

## 11.7.21 / Jesus and Nicodemus / John 3:1-21

Think of a time when you had a very difficult decision to make between two options – both of which, something in you really wanted to choose – but you could only choose one. [Illus – Gameshow: Car or mystery door?, Amanda’s homemade brownies or homemade apple pie, dilemma that hits deeper – say/watch/money](#)

In our passage today Jesus presents Nicodemus with a very difficult decision. [3:1-2](#)

Member of the Jewish ruling council

- high level of knowledge about the law and the prophets
- position of authority and notoriety

He came at night – that is to suggest that he came in secret. The religious leaders (as a collective group) were suspicious about Jesus – from their perspective he was disrupting their tidy and comfortable view of the law and the prophets **and** his disruption was putting at risk their authority and their comfortable position of importance in a fragile society.

For Nicodemus pursuing Jesus was going against the passionate position of the ruling council of which he was a part. Yet... given his **experience with** and **understanding of** Jesus’s teaching and signs – Nicodemus is also convinced that Jesus’s teaching and signs are **from God**.

Two things we therefore know about Nicodemus from the start:

1. He was a religious leader of high position and deep convictions.
2. He was captivated by the teaching, signs, and person of Jesus.

**Nicodemus is torn** – this teaching and these signs must be from God... **but** this man/s ministry is threatening to undo life as he knows it.

Now what we have next is what John, through the leading of the Spirit, chose to capture for us of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. I imagine this was an hours long conversation into the night and what we have is a spirit-inspired 2 minute summary.

Here's Jesus's response to Nicodemus's opening statement: **v3**. Kingdom of God: Isaiah 9:6-7 (see also Psalm 103:19, Zacheriah 9:9-10, Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-26).

Judaism taught that this was to be a future kingdom and that all Jews who faithfully kept the law would be admitted to it freely. This is what the Jews were expecting. This was the teaching that Nicodemus was thoroughly soaked in and this was the teaching that was Nicodemus's life's profession – the hope of the Kingdom & the way to get access to the kingdom was through the law.

And Jesus tells him, *“no one can see this kingdom unless they are born again.”*

Nicodemus perspective: that is impossible on so many levels!

Greek word translated 'again' – anothēn: means again or from above.

Nicodemus gets fixated on the 'again' meaning of this work. **V4**. Jesus redirects Nicodemus's attention to things above – not things on earth (it's born from above). **V5-7**. I'm talking about being born *from above* – from a heavenly work – a **work of the spirit**. **V8**

Jesus, keep **learning** and **listening** to the voice of the Holy Spirit in you.

Keep making the powerful and weighty choice to follow Jesus rather than your own sinful desires because following Jesus is stepping into every spiritual blessing of the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

Have you placed your faith in the work of Jesus Christ and stepped into a relationship of following him?

How might you follow Jesus even more closely this week?

The choice is huge and the choice is yours.

Do you believe... John 3:16

If yes, than you can step into this relationship today. I know that this is a weighty decision. Choosing to follow Jesus is choosing to live for Him and His ways rather than for you and your ways.

But I know also that choosing to follow Jesus is

- choosing light over darkness
- choosing eternal peace with the living God over eternal separation from the God
- choosing a life of fellowship with the Triune God for which we were created

The choice to follow Jesus begins with a conversation with Jesus... something like this... *sinners prayer*.

It is our plan to celebrate the redemptive work of Jesus through celebrating believer baptism. *Invitation to baptism next week...*  
**Interested? Text "baptism" to (765) 267-1967.**

I look forward to celebrating that together next week.

Once you step into relationship with Jesus, the spirit of God is poured into you and he will empower you to make this same decision every moment of everyday for the rest of your life on earth. You'll enter every moment with power and insight from the Spirit of God to follow the way of Jesus. That doesn't mean that the decision to choose light over darkness will ever be easy; it means that you have access to the power of God through the spirit in you to choose again and again to follow the way of Jesus. And when you fail – because you will - that same spirit will give you the power to repent and get back on the path of following Jesus. That spirit will never leave you. (Rom 8:39) Followers of

It's helpful to know that Greek word for wind and Spirit are the same.

Nicodemus is living within a system that says obey this law and that earns you entrance into the Kingdom. What Nicodemus and many of the Jewish people are yet to learn (but Jesus will teach them) is that they cannot obey the law perfectly. **The law points them to their need for a Savior.** And the Savior will make a way for the Spirit to redeem them. They won't be earning redemption for themselves through ethnic heritage or rule following; they'll gain access to the kingdom through the work of the Spirit – who is invisible like the wind... yet who's **presence** and **power** is made known to our very eyes... like the wind.

Nicodemus is being confronted with the unsettling spiritual reality that he can't cause his own rebirth. He cannot make himself be reborn. He's being challenged by the proposition he cannot gain access to the Kingdom of God without the work of the Spirit who He cannot see and the work Messiah who he does not know.

This is very unsettling and it's blowing Nicodemus's mind! He replies... **v9**.

He's a teacher of Israel – He knows the law and obeys the law – how can this not guarantee his access to the kingdom?! How can he be expected to put **faith** in the work of the Spirit to gain him access to the kingdom!?

We see through verses 10-12 that Jesus realizes that Nicodemus – trying as he is - is not following. Given that, Jesus knows as well that Nicodemus will not grasp what he's about to tell him but, none the less, Jesus launches into sharing some incredible heavenly plans with Nicodemus – which perhaps later Nicodemus will grasp and respond to in worship as will countless others through the generations. Here it is – **v13**.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus is quoted as saying a lot of things about *Son of Man*. And it's always stated in such a way that you wonder... what it means. When Jesus mentions the Son of Man, either he is clearly saying that he is the Messiah (referring to the Daniel prophecy about a Son of Man) or he is obviously implying that he is the Messiah. Either way, when Jesus mentions the *Son of Man* he is connecting his life and mission with the prophesied Messiah. So... the point of verse 13 is this: Jesus knows the things of heaven that nobody else knows because he came from heaven. How's that for an introduction to what he's about to unpack!?

And then ... **14-15**.

Numbers 21:4-9 records the story of the Israelites complaining against God. To punish their rebellion God sends poisonous snakes to kill the Israelites. The Lord tells Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole and when bitten the Israelites who look to the serpent on the pole will be healed. Sounds weird but here's the teaching – **look to the Lord's provision and you'll be healed**. While facing certain death for your sin, place faith in the Lord's provision and you will be healed. Jesus says, I'm going to do something similar – I'll be lifted up and those who look to me will be healed – they will have access into the Kingdom of God.

John goes on in verses **16-18** to summarize the rest of what Jesus shared with Nicodemus (*read it*).

Nicodemus had to wrestle with this: was he going to seek access to the Kingdom of God through his ethnic lineage and his following of the law **or** through putting faith in the messiah who sat before him. This – no doubt was a terrifying decision.

- Everything in him was screaming – access to the kingdom is for Jews who follow the law.

- And everything in him was screaming – this man's teaching and signs are from God.

John concludes his account of this story with this: **19-21**.

Light – Jesus – has come into the world. Will we/you follow the way of light or the way of darkness?

Jesus is the Word – who was with God in the beginning.

Jesus is the ladder – through whom we access God.

Jesus is the wine – he quenches our thirst.

Jesus is the temple – it's through him that we access God.

Jesus is the light – will you follow the light or walk in darkness?

Jesus presents us with a clear and difficult decision.

- We can place our faith in Him – His love and His redemption.
- Or we place our faith in our own path – which feels more comfortable and predictable

For Nicodemus to place faith in Jesus in that moment – would have meant walking away from a lot of the securities and comforts of the life he had known. Following Jesus would have also meant stepping into every spiritual blessing of the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

**This is a weighty decision.** Following Jesus means walking away from a lot of what the world values and pursues.

It's walking away from things that I should not watch, say, do... things that my peers are watching, saying, and doing... and if I cease to watch/say/do those things I will become an outsider. I don't want to become an outsider in this world.

But I cannot be an insider in this world and in the Kingdom of Heaven. Being an insider in the kingdom of Heaven is the choice to be an outsider in this world.