

Morning Sermon Outline / September 18, 2022

“Night-time, Needy Nicodemus” John 2:23-3:7

Pregnant Bible Verses? Those about being “born again” definitely are, but before we get to them, we have to finish chapter 2 -

²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, ²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. John 2:23–25 (NKJV)

Jesus knew all men; He knew what was in man.

John chapter 3 begins with one of those men, whom Jesus knew, Nicodemus!

Knowing all men, knowing what was “in man”; what Jesus could see; was not a pretty sight!

Nicodemus comes to Jesus “by night” because he did not want to be seen (by some of his peers who were opposing Jesus). However, he was definitely seen by Jesus. Pregnant verses, mean more than one sermon on the New Birth -

I. *Let us consider what Jesus knew about “man” and what was “in man”, even in Nicodemus -*

Even “believers” were not to be trusted, at least not completely ...—²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself to them... John 2:23-24 A

1. *Why?*

...because He knew all men, ²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. John 2:24 B –25 (NKJV)

*“He knew all men, not only their names and faces, as it is possible for us to know many, but their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, as we do not know *any man*, scarcely *ourselves*.” Matthew Henry*

A. *Just as we have already seen, He knew Peter and Nathanael even before He met them!*

B. *He knew them better than they know themselves –*

³¹ And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” ³³ But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.”

³⁴ Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.” Luke 22:31–34 (NKJV)

C. *As Jesus knew Peter, saw all his weaknesses, so He knows us, so He knows all men -*

2. *What is in man?*

¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. Matthew 15:19 (NKJV)

⁹ “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? ¹⁰ I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:9–10 (NKJV)

II. Jesus knew Nicodemus' heart -

3 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.** ⁶ **That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** ⁷ **Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'**" John 3:1-7 (NKJV)

1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee (Φαρισαῖος, *Pharisaios*)

The origin of the term "Pharisee" comes from the Aramaic word פִּרְשֵׁי (*prsh*), which means "to separate," "divide," or "distinguish."

A. *And the Pharisees were a group that sought to separate themselves from others, according to God's word, God had separated Israel -*

²⁴ But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. ²⁵ You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. ²⁶ And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine. Leviticus 20:24-26 (NKJV)

B. *In this desire they were not wrong; even the NT commands the same –*

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "*I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.*" ¹⁷ Therefore "*Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.*" ¹⁸ "*I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.*" 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (NKJV)

2. *The Pharisees sought to achieve this separation by strict adherence to God's law –*

A. *About this too, they were not wrong –*

¹ Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:1-2 (NKJV)

B. *Where they were wrong was about themselves – they thought themselves strict adherents to God's law "experts" in knowing and keeping that law.*

3. *How were the Pharisees mistaken?*

A. *Deceived and deceiving by their own large phylacteries -*

⁵ **But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.** Matthew 23:5 (NKJV)

What is a phylactery?

"φυλακτήριον (phylactery) is found only here in the NT. The Greek word means literally 'a safeguard, a means of protection' and was used of amulets and charms worn in the ancient world. Here, however, it is almost universally taken to refer, in the plural, to *tepillin*, the small leather boxes which contained selected passages of Scripture (normally Ex. 13:1-10, 11-16; Dt. 6:4-9, 11:13-21), which were worn on the left hand and the forehead." J. Nolland

These were commanded by Scripture, however, even what is right can be done in a wrong way, with a wrong heart –

⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (NKJV)

What is wrong with a Scripture wristband or headband? Making them **BIG!** Saying I am as **GODLY** as my Bible Headband is Big, but *not having a heart reality to match!*

B. They were extreme or exacting in ways God is NOT, for show, but they missed more important things –

²³ **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. ²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!
Matthew 23:23–24 (NKJV)**

C. Their inward reality was a far cry from their seeming outward purity –

²⁵ **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Matthew 23:25–28 (NKJV)**

The Jews called tradition “the fence of the Law.” Within their traditions they had some 35 pages worth of laws about ceremonial cleansing, including hand washing, also the washing of cups and dishes. Adding to the law in EXTREME ways does not make a person more righteous.

4. Nicodemus, was likely a sophisticated pharisee, his name “Nicodemus” is Greek, though he Jewish. He likely had a Jewish name also, but we do not know it. The name speaks “Educated.” Not only in the Bible, plus Jewish traditions but also the larger Greco-Roman culture.

5. Ruler of the Jews, meaning a member of the Sanhedrin, one of 70 men who ruled in Israel, a teacher / politician; multilingual! He not only graduated from the best seminary in Israel, but also from the Harvard, or the Oxford or Cambridge of his day.

“He would have been even more important than a Rockefeller, Astor, Stevenson, Einstein, or Eisenhower. For in one sense, he was all these things in one.” James Boice

III. *The significance of Nicodemus’ coming to Jesus –*

1. *He came at night - ²This man came to Jesus by night... John 3:2 A*
Afraid of the condemnation of his peers ...

2. *He came as a representative - “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.” John 3:2 B*

A. **“We”** and his words show Nicodemus to one of the believers (plural) mentioned in John 2:23

B. The kind of “faith” these have in Jesus is not, at least yet, “saving faith”

³ **Jesus answered ...**

3. Jesus' answer is not to any VOICED QUESTION we read from Nicodemus, but perhaps to a heart-question? Nicodemus made a statement indicating "faith" in Jesus. Jesus ANSWERED a question that had to be in Nicodemus' heart. If it was NOT, Jesus is graciously putting it there!

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." John 3:3 (NKJV)

4. Nicodemus' response –

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?" John 3:4 (NKJV)

- A. Can a fifty-year-old man go back into his mother's womb? No!
- B. Nicodemus probably understood Jesus was not talking about a physical reentry to an older mom's womb by an adult child.

The concept of "New Birth" was applied in Jesus' day, by Jews, to gentile proselytes. Gentiles –

¹¹ ...being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Ephesians 2:11 B

- C. What Nicodemus is likely asking is Why? How? Does a mature godly person go back to the beginning?

5. It was applied to Gentiles, but not to Jews, and especially not to one like Nicodemus, but Jesus applies this NEED of New Birth to Nicodemus –

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. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ 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." John 3:5–8 (NKJV)

IV. The significance of Jesus' words to Nicodemus, ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

- 1. It is not only the gentile "dog" who needed to be born-again, but Nicodemus, a leader, a teacher, needed the New Birth too!
- 2. The new birth is a radical moral / spiritual change that is only accomplished in our sinful hearts by God's power, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The **MESS** is BIGGER than we think!
- 3. We cannot see God's Kingdom, that means we cannot understand it, or relish it, or delight in it, without this spiritual new birth – John 3:3
- 4. We cannot enter this kingdom, meaning get to Heaven, be saved, without this New Birth – John 3:5
- 5. Nicodemus, as educated, as far along as he thought he was in supposed spiritual maturity, NEEDED the new birth himself –

⁷ Do not marvel that I said to **YOU**, 'You must be born again.'

⁷ Do not marvel that I said to **YOU**, Mister Big Shot Dr. Sanhedrin Member 'YOU must be born again.' Most of us at one time or another have had to clean up a mess! I have, even as a professional cleaner! But nothing we know is like the mess of our hearts!

⁹ "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? Jeremiah 17:9 All of Nicodemus' education, supposed learning, even of the word, was worthless if not accompanied by the New Birth, spiritual power! He covered sin. Hid sin, even from himself. His problem did not need a minor adjustment, but a full re-doing, a total, dramatic, divine CHANGE! 'You must be born again.'