**Bumper**

Do you remember playing “Telephone” game when you were a kid?

You know the game where you sit in a circle and the first kid would whisper a word or phrase in the ear of the kid next to them then that word or phrase would be whispered from one kid to the next.

By the time it made it all the way around the circle the word or phrase was never close to what was initially whispered.

The phrase would be twisted messed up and completely misunderstood!

It is easy to misunderstand someone when we don’t hear them clearly or their words get filtered through a verity of perspectives or understandings.

We would like to think this was simply because we were kids playing a silly game but in reality, not much has changed now that we are older living our lives.

Instead of sitting in a circle, we circle like vultures on social media, picking at each other’s words.

Or we sit with our phones, text back and forth without the benefit of nonverbal social ques and try to discern what is really being communicated or conveyed by a handful of words and a few emojis.

Misunderstandings are less likely to happen if we sit down, face to face and talk,

This is why the arrival of Jesus is so critically important, Jesus is God’s son entering our world so we can see and talk to God directly!

God came down to get up close and personal!

God knew He would have to do more than just send prophets or letters to convey His message.

He would have to show up and sit down with us personally.

This is why Jesus came, so we could see God face to face.

Jesus entered the world with a clear mission, He had a firm grasp on His ministry, He was resolved in His message and it is where Gospel of John begins.

**SLIDE 2-4 *John 1:1-5 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”***

John’s Gospel is clearly establishing that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who brings order to the chaos, light to the darkness, and offers us a way to experience a transformed life.

Jesus was God up close and personal stepping in even when we were constantly pulling away!

Misunderstandings are only solved by stepping in not pulling away.

Even though Jesus stepped in and spoke to us personally, it was still hard for us to understand.

This is why John said:

**“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”**

Spiritual darkness disrupts our understanding.

We will consistently have spiritual misunderstanding unless we willingly embrace the one who has arrived to shine light into darkness.

We all want light to illuminate in darkness!

Last week I was thrust into a very dark situation. My son-in-law’s father tragically passed away.

We went to be with the family, and you could see every single person striving to find light in the middle of this dark situation.

Ronn McEwan loved Jesus and lived a strong life of faith.

So very quickly in this very dark situation light began to emerge because the family knew that Jesus was their rock and with Jesus there is always light in the middle of darkness.

In fact, I was talking with one of Ron’s brothers and he said, I don’t know how people get through these dark situations without the light of Jesus.

Why is it that so many struggle to see that Jesus brings light into dark situations?

I believe the reason is too many of us choose to listen to the whispers that offer twisted versions of the truth.

Then we lean on our own perspectives and misunderstandings rather than receive the light Jesus offers.

We see this reality being played out in the opening scene from the Jesus film that launched this message today.

This scene portrayed what is known as Palm Sunday.

This marks the beginning of Holy Week.

**(Good Friday online experience, come and go family communion – online services Saturday and Sunday – live in person services Sunday all campuses)**

**SLIDE 5** Palm Sunday acknowledges the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem that launched the final week of His life.

On that Sunday, when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem, He acknowledged the people still didn’t understand Him!

They hadn’t accepted His light into their dark understanding!

Even though people were shouting His name and Praising Him as king they didn’t understand who He really was and what He had come to accomplish!

The misunderstanding was so deep that it brought Jesus to tears!

***Luke 19:41-42 (NIV) 41  As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42  and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.***

This misunderstanding wasn’t new, it had been there throughout His life.

In fact, as you read through the first three chapters of John, every major character is misunderstood.

**John the Baptist was misunderstood** – people were constantly trying to figure out who he was and what he stood for.

Are you the Christ? Are you Elijah? Are you the prophet? Who are you?

He replied that his role was to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

The Pharisees rejected John the Baptist as a prophet from God.. Their blindness was of their own choosing.

They would rather look important than to understand God’s plan.

John chided them saying that the one he was speaking about was already among them, yet they did not know him.

The very next day John the Baptist is able to introduce Jesus for who He is, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

He relays this information to some of his own followers and they too begin seek Jesus and explore who He was.

One of them was the future apostle John who would eventually write the gospel of John we are referencing today.

John and his friend Andrew began following Jesus.

Other individuals were challenged to follow Jesus and become disciples.

One of them named **Nathaniel** misunderstood Jesus because of His preconceived ideas about where Jesus came from.

Have you ever had someone assign value to you or misunderstand your value because of where you came from?

Maybe they judged you based on your neighborhood/state/family/place of employment or station in life.

They locked onto a preconceived idea of your worth based on where you live?

If that has ever happened to you, remember you’re not alone, They did that to Jesus too.

The **Jewish religious people** misunderstood Jesus.

During holy week Jesus cleared the temple because they wanted to see a physical sign and Jesus gave them spiritual truth.

Have you ever had people misunderstand your spiritual beliefs and try to make fun of you or put you on the spot in front of others?

If that has happened to you remember your not alone, They did that to Jesus too.

Misunderstanding can muster up loads of emotion.

**How do you feel when you are misunderstood?**

Frustrated, discouraged, demotivated, feelings of hopelessness flood to the surface!

These feelings can paralyze us!

The more these painful misunderstandings happen the more bitterness and resentment can build up in our own heart.

When this happens, our natural tendency is to quit.

We want to walk away from the pain.

**SLIDE 6** But here is the good news even though Jesus was misunderstood He didn’t quit!

He pressed on to reveal truth that would bring light into the darkness of all of our lives.

Jesus chose grit over quit to see the mission fulfilled, His ministry accomplished and His message to be heard, even when He was misunderstood.

There is one specific encounter Jesus had with an individual who misunderstood Him that I believe reveals profound insight for all of us today!

This encounter was with a man named Nicodemus.

**SLIDE 7-8 John 3:1-2 (NIV), “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”**

The first thing I want to point out is the irony in the timing of when Nicodemus shows up.

Jesus had spent all day in the Temple teaching the Jewish people.

He was there driving out anyone who would stand in the way of those who wanted to learn, worship, or pray.

Nicodemus could have approached Jesus during the day while in public, but he didn’t.

Nicodemus slips into Jesus’ presence under cover of darkness.

Why be so secretive? Why not go public with your questions.

You see Nicodemus had a lot to lose.

If he were to acknowledge Jesus as the messiah it would affect his social standing, he would have lost his title, he would have lost his position.

The cost of accepting Jesus seemed too high. In His eyes he would have lost everything.

I believe one of the reasons many people seek Jesus today in secret is they are afraid of what they believe they will lose.

They believe the cost of accepting Jesus is too high that they will have to give up much of what they built their life upon.

I Remember this being a barrier for me to follow Jesus. I thought following Jesus meant I would have to give up the things I loved.

I had the false believed that following Jesus was saying No to everything I found enjoyable and life giving.

And that was the furthest thing from the truth.

**SLIDE 9** Jesus doesn’t want something FROM you He wants something FOR you!

To help you find the reason you were born and help you become the best version of yourself, He wants to unleash your full potential!

Nicodemus stayed in the shadows because he was afraid of what he perceived he would lose.

Yet he couldn’t get away from the insight Jesus conveyed and the power He displayed.

Nicodemus acknowledges the miracles Jesus had performed and says Jesus is clearly a great teacher and that God must be with him.

Yet, he still doesn’t truly see Jesus for who He really is.

John the Baptist told us the Jesus is the lamb who takes away the sins of the world, but Nicodemus only sees him as a teacher and a miracle worker.

The second thing I want us to notice is how Jesus cuts right to the point.

Jesus directly addresses Nicodemus’ spiritual blindness and misunderstandings.

**SLIDE 10 John 3:3 (NIV) 3  ….. Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."**

Rather than just correcting the statement Nikodemus makes, Jesus points out the deeper spiritual need.

We can learn a lot from Jesus in this moment. Jesus looks beyond the symptoms displayed in Nikodemus’s life and moves into the place of his real need.

Have you ever noticed that we struggle to do this with others!

We have this terrible, terrible habit of addressing the symptoms of our broken world rather than addressing the root cause of our spiritual misunderstandings.

We miss the moment to address the real cause of relational pain.

The real cause of conflict, and division, the real cause of loss of purpose, or whatever else manifests itself because of our spiritual misunderstandings.

We try symptom management rather than address the real disease.

It is like taking Tylenol for a broken leg.

It might mask the pain for a short while, but it isn’t going to heal the leg and the pain is going to quickly return.

Jesus didn’t talk about how to manage Nic’s symptoms. He went right to the core need that Nicodemus had.

Jesus said plainly what you need is “a spiritual rebirth.”

Notice Jesus didn’t say, “try harder.”

Jesus didn’t even say, “Get an accountability partner, join a small group bible study, or spend more time in worship services at the Temple.”

Jesus said “Nicodemus, you need a radical transformation within that can only come from above.”

Jesus could have simply dismissed Nicodemus for his lack of understanding.

But misunderstandings are a beautiful opportunity for growth.

When someone misunderstands us, it creates a powerful opportunity for dialogue.

When people misunderstand us, it gives us the chance to lean in and lead that person into transformational experience.

Never take misunderstanding as an excuse to reject people or push them away.

Misunderstanding is always an opportunity to go deeper in relationships.

Lean in and relate to others until the Holy Spirit of God illuminates their spiritual misunderstandings!

Jesus takes Nicodemus on a journey through conversation.

Jesus addresses Nicodemus’ shortcomings with understanding revealing who He is and what God is actually up too.

When the conversation is over, Jesus has offered Nicodemus an opportunity to go deeper in his relationship with God.

This invitation was way deeper than Nicodemus has ever dreamed possible.

He was given the opportunity to understand Jesus beyond what he perceived.

Jesus was not a simple teacher and miracle worker He is the Son of God, the Light of the World who has the power to rebirth us into spiritual understanding!

I believe this encounter with Nic helps us understand that we too can have a rebirth.

We can move from darkness to light, from misunderstanding to understanding.

**SLIDE 11** Jesus is offering all of us the opportunity – to move beyond our misunderstandings and experience His presence, where we will receive power that will transform us into a new person!

We can be born again, a renewed understanding of who we are meant to be!

To accept Jesus as the Son of God and walk in salvation. To receive Spiritual sight to no longer walk in darkness.

We can be transformed from misunderstanding to understanding!

What happened to Nicodemus?

John simply transitions and says that Jesus and his companions left and traveled through the countryside.

This story doesn’t seem to have resolution.

It simply leaves us wondering how Nicodemus responded and if he decided to seek to understand who Jesus truly was or not.

We are left to imagine that Nicodemus slipped back into the darkness and went home, that nothing in his life changed.

Thankfully, John’s Gospel isn’t quite finished with Nicodemus.

After Jesus was lifted up on the cross, crucified! Nicodemus publicly went with Joseph of Arimathea to claim the body of Jesus.

This would have been a very bold and public transition from skeptic to disciple that could have cost these two men their lives.

Nic was a prominent member of the Jewish ruling class, their status in the community and role in their religious circles would have been put at risk.

The time spent with Jesus was not without effect on Nicodemus.

He may have met Jesus in the darkness, but he found the Light of Life and went public to claim Jesus body!

Nic went public with his faith in Jesus!

I’m so glad Jesus pursued the heart Nicodemus.

Even in the face of doubts and misunderstandings, Jesus had grit and wouldn’t quit until he had explained everything Nicodemus needed to know about new Life that can be found in Jesus!

More than that, Jesus was tough as nails as He followed through on what He said to Nicodemus, that he would allow himself to be lifted up on the cross and crucified.

He endured the nails for Nicodemus.

When Nicodemus witnessed the love Jesus had for him as he hung on the cross he was compelled to go public with His faith.

Nicodemus was reborn with new spiritual insight that brought light into His misunderstandings.

This message is not simply for Nicodemus, Jesus has endured nails for you too.

The same Spirit that allowed Jesus to stay true to mission, ministry and message in the midst of misunderstanding is the same Spirit that now can live in you!

**SLIDE 12 *Romans 8:11 (NIV) 11  And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.***

You can have grit over quit even in the face of misunderstanding and become a light that draws others into the light of Jesus rather than push them away.

The question simple!

Will we settle for a life where we receive whispers from others who misunderstand where we can find ultimate life?

Or will we accept that God sent His son to talk to us face to face giving us light and understanding on who we can become?

Will we keep our relationship with Jesus private, or will we go public with our faith?

Have we been reborn? Have we asked the light of the world to illuminate the dark places in our life?

Have we accepted Jesus and are we willing to allow Him to guide us through all of life’s misunderstandings?

If not, I hope and pray that today you will move from the shadows and become a bold proclaimer of the truth.

That Jesus is the Lamb of God who is tough as nails that takes away the sin of the world!

Do you believe it today!

Let’s **Pray**

Response time

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**Response**

**Take Away**: We may be misunderstood but we can lead others to acceptance if we stay consistent.