

John 3:1-21; 19:38-42  
Sunday, February 21, 2021

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a PHARISEE named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus **BY NIGHT** and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being **BORN FROM ABOVE**."

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be **BORN FROM ABOVE**.' <sup>8</sup> The **WIND** blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the **SPIRIT**." <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

<sup>11</sup> "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have *eternal life*.

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Language Notes & Textual Connections

**PHARISEE** :: they were one of the groups of religious leaders in the Jewish world of Jesus' day. They accepted both the oral and written tradition of the Torah, emphasized radical following of God's laws and were most likely the closest of the leadership groups in terms of similarity to the teachings of Jesus.

**BY NIGHT** :: notice the poetic mentioning of light and darkness, day and night throughout today's text and the whole gospel of John. Nicodemus comes at night which is both a chance to hide and not be seen in the darkness by others, as well as a metaphor for the time of day when we see less well and things are uncertain or unclear.

**BORN FROM ABOVE** :: the word used here is **ANŌTHEN** which is a double-entendre or play on words it means both 1) "from above" as in from heaven – the realm of God" as well as 2) "again" or "anew."

**WIND** :: the word for wind in both Greek and Hebrew (the languages in which the Bible is written) means simultaneously wind, breath, and Spirit (as in ghost or the Holy Spirit/Spirit of God)

*eternal life* the word used here is *αἰώνιον* which can mean 1) age-long, and therefore: practically eternal, unending s contrasted with that which is brief and fleeting and/or 2) a focus on quality, meaning more that such a life is right now, experiencing this quality of God's life now in the present.

being born of water and Spirit. :: language coming from John 1:1-13

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ...

## Language Notes & Textual Connections

...<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> *But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,* <sup>13</sup> *who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.*

**Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness ::** this refers to the story told in Numbers 21:1-9

<sup>1</sup>When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. <sup>2</sup> Then Israel made a vow to the Lord and said, "If you will indeed give this people into our hands, then we will utterly destroy their towns." <sup>3</sup> The Lord listened to the voice of Israel, and handed over the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their towns; so the place was called Hormah.

<sup>4</sup> From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup> The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." <sup>6</sup> Then the Lord sent poisonous[c] serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." <sup>9</sup> **So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole;** and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

<sup>17</sup> "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the LIGHT has come into the world, and people loved DARKNESS rather than LIGHT because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For all who do evil hate the LIGHT and do not come to the LIGHT, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But those who do what is true come to the LIGHT, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

<sup>38</sup> After these things [*the death of Jesus*], Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus BY NIGHT, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. <sup>40</sup> They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup> And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

### QUESTIONS FOR MEDITATION & EXAMEN:

- **What word, image or phrase grabs your attention?**
- **How is Nicodemus transformed from the beginning to the end of his story?**
- **How is faith described in John 3, 19; and the inter-textual connections of John 1 and Numbers 21?**
- **How do you need to let go of seeking to control life? Other people? God?**
- **How is the Spirit of God inviting you to flourishing faith through this text?**