

Lent Devotional March 12, 2025

Scripture

John 2:23-3:15

23 When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. 24 But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 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." 3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." 4 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?" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' 8 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." 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

11 "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. 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Devotion

The Rev. Connie Bennett Hoeke '94

Jesus knows all about human nature. Therefore he knows how we think, judge, mistrust, love and care. He knows everything about us.

Enter Nicodemus. Jesus decides to impart spiritual things to him—a Pharisee who dared to interact with Jesus in secret. He did not want to ask questions to trip him up; rather Nicodemus wanted to learn from him.

Nicodemus knew that Jesus could not be doing miraculous signs without being sent from God. What he didn't understand was that Jesus was the Son of God and had been with God before he was sent by God to live on the earth. Jesus explains that in order to understand his reason for coming to earth, he must be seen as more than a miracle worker. God desires for us to be baptized by water, as John the Baptist was doing, but there was more. We must be born of the Spirit, and therefore be spiritual beings, as this subdues our worldly nature. Nicodemus cannot understand this because he was too much of the world. He couldn't understand the heavenly things that Jesus knew, and he was stuck.

Jesus speaks of the freedom of the Holy Spirit to go wherever it wills and enter into human beings. Then Jesus foretells the way that he will die and how that brings to humans an eternal life with God, which begins while we live on earth.

How important it is for us to be open to receive the Holy Spirit and be involved in spiritual practices that lift us up to know heavenly things. We are lifted up to be with Jesus and let him love us and care for us.

In this way, we are drawn closer to Jesus Christ and drawn away from the worldly nature which dares to bind us. Let us receive the Holy Spirit and know ourselves in a way we cannot know without God's deep presence. Let us live our spiritual lives and love Jesus Christ, praising him for each day of our lives.

Prayer

Almighty and ever-loving God, we praise you for your Son Jesus, who desires to lift us up to be in your care. You love us in a deep and powerful way and care for our souls. May we dwell in our spiritual lives, given to us by the Holy Spirit. Wrap your loving arms around us and fill us with your Spirit and truth. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.