

## Sunday Lesson – May 30, 2021

**GOSPEL: John 3: 1 - 17**

### ***The Holy Trinity***

#### **Background**

“John is a master of dramatic settings, symbolism and imagery and so it is valuable to note that Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Jewish leader, arrives at night, a time of unbelief, ignorance, and temptation in the Fourth Gospel. He comes ostensibly to learn more about this young rabbi, but perhaps does not want his colleagues to know of his interest. He has, if not faith, at least faithful curiosity.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-in-lent/commentary-on-john-31-17-2)*

#### **Insight**

“While the appointed lectionary ends at verse 17, the dramatic unit continues to verse 21 and it would be well worth extending the pericope. In these last verses, the Evangelist — it is difficult to tell if Jesus is still speaking or John is narrating — introduces a major theme of the Fourth Gospel: Jesus always creates a crisis (literally, krisis in Greek, which we normally translate as “judgment”) for those he encounters by calling forth from them one of two responses: either belief or unbelief.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-in-lent/commentary-on-john-31-17-2)*

#### **Gospel Reading**

“There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, “Rabbi, we all know you’re a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren’t in on it.” Jesus said, “You’re absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it’s not possible to see what I’m pointing to—to God’s kingdom.” “How can anyone,” said Nicodemus, “be born who



has already been born and grown up? You can’t re-enter your mother’s womb and be born again. What are you saying with this ‘born-from-above’ talk?” Jesus said, “You’re not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the ‘wind-hovering-over-the-water’ creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom. When you look at a baby, it’s just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can’t see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit. “So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be ‘born from above’—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it’s headed next. That’s the way it is with everyone ‘born from above’ by the wind of God, the Spirit of God.” Nicodemus asked, “What do you mean by this? How does this happen?” Jesus said, “You’re a respected teacher of Israel and you don’t know these basics? Listen carefully. I’m speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don’t believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can’t see, the things of God? “No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life. “This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing

in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him." The Message

### **What It Could Mean?**

"Dear Nicodemus, your questions helped us understand Jesus better. Your concern about being born and belonging have been fundamental to Christian spiritual-material life. Here is my take on your conversation with Jesus: our birth is as much a spiritual event as it is a material one, for there is no distinction between these two realms, right? For Christians, without water there is no material birth or spiritual rebirth. Flesh and Spirit are woven into the same body, all wet by so much water!

I mentioned the Trinity—this is a Christian belief where God is one in three persons: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. For Christians, it is how God moves, relates, dances, and manifests Godself in the world—always through relations. God, human, other beings, the earth, the rivers and oceans, the air—everything is a big relation of deep belonging and entanglements. In other words, I cannot understand God if I do not know the earth. I cannot understand human beings outside of the life of other beings: animals, vegetables, and minerals. The same way the Spirit cannot be understood without water. Thus, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, the redeemer of this world is also the Spirit of God fully alive in the "natural" world, which is not to be understood apart from the "cultural" world. For nature and culture are one thing, just like the Trinity.

I think it is time for us to understand that the eternal life promised by Jesus has to do with the life we live now. The eternal life promised by Jesus that comes through the presence

of the Spirit can only be understood if it is fully drenched in the waters of our world and the wombs of our mothers. Thus, there is eternity in every river and in all the oceans as there is eternity in the work of the Spirit and in the love of God through Jesus. For the Spirit of God is also made of waters.

We must start to relate the life of the Trinity, that is the life of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, with the life of the earth and all forms of life! So we can relate together, dance together, live together! Without division. More than ever, we need to gain a new awareness of the Spirit as well as of the water, so that we can finally understand the eternal love of God for the world."

*(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org by Claudio Carvalhaes)*

### **Readings for Further Study**

- [2 Corinthians 5:17/Titus 3:5/1 Peter 1:3/1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:17; 5: 1-4, 18/John 1: 12,13](#) *New Birth*
- [Ephesians 2:1; 2: 8-9/Romans 3:23](#) *Why does a person need to be born again?*

### **Thought for the Day**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." ~ 1 Peter 1:3

### **A Celtic Prayer**

Through the dark hours of this night  
protect and surround us,  
Father, Son and Spirit, Three.  
Forgive the ill that we have done.  
Forgive the pride that we have shown.  
Forgive the words that have caused harm  
that we might sleep peaceably,  
and rise refreshed to do your will.  
Through the dark hours of this night  
protect and surround us,  
Father, Son and Spirit, Three. **Amen.**