

## “Reborn”

I find it kind of funny that the gospel of John, while the only gospel that does not have the typical birth narrative of Jesus, talks a whole lot about birth later on. The conversation here in chapter 3 with an inquisitive Nichodemus is all about birth and rebirth.

While there is a whole lot of stuff packed into these 21 verses, I would like us to explore this text from the viewpoint of Nichodemus. This is the first time in this gospel that we meet Nichodemus. As the author tells us, he was a Pharisee, a Jewish leader. He comes to Jesus in the night to talk to him. Why did Nichodemus come to Jesus at night? If you were a leader in the religious community and you wanted to go talk to someone who had just turned over the tables in the synagogue wouldn't you do that in secret too? Nichodemus is apparently afraid of what his peers might think of him if they saw him talking to this Jesus fellow. So he comes at night.

The author doesn't tell us what Nichodemus's intentions are for visiting Jesus, but we get a hint that Nichodemus is at least granting Jesus the leeway that he is a teacher, who is able to do signs, and that these signs come from God. Nichodemus allows Jesus to be a man of God, but stops right there. He doesn't go so far to affirm what others have claimed before, that Jesus is the son of God. So why is he there? Why would you go? Would you go to observe? Would you go to ask questions? Would you go to debate? Would you go to catch Jesus in a trap and then report him to the authorities?

All of these are a possibility for Nichodemus actually. We never really get to find out. But his presence there with Jesus sparks a conversation about God's kingdom, and being born anew.

Once again, as is typical in Johns accounts of Jesus, we skip right to the meat of the theological conversation, when Jesus goes right over Nichodemus, and let's be honest, our heads, by all of a sudden talking about what is required to see the kingdom of God.

“Jesus answered, I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it's not possible to see god's kingdom.”

Well, Jesus, I was just telling you that you were clearly a teacher who comes from God, but ok, I'll bite, how is it possible for an adult to be born? It's impossible to go back into my mothers' womb a second time (thankfully). So what are you talking about when you talk about being born again? It's impossible.

How much are we like Nichodemus in this text? We sneak to Jesus in the night, trying to glimpse what it is that makes him special. We want to see him, to talk to him, but we are afraid to do so in the light of day.

Because it is in the light that we are exposed for who we really are.

Skip to the end of this passage today, skip over all that confusing stuff about being reborn. Because at the end is the good stuff, the stuff that makes it all clear. "The light came into the world, and people loved darkness more than the light..."

The light came into the world, and people loved darkness more than the light.

Like nichodemus, we come to glimpse the light, to see the truth, to see the love of God, but we prefer to do so under the cover of darkness. It is in the darkness that we are secure?

Why? The text says that people don't come to the light for fear that their actions will be exposed to the light. Many interpret this to mean that it is in the light that we see that we are sinful, that we see that we are corrupt. But even scarier I think, than finding out that we are sinners and people capable of doing some horrible things, even scarier than that is that we are afraid to come into the light and realize that we are loved.

Jesus says it right there, a few lines above. "God so loved the world that he have his only son. God did not send his dome into the world to judge, but that they might be saved through him."

Jesus tells us, when you come into the light I will not judge you for what you have done, you will not be made to account. I love you and want you with me. I have made my spirit move within you. You are reborn in love. Come here, see what I have made in the light.

But we don't want to go. We say out loud, its impossible! I can't be reborn! I can't be made into a new creation! I can't get back into my mother's womb!

Jesus talks about rebirth, being made new in the spirit and water. It is because of his love for us that this happens. The spirit moves within all of us, we are reborn, whether we know it or not, because we are loved.

We recognize this rebirth in our tradition through Baptism. We wash in the water proclaiming the love that makes us new.

We wander through the light and dark as human beings. We dip into the light, we know we are loved, but something happens and we fade into the ease of the darkness.

It is really, really hard for us to admit to ourselves that we are reborn in Christ. It is hard for us to admit that we are loved beings. That we are loved no matter what. It is hard for us to stand in that blazing light all the time. Because unconditional love is scary, it is transforming. We are afraid of the impossibility of being renewed.

The same happens at this table spread before us friends. We have done nothing to deserve the food at this table. It is what God has done for us that allows us to come and eat with Jesus. Christ invites us to join him in the feast that has already been prepared. When we accept that invitation, we are able to walk into the Light. We are able to recognize that we are unconditionally loved. It is at this table that, through blood, body, water and Spirit we are reborn in Christ. Amen.