s: free, unearned, undeserved, given in love, a gift.
- **One and only Son,** JC, Son/God. We know what it’s like love our kids. If you’re parent, you know: love for your children is strongest kind of love. You’d do anything to help, protect kids. God loves us so much that actually gave up his own Son. He sent J away, on mission, to leave hvn, come wicked world, where (think re he faced): mocked, hated, beaten, whipped, spit upon, lied about, punched, thorn-crowned, crucified, killed. Father knew exactly what his Son’d face. Would you send one of your kids away, knowing this’s what they’d face? I don’t think so. But God gave up his one & only Son, to suffer/die on cross – for this specific purpose: that...
- **Whoever** – very broad word, all-inclusive; no one excluded, left out; this is “whoever,” including you. No matter how terrible your sins, or anyone else’s sins, may be, this is for everyone. Whoever...
- **Believes in him (J).** That’s only limiting qualification: believing in, having faith in J. To bel in J not mean: you’ve simply have heard of him, know re him, or even have historical facts correct about him. I went on tour of Israel over 10 years ago; had tour guide, knew lots of facts re J, but didn’t bel in J. To bel in J means that you trust in J, embrace, hold onto by faith, personalize, he matters to you, you have confidence in him as Sav. That’s faith, believing! By nature you can’t bel in J on your own. It

takes HS creatng/workng faith in your heart for you to bel. We should all thank HS everyday for making us believers, bec w/o him we'd all be unbels! And what does HS use to create this faith? Uses means/grace: God in W&S. Technical phrase, very imprtnt. Means: way HS changes us from unbelief to faith is thru 1) preachng of Gos, good news of salvation, msg J lived, died, rose to save us eternly; 2) sacramnt of Holy Bap, which: connects us to J, washes away our sin, adopts us into God's faith, works faith in our heart (we have very high view of power/bap); and 3) sacramnt of HC, very body/blood Xp given/shed for our forgiveness, not symbclly, but in a real/actual way, bec J says this actually IS his body/blood (again, very high view of real presence of Xp in holy supper). That's means/grace: Gos in W&S. And it's very imp for us as Luthrn Xians to treasure the means/grace, bec that's how HS works faith within us, so that we can be among those who bel in J.

- **Shall not perish** – that's reference to hell, which real; everyone who rejects J: perish in hell forever.
- **But have eternal life** – in heaven, where J came from to save us; where returned when ascended; where all faithful who've died before us now dwell; where angels sing praise to God around throne; where we'll live in our Father's house which has many rooms; where there'll be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, bec old order things will've passed away. Eternal life means eternal living – soul & body – bec on Last Day J will raise our bodies in great res. And we'll be restored, made holy/sinless, as we were meant to be, the way God intended us to be.
- So word by word, phrase by phrase: **vs. 16** – that's the Gos in a nutshell!
- This psg from Jn ch 3 also presents Gos using 2 illustrations. First is this: **vs. 14-15**. This is direct ref to 1st Lesson, Num 21, where: ppl complained, God sent snakes, they cried out for help, Lord told Moses fashion bronze serpent, affix it to pole, and lift high in air, so that everyone could look at snake and live. I always think: gruesome picture: snake. But this gruesome snake foreshadowed another gruesome sight: Son/God, affixed to cross, lifted high in air, so that everyone who looks to J in faith would live. Why do we at St. John's have in very front of our church a great big cross, the instrument of Roman execution? To remind of us of Xp crucified for our salvation, so that we too, like Israelites, can look up and live. That's 1st illustration.
- Here's 2nd: **vs. 19bc**. Light/darkness. J is light/world. Darkness is sin. When light exposes your sin, you have two options: either crawl back into darkness, in shame, to avoid light; or repent, turn from sin, and live in light. Being a Xian means living in light of J and turning away from darkness of sin.
- This world is dark place, filled w/sin and effects/sin, like sickness & death. This coming wk marks 1-yr annvrsry of coronavirus shutdown. It was 3/17 last yr that we closed church, and world around us shut down. Really hard; we wonderd, where is God in all this; doesn't he care re world? Jn 3 reminds us: God loves world. An entire lifetime isn't long enough to grasp fullness his love. But today we have a summary. In fact, been said: if we had nothing else in Scripture except Jn 3:16, that'd be enough – bec this psg summarizes everything God's done for us. Say it with me: **vs. 16** – that's the Gos in a nutshell!

John 3:14-21

¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.