

Susan's Lent 2 Reflection — Nicodemus — John 3

Nicodemus was a prominent member of the established religious community of his day. He valued his position and did not want to compromise it; but he was also a thinking man, and as such recognised that Jesus's signs were done in God's power.

He came, it seems, to offer his support. He wanted to test the water without jeopardising his position. One might think that Jesus would welcome even this partial support at a time when his message was not well received — a chance to influence the pharisees. However Jesus baffles Nicodemus by talking about being 'born again'. Nicodemus is frustrated at this almost mocking approach. Part of the problem seems to be that Nicodemus comes talking about 'signs' and Jesus has been trying to avoid such distractions. The question for us also is: 'do we also want signs, miracles, instant gratification? Or are we prepared to look beyond the sign to the change of concept or attitude beyond the sign?'

Nicodemus has seen beyond the sign, but his coming by night shows that he is trying to have his cake and eat it! He comes, perhaps rather smugly, to offer his support without putting his position in danger. He is not prepared to risk his way of life.

Jesus makes it clear to Nicodemus, and to us, that such a position is not available. We are all faced with the simple choice — 'are we born again?'

What does this mean? It is a challenge to us to try to understand what being a Christian — being Christ-like — really means. We stand saved or condemned by our own choices, made freely. Our God made us free and will not treat us as children to be kept safe and free from danger. We are to accept or reject Jesus Christ as Son of God. We accept the gift of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit or we ignore it. The battle of light over darkness present in the incarnation is present in each one of us. The wrongdoer hates the light, while those who strive to understand God's amazing grace and love welcome any enlightenment — are open to new insights and recognise that there is always something new to learn.

Jesus finally spells out his choice to Nicodemus and us. You can go on in the darkness — or choose to enter God's created world as he intends it to be, by accepting his Son — including his lifting up on the cross as the ultimate sign of God's abiding love. This is foolishness to the world, but glorious to Christians.

So, like Nicodemus, we must make our choice. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, so that those who believe might not perish, but have eternal life. What will we give and do in response?

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