

Trinity Sunday

“Knowing what must be known for eternal life by the power of the Holy Spirit” John 3:1-5

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, John 3:1-5.

**“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”**

**3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

**4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”**

**5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”**

“What do you know?” Has anyone ever greeted you like that before? It’s another way to say “How are you?” right? Or “How’s it going?”

“What do you know?” There are many different ways to answer that right? “Not much, you?” or “More than I’m telling”, or you might say “I’m a day older than yesterday but younger than tomorrow!”

“What do you know?” a good answer would always be “that Jesus loves you”. And then see what your response is...

Well, a man named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to get a response from Him...get to know Him, and deep down, Nicodemus wanted to know that Jesus loved him.

So, Nicodemus, a started the conversation with what he thought he knew about Jesus.

**“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”**

Well, most people would probably agree with Nicodemus that Jesus was a teacher from God. Jesus taught people to love one another and that’s something most people would say is good. But believing that Jesus was just a good teacher is not how Jesus wanted this conversation to end. Jesus didn’t say “Thank you, now go on being a good Pharisee, did He?”

No, Jesus said something that really caught Nicodemus attention.

**“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

Nicodemus did a double take. What?? Born again? How can this be possible? Enter your mother’s womb a second time?

There’s a saying “You don’t know what you don’t know.” Back in 2002 the Secretary of State under George Bush said this phrase. As we all remember, on September 11, 2001 the year before, there was a terrorist attack on the Trade Towers and the Pentagon. It caught everyone by surprise. One doesn’t know when every terrorist attack might happen until it happens.

In other words, a person doesn’t know your “unknown unknowns”. The brilliant Albert Einstein once said, "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know."

Nicodemus didn’t know what he didn’t know. He was a Pharisee and pharisees were very legalistic and considered strict followers of the law. But following the law cannot help a person see the Kingdom of God. The Law as glorious as it is only gives birth to death as we know from 1 Corinthians 15.

### **1 Corinthians 15:56**

**“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.”**

The Pharisaical teachings of looking to the Law for one’s salvation will always fail because no one can keep the Law perfectly...no not one.

**“Flesh gives birth to flesh”**. Jesus said. And our flesh, being sinful, has now become mortal and incapable of saving itself. But Jesus holds out the Good News to Nicodemus and all of us sinners as well. **“The Spirit gives birth to spirit”**. That is the Holy Spirit gives new birth, eternal life to the soul. How?

Well, Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know how to see the Kingdom of God...how the soul can be saved. And so, Jesus continued.

**“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”**

What Jesus just said was an unknown that has to be revealed by God. This is not knowledge we are born with or can read in a textbook at school. Born of water and the Spirit is a work of God. It is a work of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For in baptism, the Triune God

gives a sinner a new spirit, new life, eternal life, forgiveness of sins and salvation of one's soul!  
The Triune God dwells

**Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."**

**9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"**

**11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen,**

We, the Triune God, speak the words of eternal life of salvation, being born anew. This new birth is 100% the work of God!

With much patience and love for Nicodemus, Jesus lays out for him in all its splendor the Gospel teaching of salvation.

**"14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"**

The people who were bitten by the poisonous serpents, because of their lack of faith and complaining, couldn't save themselves. They pleaded for mercy. And God told them to look at a bronze serpent on the cross. Believe God's promises and you will not die. And all who looked with faith in God at the bronze serpent didn't die.

Now Jesus tells Nicodemus that He is more than a teacher. He is the Messiah. And Jesus, the Son of God, had to come to save all people, the whole world who are dying from the poison of sin, including you and me. He did this by dying on the cross. Look in faith to Jesus and you will not perish but have eternal life!!

This is the Gospel! This is the antidote, the only antidote for the Law. The love of God for the whole world. And so, Jesus tells Nicodemus and all of us this most beautiful Gospel truth.

**"16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

**Mark 16:16**

**He who believes and is baptized will be saved;**

"Well, what do you know?" People say this when they are surprised by something. Johnny is going to be an astronaut. Well, what do you know!

Jesus reveals to the world the greatest surprise, the Good News, because He wants all people to know Him, and believe in Him as one's Lord and Savior.

**“17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

Nicodemus was indeed born again. As we later know that in devotion to his Lord, he helped with the burial of Jesus by bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 100 lbs. (John 19:39)

But “What do you know?” Three days later, as Jesus promised, He was raised from the dead! What does that mean for all who are born of water and the Spirit?

Listen to **Romans 8:10**

**“And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”**

And now you know! Believer in Jesus! Now you know what is not known except through the the Holy Spirit revealed to you in His Word.

The Triune God who is Holy, Holy, Holy ...Father, Son and Spirit, three Persons yet one God, gives a sinner something amazing in baptism – righteousness – Jesus' righteousness. Baptism makes you holy with Jesus' righteousness. This is a gift. It's the Gospel. It is not the Law but it is a work of the Spirit of life. And the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead also will also give life to our mortal bodies! Eternal life!

If someone greets you “What do you know?” Well, you can answer, “Do you have a minute? I'd like to tell you about what I know of Jesus' love for you!”

Amen.

**“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**