

How much we depend on the world around us to make things work...The electronic world is hard for me. I have to keep asking for help from experts and grandchildren. I am the kind of person who likes my information firsthand and to figure things out for myself. I read about whatever is happening and try and try but have to go to a different source to get real answers for things I just can't get. I guess that is the same for the entire world around us. Do we depend on the rumors or opinions of others or do we get to the source and get the real unbiased information for ourselves?

I think that is where Nicodemus is coming from in our Gospel today. I just love the story of Nicodemus. This guy is a strong man with real questions. He is a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. Our scripture frequently mentions the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were part of the governing bodies in the Jewish communities. They each had their own philosophy about governing and higher religious matters like life after death. The Pharisees were centered in the Jewish scripture and teaching in a more strict way than the Sadducees. Every city in Israel included a council of the temple that governed the temple community and they sat as judges over the people of Jewish faith in that community. The Sanhedrin was the ultimate council, the real last word for everything. Maybe like a supreme court of their day.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were interested in Jesus' ministry from the beginning. They were the Keepers of the faith and wanted to know about any teacher that was talking to their people. Jesus was different and

they were having difficulty with the claims he was making and that he was teaching with a different kind of authority. No man had ever spoken like this man, and no man had ever won the favor of the masses so quickly and so thoroughly. So who were these officials listening to? Where were they getting their information? We know they had scouts that followed Jesus around and asked him questions, and watched his ministry closely. Those scouts must have gone back to report the things Jesus did and taught and had to say. They must have been interested in the size of the groups listening to him and what their reactions were and there were probably some lengthy discussions about Jesus. All this must have stirred the heart and soul of Nicodemus and he wanted to go to the source and get his own questions answered. So here he comes under the cover of darkness to talk directly to Jesus to get clear and real answers.

First he says: “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.” That is a lot for him to admit. He is letting Jesus know that he has been listening closely to the information about him. Then Jesus takes his thoughts and expands on them. “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” This may not have been the definitive kind of answer that Nicodemus was hoping for...; 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.” Well Nicodemus is getting to the real source alright, but can he grasp what Jesus is telling him, and can he do anything with the teaching? What a challenge he has run

into...He questions further and listens and finally “Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? “ Now here is a question for all of us...Can we be followers of Jesus and not at least try to understand these things??

“If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?”

In our Christian world today there are many different views and opinions. There are many different views on the same thing in the scripture. We have a born again kind of view that has taken a very literal view of this teaching; there is an theory that there are many ways to look at some of these things that Jesus said and put them into a 21st pluralistic setting so we can include all the gentiles that Jesus wanted us to include. I think we come to Jesus with much the same kind of questions that Nicodemus voiced so very long ago. How can this be??

Here we are in Lent. Lent is our traditional time for sacrifice and learning for having a closer relationship with our faith and its teachings. We could easily go to Jesus for answers and we do, but do we hear the precise and definitive answers we are looking for? Much like Nicodemus, we probably go away challenged by Jesus teaching? I wonder if that makes Jesus smile?? It at least helps Him know we are paying attention and care enough to challenge our own faith.

But where do we go from there? Nicodemus did remain as a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin after this encounter with Jesus. We actually hear about

him twice more in the Gospel of John. According to my favorite look-it-up source Wikipedia it says: “The second time Nicodemus is mentioned, he reminds his colleagues in the Sanhedrin that the [law](#) requires that a person be heard before being judged ([John 7:50–51](#)).

Finally, Nicodemus appears after the [Crucifixion](#) of Jesus to provide the customary embalming spices, and assists [Joseph of Arimathea](#) in preparing the body of Jesus for [burial](#) ([John 19:39–42](#)).

So we go back to the principle of real faith; Faith like Abraham in our old testament reading today. In our Epistle it says “For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)

Nicodemus would be very familiar with the scripture about Abraham. As a child of Abraham he also worked with the law and faith. But this new voice was giving him a lot more to think about; a lot more to bring into his circle of faith and belief. He followed thru to the end.

That is where our faith needs to take us. It needs to take us to the foot of the cross as this Lent goes on. It must remind us of the faith and action on that faith that bring us the joy of being children of God. Help us to remember “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

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