

Nicodemus John 3: 1-21

Last week we spent some time with Jesus and the Woman at the Well. One of the things I noted was that when Jesus spoke about The Living Water, she took Him literally. He was speaking metaphorically. As I mentioned last week, the same was true of Nicodemus. But in both cases, their literal translation of Jesus' directive, is of little consequence to the story.

Many of you have at one time or another, heard this passage about Nicodemus. When it comes to that story, there are a few features which stand out.

Take a moment now and make a quick mental note of the things that you already know from the Nicodemus story. (Give them a minute)

I have been working on developing some telepathic powers and I want to try them out this morning if you don't mind. Think about the list of things that you have just made in your head, about Nicodemus. I need you to concentrate on one item from your list.....just one fact you know about the Nicodemus story. Got it?

Ok. I want you to raise your hand if what you are thinking about was 'night time', or darkness, or dark of night!! Yes!!!! I connected telepathically with a many of you didn't I? Nicodemus went to Jesus under the cloak of darkness. He wanted to see Jesus badly but he did not want anyone, especially any of the other Jewish leaders, to see him going to Jesus. He thought his chances at keeping his visit a secret were better if he went at night. That was quite good! I was able to connect with quite a number of you. It seems my telepathic powers are growing!!

Now, let's try again. If I did not come up with the word you were thinking of, continue to focus on that word. If I did guess your word, go to another word on your list. OK, focus....is the word you were thinking of Pharisee.....Nicodemus was a Pharisee!! Great! A few more!! Not only a Pharisee, a leader in the Jewish synagogue, Nicodemus distinguished himself as a member of the Sanhedrin. He would have known the Scriptures well. He would be an expert in the Jewish law. As a Jewish scholar, he would know from the Old Testament the great expectation of the Messiah. He had seen some of the many miracles that Jesus performed. Ok that's enough use of my telepathic powers for today. Let's move on!

Those are two very important words to associate with Nicodemus -night time and Pharisee....these are foundational bits of information to help us understand the significance of the relationship between Jesus and Nicodemus. It would not have been an easy decision for Nicodemus to go and find Jesus. He was stirring up trouble in the Jewish community. He was regarded as a threat – a heretic and a blasphemer even! Had he been caught alone with Jesus, Nicodemus would have been considered a traitor by his peers.

Are you aware of the conspiracy theory around Nicodemus?

Some maintain that he went to Jesus as a spy from the Sanhedrin, tasked with trapping Jesus into declaring himself as the Messiah....heresy in the minds of the Jewish church.

Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We know you have come from God as a teacher." First person plural.... Nicodemus said "We", rather than "I". It seems he was representing and spying on behalf of others. And why would he say, "We know you have come from God as a teacher, rather than simply ask, "Did you come from God? Are you the Messiah?" Was that some sort of subtle trap?

There are problems with this conspiracy theory:

1. It was not unusual for Jewish officials to challenge Jesus in public. If he were simply challenging Jesus, Nicodemus would have no reason to visit Jesus in secret, in the dead of night.
2. Nicodemus did not ask, "Are you a teacher from God?" Nicodemus stated that Jesus was. This seems to indicate that Nicodemus believed He was from God.
3. Later on Nicodemus spoke to a group of unbelieving Pharisees, trying to get them to stop their efforts to seize Jesus unlawfully. Nicodemus did not want Jesus to be arrested.
4. After Jesus had been crucified, it was Nicodemus who joined Joseph of Arimathea in giving Jesus a traditional Jewish burial. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. There is every reason to believe that Nicodemus loved Jesus.

It is important to acknowledge this: While not fully convinced of Jesus' divinity, Nicodemus had in fact, seen many of the miracles Jesus performed. He knew well, the Scriptures from the Old Testament explaining the expectations of a coming Messiah. Something, somehow had touched Nicodemus' heart. Something about Jesus intrigued him. He thought he was on the edge of something life changing. Nicodemus was determined to have a private meeting with Jesus!

Matthew Henry writes, "And though now he came by night, afterward he owned Christ publicly'. By his words and actions afterwards, we know that Nicodemus became a Christian! His time with Christ changed his life forever!

Listen to the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus.

"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who comes from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Interpreting Him literally rather than metaphorically, not unlike

the woman at the well, 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?" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."

And from there, Jesus goes on to share with Nicodemus:

He tells him about God's love for the world.

He tells him about the irrefutable significance of faith.

Jesus teaches Nicodemus about the fact that God sent Him not to condemn the world but to save it!

Jesus told Nicodemus that all people should be drawn toward the light not the darkness. Jesus called Nicodemus to some self-examination. He said that it would become evident from our actions, whether we are drawn toward the light or if we love the darkness.

Nicodemus needed to ponder anew, who this Jesus was and what Jesus' role in God's purpose was. Nicodemus also had to ponder what his own role in God's purpose was, and how his life would be changed from this time forward.

This encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus happens in the 3rd chapter of John. It is apparent that his encounter with Jesus changed his life. In chapter 7, Nicodemus spoke to a group of unbelieving Pharisees against unlawfully seizing Jesus. In John 19, after Jesus had been crucified, Nicodemus joined Joseph of Arimathea in giving Jesus a traditional Jewish burial. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

Getting to know Jesus changed Nicodemus' life!

That's part of the danger of Jesus I suppose.....when we encounter him, our lives change. When we seek after him, in the dead of night or the light of day, our lives change. The changes are reflected in our actions. In our daily living there is a greater capacity for and greater expression of compassion, generosity, patience, grace, forgiveness.....more light....less darkness! Being born again is a process. It happens again and again and again.....in giant steps and baby steps!

Blessings to you on your journey .