

Church Devotional. Monday, March 23. Scott Somers

In the 3rd chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nicodemus: "You must be born again!" Nicodemus was a Jewish leader who had come to see Jesus at night. Presumably, he did not want to risk his standing in the community by associating publically with Jesus. He greets Jesus with respect but is amazed by hearing him speak about being born again. He thinks literally but Jesus is speaking spiritually.

We can, perhaps, relate to his confusion. How often do we misunderstand the meaning of God's Word? Jesus spoke to the people in parables in order to help them understand the deep love that God has for creation. Still, his own disciples often did not understand what he was doing and saying. They continually acted and spoke from a human perspective that Jesus referred to as a "lack of faith".

Well, if religious leaders like Nicodemus and those nearest and dearest to Jesus did not grasp the spiritual message of Jesus, what chance do we regular folks have? Actually, this is what this story is about. We have something that even the disciples of Jesus did not have while he was on earth. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit!

When Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born again, he is referring to the Holy Spirit. Another way of translating being born again is, "Being born from above". After Jesus' ascension, at the Festival of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, the disciples received the Holy Spirit and were born again, or from above. They understood the message and mission of Jesus spiritually. They were able to do miracles, preach the gospel and suffer persecution because of this change in their understanding. Remember, before Pentecost, the disciples betrayed, denied and fled persecution!

The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's gift to the world through faith in Jesus Christ! The third verse of this chapter reads; "God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that whoever believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life."

Sometimes we are like the disciples, acting out of our human understanding of life. But, as Christians, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us in our desire to follow Jesus faithfully.

Prayer: Almighty God, in this season of Lent, we ask that you might fill us with your Holy Spirit and help us to walk in that spirit more faithfully each day. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.