



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon- Sunday Holy Trinity (Proper B) 2018

Jesus reveals the Holy Trinity!



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 3, 1-17:

- ^{ESV} 1 Now 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 him, "Truly, truly, 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, "Truly, truly, 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 its sound, 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 the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?
- 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.
- 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?
- 13 No one has ascended into heaven except him who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.
- 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
- 15 that whomever believes in him may have eternal life."
- 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whomever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
- 17 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.
- 18 Whomever believes in him is not condemned, but whomever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- 19 And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved

the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

• **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, breath Your Life into our ears and take it into our hearts and make us give the right praise to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! Amen.*

• **Dear beloved of the living Holy Trinity!**

• Today we celebrate the confession, the right praise (ortho-dox), which Christ has revealed to His church, and through many theological battles in the ancient church found its expression in the three ecumenical Creeds. This doctrine, this confession is anything but academic only, something the theologians can fight about, as if it has nothing to do with our faith in God. The Gospel reading for today is a splendid example which reveals why it is essential that we believe, teach and confess in the ONE God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

• Nicodemus was a well-known man, one of the Pharisees, serving on the Sanhedrin [Joh 7,50], the highest official body of leaders of the Jews around 30 AD. He was in a way representing the Jews. He must have been an excellent diplomat. The way in which he approached Jesus was respectful, honouring this man who was doing some magnificent signs. No one can do these signs unless God is with him, they concluded.

• Why did he come to Jesus? To speak to Him from Rabbi to Rabbi. One other thing we need to realise is, that the Sanhedrin was not united on Jesus. Especially not in the beginning. However, this group sympathising with Jesus, was definitely in the minority. And they lost more and more say as Jesus was getting closer to His death on the cross. Later on, however, after Pentecost, we do find amongst the Jerusalem congregation some converted Pharisees.

• So, there were some high officials who inwardly sided with Jesus, because of the signs He did. Nicodemus was most probably a representative of this specific group.

• This explains why Nicodemus came by night, in stealth, so that he wouldn't be seen by others. He came in peace. He must have been one of those who were spoken of earlier on, when John recorded, that many believed in Jesus because of the signs He did.

• So, here we have one of those many sign- believers approaching Jesus. But whom did Nicodemus believe to meet that night?

• Whom did Nicodemus see in front of him? Jesus the man, a prophet, a teacher from God, at the most! What did he fail to realise? That God was sitting in front of him!

- Remember Jesus had received the Holy Spirit when John the Baptist baptised Him with water. It was a Baptism of water and the Spirit that He might be revealed to Israël! And very important, Jesus would not hold the Spirit to Himself. He came to baptise with the Spirit. He came to hand out the very Spirit of God.
- Jesus, the spirit-filled temple of God, Jesus, the kingdom of God in person, in Spirit and Body, was sitting in front of Nicodemus. He was looking the kingdom of God in the eyes! But, although he was a high ranking teacher of Israël, even sympathising with Jesus, the man, He did not recognise God, right in front of him! He interpreted the signs wrongly!
- Why? Jesus said to him, you, meaning, all of you Jewish leaders, do not accept our testimony concerning my Baptism! The Baptism of Jesus signifies Him as being the Son of Man who is at the same time the Son of God. You, Nicodemus, you heard the Spirit's sound, His voice, speaking to you that night, but you, did not know where He came from and where He was going.
- It was true: Nicodemus didn't know that Jesus was with God in the beginning and that He, Jesus, was going to the Cross and back to the Father.
- Nicodemus did not accept the most important sign, the sign revealing the Holy Trinity being united in the ministry of Jesus! These go together! Therefore, he was neither in the kingdom of God nor did He see the kingdom of God. He didn't know the real God!
- He was making up his own god, his own idol and calling him god, without realising it. A god with only one person. That is not the real God, as even the OT writings confess in the light of Christ's Baptism, sacrificial ministry and death!!
- That is why Nicodemus needed to be born from above, anew, by water and the spirit. That which is born of the flesh, our old Adam, cannot enter nor see the kingdom of God. A new birth of water and the Spirit is necessary to see the unity of the Trinity doing everything necessary to fulfil our reconciliation with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- Now, concerning yourself, you who have been baptised into Christ' ministry, you are in the kingdom by the Spirit's doing. You recognise the kingdom of God as being Jesus, His Spirit and His Body. You know the name of the only Son of God and believe

in His name for your salvation. This is the accomplishment of the Trinity, for you, on you and in you! That's grace upon grace.

• If you or anyone else would confess Jesus as good friend only or at best as being a good prophet of God it would not suffice. The "Jesus" Nicodemus had in mind at that stage, is not right enough. That portrait falls critically short, because it means you would make up your own god and call him "Jesus". And this "Jesus" would not be able to create new divine faith in you, because he would be a human being only. It would also mean that the death of your own fabricated "Jesus" could not have been your salvation and life. A human being can only die for one other human being. Who was it going to be?

• And therefore, such confessions must be rejected, must be condemned in the strongest terms possible, because they are dangerously misleading many people into a false security as if a Nicodemus type of faith in his own god is true faith. The right faith goes together with the right confession of faith.

• The right faith is so much better, infinitely more graceful, beautiful, filled to the brim with love, good news, good conscience, fruits of the Spirit and a true eternal unity and harmony. You got immersed into the baptismal ministry of Jesus by the Spirit of God. This is where we lost our own life and gained the new Life in Christ. This gave us a heavenly Father, a heavenly brother and Lord, a heavenly Comforter and Councillor, who in unison, look after us in the most holistic way you can imagine, using His local congregations.

• Another good news is, Nicodemus, now agrees with us. After the death of Jesus he came with Joseph from Arimathia to give Jesus a decent burial. The seed Jesus had planted on that night, was beginning to grow. Thanks be to God, that He came to reveal Himself to us, through Christ Jesus, so that we can stand in awe today and praise His wonderful being and works!

• Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son and Glory be to the Holy Spirit! *Amen.*

• *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. [NKJ 2 Cor3:14.]*