

Jesus teaches Nicodemus

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

There was a time when you would see at almost every sporting event someone in the crowd holding up a sign that read, "John 3:16." Reminding people of the Good News to a world that even today seems to need it more than ever before. John 3:16 is probably the most well-known Bible verse throughout the world. Not because of some sign at a sporting event. Rather because this is where the Gospel is found in the Bible. Short, sweet, and easy to remember with eternal consequences. But then again, many people, even some Christians, do not remember that this Gospel message was originally shared by Jesus to a man named Nicodemus.

While it has been said that Nicodemus may have been representative of all Jews. He was a successful, well-respected member of the Jewish ruling council and a teacher of the Law. If anyone knew God's Law, it would have been him. So, along with others, he looked forward to the coming Messiah as well as the time when God would celebrate His people before all other nations. Not understanding that God was working His plan of salvation and bringing about His kingdom through Jesus, Nicodemus went to Jesus with an understanding that Jesus' power and authority had come from God. He said to Jesus, ***"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."*** (v.2)

Possibly with the help of others, his statement seems to have been well thought out. He acknowledges Jesus' teaching and miraculous signs. But since he went to Jesus at night, Nicodemus may have been looking to spend more time speaking with Jesus. It seems to be a private conversation where he could share that he was feeling distant from

God. To be sure Nicodemus loved God, but like us, he may have wondered if he may have been feeling lost or alone, if he felt what he was doing really mattered. Because when that happens in our lives, we need to spend more time with God.

Jesus says to Nicodemus, ***“Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*** (v.3) Ushering in the Kingdom of God, Jesus seems to underscore that if Nicodemus wants to understand, he needs to begin again in a new way. But stuck in his line of thinking, Nicodemus continues in his logical line of thought without spiritual understanding. He asks Jesus, ***“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ It’s then that Jesus tries to explain by reiterating the spiritual need of being born again by saying to Nicodemus, ‘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 the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.’”*** (v.4-7)

Many people might wonder what Jesus’ meant by saying ***“You must be born again.”*** They might feel that Nicodemus took a reasonable and logical approach to gain greater understanding. Examining the facts, and logically analyzing that which supports those facts before believing something to be true seems to be how many in our world operate today. But that is not the way the Kingdom of God works. God does not use our logic to bring about salvation for His Kingdom. His ways are greater than our ways. And when we try to apply our own logic to the working of the Kingdom, we are often left marveling in our lack of understanding. His Spirit is beyond our comprehension, and our hearts need to be transformed by His Spirit in order that we might feel and experience His Kingdom. Jesus says, ***“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.”*** (v.8)

Baptism is not something that happens once during a worship service. Through the water and the Word, at our baptism, the Spirit of God begins the ongoing work of the transformation of our hearts. Through His love, lives are recreated into God’s image. No matter what we have

done, no matter what might happen, through daily repentance and forgiveness, He provides us the ability to start again. His Spirit operates where and how He wills in our hearts, opening up a new world of possibilities, as He brings about His Kingdom in the lives of all believers.

This morning we have a video that has been prepared for you. It's a contemporary version of what Nicodemus might say to us today about his conversation with Jesus. Let's take a look...

Like the time when Moses lifted up the snake in the desert that people might look at it and be saved, by the power of His Spirit, He helps us to believe the seemingly unbelievable. We see Jesus lifted up on the cross and are reminded of the love and salvation that He came to give. John 3:16 helps us to understand something that has always been true about God from the very beginning of time. He has always loved the world and wants to save all who believe in Him. ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life.”***(v.16) And yet, because of Jesus, we also hear Him say to us, ***“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”*** (v.17) Holding this faith dear in our hearts we go from here into the world around us sharing the message of Good News from God Himself, with all those who need to hear it.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Service Notes: Jesus teaches Nicodemus

1. John 3:16:
 - a. used to be seen on a sign at sporting events.
 - b. was originally shared with Nicodemus.
 - c. is a short, sweet message of God's love for the world.
 - d. all of the above.
 - e. none of the above.
2. Nicodemus was:
 - a. a Pharisee.
 - b. a member of the ruling high council.
 - c. looking forward to the coming Messiah.
 - d. a teacher of the Law.
 - e. all of the above.
 - f. none of the above.
3. Nicodemus met with Jesus at night:
 - a. because he didn't want to be interrupted.
 - b. because he wanted to have a private discussion.
 - c. because he knew that Jesus was the light of the world.
 - d. all of the above.
 - e. none of the above.
 - f. a and b
4. After Jesus says, "**You must be born again.**" Nicodemus may have:
 - a. not understood initially because he uses his own logic.
 - b. understood over time that it involves faith.
 - c. understood that it involves baptism.
 - d. all of the above.
 - e. none of the above.
5. Baptism:
 - a. is something that happens once in your life.
 - b. is something that is ongoing in your life.
 - c. is something that involves water mixed with the Word of God.
 - d. is something that involves the Spirit of God.
 - e. all of the above.
 - f. none of the above.
6. Fill in the blank: "**For God so loved the world that He gave His _____**

Son, so that _____ who believes in Him may not _____ but have _____ life. For God did not send His _____ into the world to _____ the world, but to save the world through _____."