

The Fourth Sunday in Lent (2021)  
**John 3**

**Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine; chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day.**

**Let me see my Savior's face. Let me all His beauties trace. Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee. Yes!**

**John 3:14–21** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **THIS IS HOW** the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

**“For this is how God loved the world:** he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.”

In the Name of Jesus.

The Son of God had an ‘edge’ to His talk with Nicodemus. When He spoke of those who shun the light and love the darkness, He was speaking of that good man, Nicodemus, who, Saint John records, ‘came to Jesus at night.’

Why at night? Because during the day—‘Have you SEEN the type of people flooding to Jesus?! If I SHOWED up—

WITH THEM!....WHAT would my fellow-religionists say?!’

Oh. What of Nicodemus? What of you and me? Ah! What of HIM?!

<sup>38</sup> After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup> So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. <sup>1</sup>

No more sneaking around AT NIGHT for Nicodemus! Birth from ABOVE! SOMEONE—named after my son, Nick!—THAT MAN saw the Son of God lifted up, JUST AS Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Jesus said it was necessary. ‘I must be lifted up.’ Otherwise—it’s a nightmare for ALL of us, for the world.

AFTER that creepy night-time confab with the Pharisee, what did Jesus do--- DURING...THE...DAYLIGHT....HOURS---FOR JUST ANYONE TO SEE?!!

<sup>22</sup> After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 19:38–42). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 3:22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The Law came through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The Gospel records that John was baptizing also. Oh...and then come the comparisons about who has the bigger numbers, the bigger church. And for once!...PRAISE the Lord!—the NUMBERS went to the Gospel! To Jesus. And John—Moses’ final prophet—rested in peace. “HE must increase; I must decrease.”

Love Nicodemus, my dear ones. Love the Pharisee. Love ANY man who—in THIS wur-uld....---STILL has a shred of conscience. It is rare.

That Pharisee knew what he OUGHT to be doing: Moses, the Law, true love, not playing favorites.

And by taking the MOST desperate step—at LEAST He found Jesus! Though at night! Jesus, whose ‘lifting up’ even Paul Anderson can see and rejoice and be saved... Imagine that!

That good man was confessing that HE...OUGHT...to be doing Love. But he was also confessing his sad state...with all of us. That man confessed that He MUST...SIN.

Jesus saved that man that night; even at night. He did NOT condemn him, despite the ‘edge.’ God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world. All He did ask of Nicodemus, was to confess that HE—that good man!—was part OF the world.

You too; and me! Thus, our Baptism, birth from above.

I understand the ‘edge’ in Jesus’ bedtime chat with that outstanding man. Your poor sinner-pastor normally has a physical reaction—not good!—when men sidle up to me to tell me about them and Jesus and heaven and God and their place in the world... Ugh. It’s like all the lights have gone out!

‘Well, God can tell that people like US, pastor, are serious about heavenly matters, committed; in a way, cut from a different piece of cloth.’

Happier—for me!—is when I am just part of a crowd, a congregation, hearing from Nicodemus-types how much THEY are oriented toward Jesus...A...N...D.....T...H...E....N.... the other shoe drops! ‘Let’s hope that YOU will be such a fan of Jesus, give Him your heart, your decision, make MORE of Him than the bulk of mankind...so that Jesus does not condemn you when He returns....’

Jesus told such a man, ‘You need to be born all over...this time, from ABOVE! From HEAVEN! NOT from what YOU can make of God!’

Join your poor pastor-sinner, as we keep our feet on the ground and our stomach-contents inside, no matter what the world throws at us: super bad OR super pretense!

The Lord rescues us from both! Meditate...meaning, SLOW....DOWN...as you confess the Creed: was CRU—CI—FIED; HE went DEAD; and He was buried. What

commandment were you planning to trample on today?  
Mouthiness about the world? Thus, contempt of heaven?

But then meditate on WHO buried Him. Even  
Nicodemus—the good man in a bad world who KNEW that  
something VERY bad was going on---in him!

Then do well, my dear ones. You are baptized, after all.  
One must imagine that even good ol' Nick lined up at the  
Jordan River and was washed. By John? By Jesus? By the  
disciples? Ah....WITH just ANYONE ELSE who showed  
up! With just ANYONE who was glad that God had sent  
His Son.

In the Name of Jesus.