

## The Ultimate Teacher

### John 3:1-15

PW Emerson – 10/31/2010 – Ten:27 Ministries

#### John 3:1-15

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

<sup>3</sup>In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

<sup>4</sup>"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup>You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

<sup>9</sup>"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

<sup>10</sup>"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup>I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

## INTRODUCTION

Who was Nicodemus?

- A man
- A member of the Sanhedrin – the Jewish Ruling Council
- Someone who is educated
- A rabbi/teacher

But when you compare this piece with the other nearby chapters in John

- Ch 4 – Jesus engages a Samaritan woman at a well
- Ch 5 – Jesus heals a crippled man in Galilee

We see an interesting dichotomy

- The Samaritan Woman & the Crippled man
  - They are outcasts
  - Yet they are excited to tell about Jesus
- This educated man, Nicodemus, who says he believes, is much less enthused
- In Jerusalem, the seat of God's chosen people, there is limited interest in Jesus
- In Samaria, Galilee, Jesus is embraced

A couple of other items to note .....

In verse 2 Nicodemus said, "We see ...." Who is the we?

- Certainly not the Sanhedrin as a whole – Jesus puts down the Pharisees
- Perhaps Nicodemus comes forward as a representative of a group of believers?

One thing to keep in mind is that this piece is almost certainly a snippet

- Jesus and Nicodemus probably sat down and talked at length that night
- We see here just the salient points of their discussion

Joey lived with me for a number of years. He can tell you some of the best discussions we've had have been around the fireplace

- Just the two of us
- Talking until 1am

That's what is happening here

- A long, drawn-out discussion

Summarized with the salient points for us

What's important here??

1) This piece is most famous because it took place at night.

Verse 1 & 2

1Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

When you know John's writing style, it is clear that this has symbolic meaning.

John talks at length about light & darkness in symbolic terms

- Light referring to being saved, being with God, being "in the know"
- Darkness referring to sin, evil, away from God – away from the light

John 1:5

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

John uses metaphors of light and darkness in talking about how Jesus brought hope, love and salvation to the world, but he was rejected and crucified

In our piece today with Nicodemus,

It's not an accident or merely interesting that verse 2 says this happened at night.

In this case, when it says "Nicodemus came to Jesus at night," it means that he came when he would not be seen or noticed.

HE DIDN'T WANT OTHER PEOPLE TO SEE THAT HE WAS GOING TO  
HAVE A TALK WITH JESUS!

Nicodemus was scared or embarrassed to be seen hanging out with Jesus!

We see that Abraham was also scared of people more than God:

Genesis 12:10-13

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. <sup>11</sup> As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. <sup>12</sup> When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. <sup>13</sup> Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

Abraham wasn't trusting God and neither was Nicodemus!

What about us?

Are we ashamed to admit to others that we are a Christian? That we follow Jesus?

Do we shy away from who we are in public?

*Illustration – teenage boy hadn't been seen at church in a while*

- Minister asked, are you a Christian? Do you believe in Jesus?
- Boy replied – oh yes!
- Minister asked, why don't I see you and hear from you more often, if you're part of God's army?
- Boy replied, "I'm part of the secret service"

God doesn't want us to be timid, shy, scared ...

God wants us to be more like Marines

- TALL
- PROUD!

Romans 1:16 says it well

<sup>16</sup>I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Think about whatever place you go most – can you stand up tall and loud and tell people you love and serve God and are saved by the blood of Jesus?

Halloween cracks me up, but it is a time when people dress up as who/what they really want to be.

When we are out in the world, God doesn't want us to put on a mask;  
God wants us to be clear that we are his followers!

This week I'm going to take a few hours to walk around to all the businesses in the area and introduce myself.

- I don't want them to find out that there is a church in their neighborhood for years that people sneak into the back door.
- I want them to know there is a common sense church that is EXCITED to be following God!

Anyone who wants to come with me, let me know!

From the discourse with Nicodemus, we also see that

## II) GOD WANTS TO TAKE US DEEPER IN KNOWING HIM

3 times in this piece with Nicodemus, he asks about something physical and Jesus takes the discourse into the spiritual

Verses 2-3

²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

<sup>3</sup>In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Nicodemus is thinking about physical things he has seen and Jesus starts talking about being born again. So of course Nicodemus thinks he is talking about being physically born again.

<sup>4</sup>"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus wants us to be deeper too.

In John 2:19

<sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

The people think he is talking about the physical structure of the temple.

Jesus is talking about his body.

Jesus wants to take us deeper too!

In the second year of confirmation one of the things we look at is daily devotions to God. Why? Because no matter who we are we want to always be growing closer to God!

One of the things I love about preaching is all the work that goes into the message *AHEAD* of time.

- I dig into a piece
- I look up LOTS of information from a wide variety of sources
- I try to find different thoughts about it, different perspectives
- Even when I'm doing a sermon on a text I've preached on before, I will use a different angle
  - Feeding of 5000 – Jesus takes care of our needs
  - Miracle
  - Our response – Jesus says to the disciples, You feed them!

God not only wanted to take Nicodemus to a deeper level, a spiritual level, God also wants to take us to a deeper spiritual understanding!

But Jesus also makes it clear that

### III OUR NATURE CAN'T BE REPAIRED; WE MUST START OVER

Verse 3

<sup>3</sup>In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Our sinful nature is so broken that we can't fix it. The only way to be made right is to start over again – be born again of the Spirit – through God!

*Illustration - My Poor Saturn*

- I had a Saturn wagon for 14 years .....
- The last year I had it, John Bell helped me a few times with it
- I kept wanting to save it
- John said the right thing to do is start over

It wasn't until later that Nicodemus caught on that we have to be born again, start over.

II Corinthians 5:17

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

If there is some part of your old ways you continue to cling to, let it go and instead cling to God!

## CONCLUSION

### ASK

Of all the things you have learned, all the places, all the subjects, who is/was your best teacher?

In verse 2, Nicodemus calls Jesus, "rabbi" or teacher.

In verse 10, Jesus says to Nicodemus, "You are Israel's teacher."

Of all the lessons in life you have gotten or will get, Jesus is the best teacher you'll have.

Take advantage of that!