

The Holy Trinity Sunday  
John 3:1-17 (Series B)  
“Together in the Light of the Son”  
June 7, 2009

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Light, our Life, our hope. Amen.

How many Nicodemus’ are there in the world? Only the Lord knows for sure. They’re all around us. We live among them. They’re next door anywhere you go. Many of us have a Nicodemus or two in the family. We know there are many like Nicodemus out there. How many, again, only the Good Lord knows.

We heard about Nicodemus in our Gospel for this Sunday. What was he after? He is a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. A man of high ranking and he comes to Jesus at night. The exact reason he comes to Jesus at night we can only speculate. Was it out of fear of being seen by the other Pharisees or Jews?

There is one thing we do know and that is that he does come to Jesus and says this to Him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Obviously, Nicodemus was impressed by all that Jesus had been teaching and doing. Who wouldn’t be, actually? Something else that is obvious, and that is, Nicodemus is after something and he believes Jesus can provide that, or at least help.

So, what is Nicodemus after then? Again, only the Good Lord knows for sure. I say this carefully, but it is likely that Nicodemus doesn’t even know himself what he’s after. In verse 11 Jesus clarifies this when he says to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.”

Appears and sounds that Nicodemus is confused. Confused not only about answers to his questions but even about what he should be looking for. Nonetheless, Nicodemus is on a quest for truth. Yet, there is one thing we know for sure. Without Jesus Christ as Savior from sin and death, there is no end to the search for truth.

Was Nicodemus looking for the truth about Jesus? Was he after the truth about God and only figured Jesus could provide the answer? Listen carefully to what Nicodemus says to Jesus and how Jesus responds. “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” And, Jesus’ response, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ response seems almost unresponsive, as if He’s really not tracking with what Nicodemus is getting at. Maybe Nicodemus felt this way.

“UNLESS God is with him” Nicodemus said and obviously thought. Sounds as if Nicodemus thought he stumbled upon a tremendous fount of truth in Jesus, and that Jesus could give him all the answers his heart desired. Nicodemus was talking to the right guy. Yet, here’s the problem Nicodemus and any of us have. How does a sinner know where to look and what to look for in a quest for truth? Jesus realizes this. And, that is why He responds to Nicodemus this way, “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In other words, Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, unless one is in connection with God, unless one is in a relationship with God, he will not know the truth of God. And, the only way to have all that is to be born into God’s Kingdom. Outside God’s Kingdom there is no knowledge or assurance of truth, only endless searching. Outside God’s Kingdom one does not even know where to look or what to look for.

So, Jesus makes it very clear to Nicodemus that in order to have any kind of truth one must belong, must be born into the Kingdom of God. Jesus doesn't dance around with Nicodemus. He gets right to the point. He basically says, "Nicodemus, forget everything you are wondering about, first thing first, before you know the truth, you must be born into the Kingdom of God."

Nicodemus then responds to this by asking, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Clearly, it is Nicodemus that is not tracking with Jesus, not the other way around. Jesus goes on, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Nicodemus came to Jesus with wrong expectations as to what he was to find in Jesus. And, so, Jesus gets right to the heart of the issue and basically says to him, "Nicodemus, before you know any truth at all, you must first enter into the only right relationship with God the only right way."

Nicodemus is wondering how any of this is possible? Jesus teaches him how this is possible. Two important points Jesus makes clear. One, man must be born into the Kingdom of God. And, the second point, the Kingdom of God comes to man, man does not come to the Kingdom of God. It is impossible for man to do this. He doesn't even know what to look for or where to look. Paul wrote to those in Ephesus, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked,..." (Ephesians 2:1). That is the way we are all born into the world, spiritually dead, dead to God, dead to the truth, the only truth. How can someone who is spiritually dead know the only spiritual truth, let alone know that he even needs to be looking for it? Just as Jesus was teaching Nicodemus, something must first happen. A

person must be brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. And, there is only way for that to happen. There is absolutely no other option, the Kingdom of God must come to man and make man alive. Jesus proclaims to Nicodemus the way in which this happens, birth by water and the Spirit. What we know as baptism.

This is the truth Jesus knew Nicodemus needed. And, it is what Jesus wanted Nicodemus to have. His love and care for Nicodemus is the same love and care He has for everyone.

Who is God? What is God all about? What does He do? What kind of relationship do we need with Him and how do we get into that relationship? These are age-old questions. And, many head out into life-long quests for the answers. Nicodemus came to Jesus seeking the same. And, Jesus' response to Nicodemus is the same to everyone, first thing first.

How fitting for this Sunday in which we observe the Holy Trinity. God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit the Counselor. Three persons, one God.

The action of the Triune God. The economy of God, that is, what God does and how He does it. It's recorded all through Scripture, from Genesis 1 in the Creation of all things to the ending chapter in Revelation. Each of the three persons interacting with man for the purpose, one purpose, and that is the salvation of all men, His Created. We read and hear this in the Creeds we confess. We hear the name of this Triune God in the beginning of our worship services. We end our prayers in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This is the God active all through history. Active in His plan to save me and all of you. The Father sent the Son. The Son is lifted up on the Cross and proclaims forgiveness of sins to all people. The Holy Spirit is the

agent of the new birth by which the gifts of God in Christ Jesus, the Son, become a present reality in the life of the sinner, the sinner who is brought into the Kingdom of God.

And, in our Gospel reading, this discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus makes this clear. He proclaims to Nicodemus that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.” He goes on to proclaim to Nicodemus, in verse 16, why God did what He did, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

This is the purpose of God. This is the purpose of God in the life of men. So, that men could have that relationship God wants all men to have with Him. And, there is only one way this relationship is possible, and that is that Jesus Christ had to be the sacrifice paying the penalty of man’s sin on behalf of sinful man. With Jesus Christ, the crucified, standing between sinful man and God there is no barrier between God and man. And, there is only one way into this very relationship, to be born again of the water and the Spirit, just as Jesus proclaimed to Nicodemus.

The Triune God had to plan it all, do it all, from start to finish, in order for man to know God exactly as God is.

First thing first, God had to come to each and every one of us Himself. He came on His terms, not ours. To give us what we needed, something, that before He came to us, we didn’t even know we needed, we didn’t even know existed. Once He came to us and gave us birth into His Kingdom, then we realize where we are, together with God in the Kingdom of God. All made possible because God had a plan, and through Jesus Christ fulfilled that plan.

The Holy Trinity together with man in the Light of the Son. That is where we are friends. All because God came to us with His Kingdom, just as Jesus taught us to pray: “thy Kingdom come.” So that we could remember that the Kingdom has come to us and made us recipients of it. And, now in the Kingdom, the truth has been revealed to us. We know our God just as God wants us to know Him, as our Savior and Creator. We know others in the Kingdom as those also saved and redeemed by the very same God in the very same way. In this Kingdom we find the Triune God in all truthfulness. Something not found outside His Kingdom.

Here we are in His Kingdom with OUR God. Right in the center of His Kingdom stands as a reminder of what had to be, the Cross of Jesus Christ. That is what made it possible for us to be here in His Kingdom. In the Kingdom of which we now belong God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness through Jesus Christ reigns supreme in our hearts. We see all in a new Light, the light of Jesus Christ. We see all in a new truth, the only truth that exists.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit we say, pray, and proclaim. This is the true God, a God that saves, and God that loves and forgives. Only One way in and only One way to know of Him, to be sure of His promises, and that is to be brought in by His mighty and loving hand- His Word.

We who are in the Kingdom say with a lot of joy, “Where am I and how did I get here?” “My child,” God says, “I brought you here.” And as God points you to the Cross of Jesus Christ, He says, “That is the reason I brought you here.” As His children our God is there to give us the answers again and again to our questions, “Where am I?” and “How did I get here?”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit we proclaim to the world. For it is the name of the true God- the name by which all men are saved. Amen.