

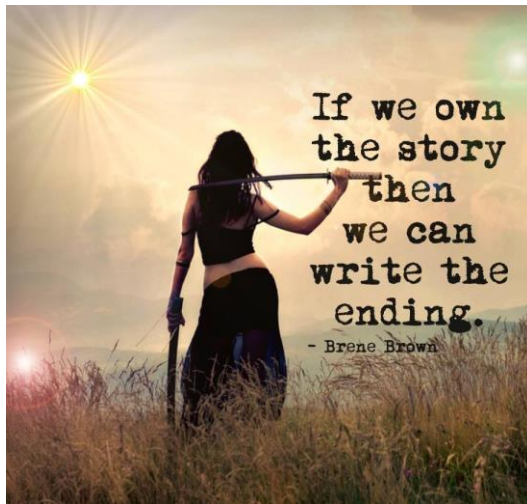
St. Mary's Episcopal Church

Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Message by The Rev. Michael Burke

4th Sunday of Lent, 2021

Again and Again: God first loved us.



Good morning, and welcome to this fourth Sunday of Lent.

Today's scripture lessons are about trust. (Among other things, I suppose...) Trust in God when things don't always make sense. Trust that Grace alone will save us, when our own best efforts have come up empty. Trust that before we ever professed or experienced our own love of God, that God first loved us. Again and again, this is our story. That God first loved us.

Attached to downloadable sermon, that either is, or soon will be posted on our website, GodsView.org, is an exploration of what the scripture texts appointed for today might mean, when they were written, and again, what they might mean in our contemporary lives.

But I'm not going to cover any of that this morning. None of it.

Instead, I want to tell you a story. Instead, I want to tell you a piece of *my story*.

You may have heard it before,

But today is, you see, my re-birthday. Not my birthday, which is in November, but my re-birth-day. On March 14th, 2021, I came back to life. Not in the "resurrection sense, but close enough for me.

Seventeen years ago last week, on March 5th, 2004, I went into Providence Hospital for what was supposed to be a bilateral lithotripsy. That's the procedure where they use

concentrated energy waves to break up stones that are embedded in your kidneys, allowing your body to then pass them out. And I had blockages on both sides.

Well, things went badly. Instead of improving after my release to home care, I got progressively worse. Midnight came and went. My wife Nancy spent the early morning hours on the phone with the on-call doctors. By 4am on the morning of March 6th, I could no longer stand or answer simple questions. With the help of a family friend, Nancy got me down the stairs and into the car. We headed for the hospital.

It was a wild night at the emergency department. The triage nurse interviewed Nancy, and I was placed in an observation room. But things there were busy. It was 8:55 am, just over four hours after my arrival at the hospital, before I was seen by the doctor.

I was no longer able to recognize anyone but Nancy, and I could not correctly answer a number of questions that I was asked. The doctor and Nancy argue about my treatment. At 9:05 am, Nancy is dismissed by the doctor, to go to the cafeteria for something to eat. Several minutes later, she is paged on the overhead P.A system to return immediately to the emergency department.

She is told that my lungs have rapidly filled with fluid and that I require immediate intubation and will be placed on a ventilator. Three unsuccessful attempts were made to intubate me. The doctors are now racing against time.

Nancy is then informed that I have been successfully intubated and placed into a medically-induced coma. I have been diagnosed with acute respiratory distress syndrome.

Over the next few days, doctors come and go from my room in the intensive care unit. I have had a number of adverse and paradox reactions to medications and to the anesthesia. There is concern, that I went too long without oxygen during the intubation attempts. Test results are given, and test results come back. The neurologist is not encouraging. She writes a report. Nancy fights to get a copy.

On the middle of a page with dense text is the sentence, "It is unlikely that this patient will regain consciousness."

The doctors inform Nancy that it is time to have any family that she wishes, to come and help make decisions about end of life care and life support.



My children, Jesse and Cassidy, were ages 9 and 5. In a paper she wrote some ten years later, while in high school, Cassidy recounted:

“When I got to [my dad’s hospital] room, I climbed up on his bed, and gave him a big hug and showed him the picture I had drawn for him... ..My mom explained to [Jesse and] me that my dad’s surgery did not go as well as they hoped, so they had to put him in a long sleep called a coma to help him recover. She then told me that the doctors had told her that he was never going to wake up again. Lastly, [my Mom] explained that the doctor who said that was wrong... ..but that my dad was going to be different for a while. She used big words that I didn’t really understand... .. and she tried to explain what my dad was going through and I just nodded like I understood because I could see how hard this had been on her and I didn’t want to make it any more difficult.”¹

My brave son Jesse put his arm around her, pulled her close, and did his best to comfort his little sister and his mom.

A family member took our children back to her house with her, and Nancy went home alone that night. A friend from St. Mary’s, finding out that she was by herself, came by the house to sit and pray with her, and to put her to bed to get some rest.

Over the next few days, attempts were unsuccessful in weaning me off the ventilator and bringing me up off the medications. During the last, final attempt, Nancy sat by my bedside gently stroking my hand. Quietly and patiently, she recounted stories of many of the things we had done together, and happy memories of our children.

I have a distinct memory from that time. I was deep underwater, like at the bottom of the sea, but I could see the light at the surface above me. I pumped my arms furiously, but it was like I was anchored to the bottom. Slowly I started to rise, but the surface was too far

¹ Cassidy Burke “Never Losing Hope,” Honors English paper, November 20, 2014, Dimond High School.

away. Upwards I swam, my lungs on fire with the need for air. Upwards, I strove, but it was just too far. And then I broke the surface. My lungs gasped for oxygen, and I took in a full breath, like a baby after birth. The light was so strong that I shut my eyes in a squint.

Back in the I.C.U, the monitors displayed my rise to consciousness. My memories here are spotty, but I remember Nancy's face, bending down, coming into focus. I remember the worry in her eyes, and the tears falling on my arm.

Now at that time at St. Mary's there were a number of young residents in the doctor's training program. Nancy and I had been in an in-home Bible Study with them for a couple years.

That night, they snuck into my hospital room. There were "no visitors," but they had badges hanging around their necks.

I remember clearly seeing them there, but I could not speak and could barely move. My vocal chords were paralyzed, and my brain couldn't seem to function to raise my hand in acknowledgement.

But they circled around me. They held hands, and one held my hand at each side. And then they prayed. I don't remember everything from those days, but I remember the prayer.

I think it started as one of those polite "Episcopalian prayers," asking for God's presence no matter what was ahead. Asking for acceptance and strength. One by one they took turns praying, like we did so many times in Bible study. From person to person the prayer went around the circle.

When at last it came to the last person, standing at my left side and holding my left hand in hers, the last member of this little group prayed. In the midst of it, tears came to her eyes and rolled down her cheek. "God," she prayed. I don't pray just for strength, I pray for healing. Jesus, I pray for a complete and full recovery. His work is not yet done, Lord, and we ask for him to be returned to us for the work he has still to do. We aren't through with him yet. We still need him." Or words to that effect.

And then I felt it. It was as if there was liquid fire in my veins. It started on the left hand, where she held mine. My fingers burned, but it was not painful. And I felt the liquid fire going up my arm, it hurt when it passed my heart, and I took a sharp breath. And then down to my leg and back up. I felt my entire body “warm,” I guess, but it was a sensation that I have never been able to put into words. I felt my body being lifted, I was soon lost in a fog.

I may have passed out, because the memory ends there.

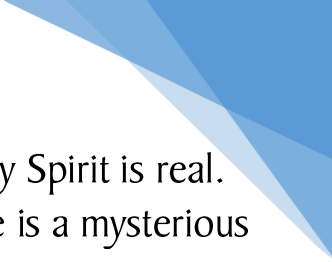
The next morning, Nancy came into my hospital room. Her face was weary, but then it looked confused. She came closer and looked deeply into both my eyes. And then her face brightened, and there were more tears. He’s back,” she said. “I can see it. He’s back.”

It was many months before I was able to say that my recovery was well underway. In time, I could form words again, I had to learn to speak all over again. For months, I could not find the words that I wanted to say. I remember holding a bag of carrots in my hand, and knowing that I once knew what they were called, but the information was no longer accessible. I remember the day I looked out my kitchen window at the bird feeder, and remembered the word “Magpie.”

I learned to stand, and then to walk, and gradually regained my balance. In time, my memory largely returned, but please don’t ever ask me to remember your phone number.

I have been left with more questions than answers. Why me? Why do so many perish in hospitals every day, and why did I survive? Why is prayer not always answered in the ways we ask for?

I have no answers for these things, my friends. I know that it was no credit of my own that brought me back to the land of the living. By Grace alone we are saved. But I know this:

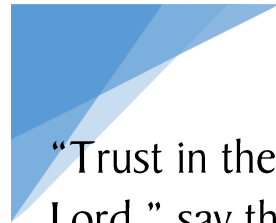


The Holy Spirit is real.
And She is a mysterious
thing.

She moves among us in
this world of matter, but
no one can tell how She
comes and how She goes.

The Holy Spirit is real. And She is a mysterious thing. She moves among us in this world of matter, but no one can tell how She comes and how She goes.

After seventeen years of reflection, I am convinced of certain things:



“Trust in the Lord,” say the Holy Scriptures. Again, and Again, and Again.

- Love brought me back. Love is the reason I am here., I am here this morning because of the Grace and power of God. Love is the most powerful force and reality there is. And God’s love surpasses the depths of the oceans and stretches throughout the cosmos above.

- It holds and binds all things together, and nothing exists that is not intricately connected to all else that is.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (I Cor. 13:7)

The first epistle of John adds: “And God is Love.” (I John 4:8, I John 4:16)

“Trust in the Lord,” say the Holy Scriptures. Again, and Again, and Again.

Before all this, I thought that I knew what that meant. I thought I believed it. But little did I know.

Even now, seventeen years later. Even now, I can *feel it in my bones*.

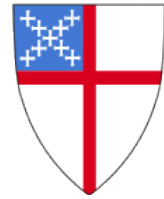
Happy Re-Birthday. To me. To us. Amen.

Postscript:

Now, I haven’t over dramatized that story in any way. In fact, I have understated and downplayed it to a marked degree. There is more that I could tell that I am not yet ready to tell. If you know me, you know that I am a recovering cynic and a considerable skeptic. I was trained in the biological sciences, evolutionary theory, as well as in human psychology. But I know that what I have personally experienced and give witness to cannot be very well explained by comfortable and familiar ways of knowing. It simply is what it is. - Michael

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the Fourth Sunday in Lent

Year B
RCL



Numbers 21:4-9
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

The Collect

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor the Israelites set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

The Psalm

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Confitemini Domino

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, *
and his mercy endures for ever.
- 2 Let all those whom the LORD has redeemed proclaim *
that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe.
- 3 He gathered them out of the lands; *
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

- 17 Some were fools and took to rebellious ways; *
they were afflicted because of their sins.
- 18 They abhorred all manner of food *
and drew near to death's door.
- 19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, *
and he delivered them from their distress.
- 20 He sent forth his word and healed them *
and saved them from the grave.
- 21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his mercy *
and the wonders he does for his children.
- 22 Let them offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving *
and tell of his acts with shouts of joy.

The Epistle

Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved-- and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-- not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

The Gospel

John 3:14-21

Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"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.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all

who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

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*The Collects, Psalms and Canticles are from the Book of Common Prayer, 1979.
From The Lectionary Page: <http://lectionarypage.net>*

Playlist:

*I'm trying to tell you something 'bout my life
Maybe give me insight between black and white
And the best thing you ever done for me
Is to help me take my life less seriously
It's only life after all, yeah*

*Well, darkness has a hunger that's insatiable
And lightness has a call that's hard to hear
And I wrap my fear around me like a blanket
I sailed my ship of safety till I sank it
I'm crawling on your shores*

*And I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains
I looked to the children, I drank from the fountains
There's more than one answer to these questions
Pointing me in a crooked line
And the less I seek my source for some definitive
(The less I seek my source)
Closer I am to fine, yeah
Closer I am to fine, yeah*

*And I went to see the doctor of philosophy
With a poster of Rasputin and a beard down to his
knee
He never did marry or see a B-grade movie
He graded my performance, he said he could see
through me
I spent four years prostrate to the higher mind
Got my paper and I was free*

*And I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains
I looked to the children, I drank from the fountains*

*There's more than one answer to these questions
Pointing me in a crooked line
And the less I seek my source for some definitive
(The less I seek my source)
Closer I am to fine, yeah
Closer I am to fine, yeah*

*I stopped by the bar at 3 A.M.
To seek solace in a bottle or possibly a friend
And I woke up with a headache like my head against
a board
Twice as cloudy as I'd been the night before
And I went in seeking clarity*

*I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains
I looked to the children, I drank from the fountains
We go to the doctor, we go to the mountains
We look to the children, we drink from the fountain
Yeah, we go to the Bible, we go through the workout
We read up on revival, we stand up for the lookout*

*There's more than one answer to these questions
Pointing me in a crooked line
And the less I seek my source for some definitive
(The less I seek my source)
Closer I am to fine
Closer I am to fine
Closer I am to fine, yeah*

*Songwriters: E. Saliers Closer to Fine lyrics ©
Godhap Music*

Let The Day Begin

Here's to the babies in a brand new world
Here's to the beauty of the stars
Here's to the travelers on the open road
Here's to the dreamers in the bars

Here's to the teachers in the crowded rooms
Here's to the workers in the fields
Here's to the preachers of the sacred words
Here's to the drivers at the wheel

Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above
Now let the day begin
Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above
Now let the day begin, let the day begin

Here's to the winners of the human race
Here's to the losers in the game
Here's to the soldiers of the bitter war
Here's to the wall that bears their names

Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above
Now let the day begin
Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above
Let the day begin, let the day begin, let the day start

Here's to the doctors and their healing work
Here's to the loved ones in their care
Here's to the strangers on the streets tonight
Here's to the lonely everywhere

Here's to the wisdom from the mouths of babes
Here's to the lions in the cage
Here's to the struggles of the silent war
Here's to the closing of the age.

Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above
Now let the day begin
Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above
Let the day begin

Songwriters: Michael Been; Recording by The Call
Let The Day Begin lyrics © Neeb Music

Rise up (Andra Day)

You're broken down and tired
 Of living life on a merry go round
 And you can't find the fighter
 But I see it in you so we gonna walk it out
 And move mountains
 We gonna walk it out
 And move mountains

And I'll rise up
 I'll rise like the day
 I'll rise up
 I'll rise unafraid
 I'll rise up
 And I'll do it a thousand times again
 And I'll rise up
 High like the waves
 I'll rise up
 In spite of the ache
 I'll rise up
 And I'll do it a thousand times again

For you
 For you
 For you
 For you

When the silence isn't quiet
 And it feels like it's getting hard to breathe
 And I know you feel like dying
 But I promise we'll take the world to its feet
 And move mountains
 Bring it to its feet
 And move mountains

And I'll rise up
 I'll rise like the day
 I'll rise up
 I'll rise unafraid

I'll rise up
 And I'll do it a thousand times again

For you
 For you
 For you
 For you
 All we need, all we need is hope
 And for that we have each other
 And for that we have each other
 And we will rise
 We will rise
 We'll rise, oh, oh
 We'll rise

I'll rise up
 Rise like the day
 I'll rise up
 In spite of the ache
 I will rise a thousand times again
 And we'll rise up
 High like the waves
 We'll rise up
 In spite of the ache
 We'll rise up
 And we'll do it a thousand times again

For you
 For you
 For you
 For you

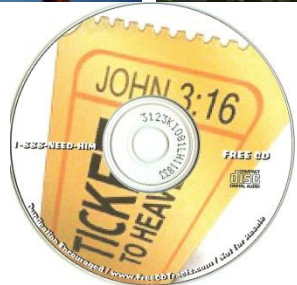
Songwriters: Cassandra Monique Batie /
 Jennifer Decilveo
 Rise Up lyrics © BMG Rights Management

Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBuIBaDSOa4>

John 3:16

St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Alternate sermon March 14, 2021

Message by: the Rev. Michael Burke
The Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B





Today’s lesson has to do with a particular Bible verse. A very, very “famous” one.

Today we have in the Gospel the verse “John 3:16”.

“16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. “

Have you seen this before? Have you seen this *everywhere*?

Yes, Denver Broncos star Tim Tebow wrote in his eye-black under his eyes during his days as a Florida Gator. And people write it on their bodies in paint and hold “John 3:16” signs at sporting events, to be seen on camera. It’s on graffiti, Billboards, Chick-fil-A cups, Forever 21 shopping bags, billboards, jewelry, tattoos, just about everything. Yes, looking online this past week, I even found a sale on John 3:16 doggie sweaters, printed in Croatian.

So what do we make of all this?

Well, today in the Gospel we get the verse John 3:16 in at least a tiny bit of context. The larger context² comes out of a conversation Jesus has been having with Nicodemus. Remember Nicodemus? He was a member of the Jewish ruling council. And he came to Jesus at night, and they enter into an amazing conversation about the Kingdom of Heaven, and how one must be “born again,” / “born from above”³ to enter into this life. And Nicodemus is having a hard time grasping all of this. Then Jesus reminds him of an ancient story in the Old Testament Book of Numbers⁴, in which the Hebrew people, being bitten by poisonous snakes, implore Moses to intervene with God to help. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live. Then Jesus draws a parallel with himself, for Nicodemus to consider. Just as the Israelites of old looked upon the bronze serpent and were restored to life, so when people look upon the Son of Man when he is “exalted”, or “lifted up” in his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, so they shall be healed, made whole, and gain eternal life. (That’s my paraphrase, not Jesus’...)

So what is it when we “see” when look upon Jesus?

- 1.) We might “see” the cross of crucifixion, the symbol of Christianity. We might be reminded of all the pain and bloodshed caused through the years in the name of God and in the name of religions. We might see nothing but the human institution that has all too often misused its power and not acted on the side of justice and reconciliation.
- 2.) We might “see” the personal affronts and violations that have taken place in our own lives; the ways in which the name of God was misused to manipulate us or others, or in ways that were

² The Gospel of John, Chapter 3

³ See John 3:3, and the footnote on the final page of this sermon.

⁴ Numbers 21:4-9

painful to us. And if that is all we see, we might see nothing but the darkness of ignorance and evil. And we might be repelled, and rebel.

But if we turn from that darkness which is so much a part of the human story of history, or perhaps so much a part of own personal histories, if we reject it, and turn to the light, we might have eyes to see beyond the human to the divine:

We might see in Jesus, lifted up upon the cross, a God who loves us so incredibly much that this God would freely give the greatest gift ever given, the gift of God's own self, made known to us in Jesus. Given that God might come near to us, that God might come among us, that God might show us God's self revealed in human flesh and blood, and with a human face. A God who wept human tears, loved in a most human way, hungered, thirsted, as we do, was wrongly persecuted, and even died in a most human way. A God revealed in Jesus who ate with outcasts, loved the unloved, healed the brokenhearted, and refused to bow down to the ways and powers of this world, even the collusion between the Imperial might of Rome and the religious overseers of his day.

He was tried unfairly, mocked, humiliated, and cruelly whipped, and still refused to surrender his Love. He was crucified, died, and was buried, and refused to stay in the tomb, for there is a season in which it appears that all is lost, in which it appears that evil triumphs and the good are vanquished, that might makes right, but that season will pass. And in the end, symbolically on the third day, when it seems that all hope might be lost and all faith prove hopeless... He is risen! Love wins. That we might know that in him, Love always wins. Hope always rises. Faith will not stay too long in the shadows of the tomb.

And if, when you look upon Jesus lifted up, if with the eyes of faith that is what you see... If you believe that... I mean when you have heard that call and made that decision with all your heart and mind and soul and strength: to love God with all that you have and all that you are, To love your neighbor as you (and to likewise) love yourself...

...then your life is transformed, not by anything you have done, but by the outpouring of the grace of God and the power of faith working in your life. From this point on, nothing can forever beat you down, or trample your hopes and joys underfoot for long.

As St. Paul says in the eighth chapter of his letter to the small fledgling church community at Rome:

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.⁵

⁵ Romans 8: 33-35, 38-39

Not even death can separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus. For, as our burial liturgy says: “in death life is changed, not ended.”

And in today’s Gospel Jesus says, **“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.”** And that verse, of course, is the sixteenth verse in the Third Chapter of The Gospel of John, John 3:16.

You may do with it what you wish. You may write it on your arm. You may write it on your heart. You may tattoo on your body or wear it on your T-shirt. But don’t trivialize it. If you wear it, do not wear it carelessly as a fashion statement, but wear it as a constant reminder to yourself and anyone else with eyes to see, a reminder of a Love more powerful, more truthful, more lasting than the brokenness of this world. A reminder of a truth that can set hearts on fire with compassion and turn this world upside down. A vision and a call that can transform your heart and change the course of your life.

I wish you many blessings on a holy Lent.

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The Gospel of John, Chapter 3

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

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

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[c] must be born again.’ ⁸ 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.”^[d]

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

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

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

John Testifies Again About Jesus

²² After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. ²⁴ (This was before John was put in prison.) ²⁵ An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. ²⁶ They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

²⁷ To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less."^[a]

³¹ The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. ³³ Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God^[b] gives the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them. *(to be continued in Chapter 4...)*

Footnotes:

- a. **John 3:3** The Greek for *again* also means *from above*; also in verse 7.
- b. **John 3:6** Or *but spirit*
- c. **John 3:7** The Greek is plural.
- d. **John 3:8** The Greek for *Spirit* is the same as that for *wind*.
- e. **John 3:13** Some manuscripts *Man, who is in heaven*
- f. **John 3:14** The Greek for *lifted up* also means *exalted*.
- g. **John 3:15** Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 21.
- h. **John 3:30** Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 36.
- i. **John 3:34** Greek *he*

Romans Chapter 8

¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you^[a] free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh,^[b] God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.^[c] And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life^[d] because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of^[e] his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.^[f] And by him we cry, “*Abba,*^[g] Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that^[h] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[i] have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

More Than Conquerors

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”^[ii]

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Footnotes:

- a. [Romans 8:2](#) The Greek is singular; some manuscripts *me*
- b. [Romans 8:3](#) In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also in verses 4-13.
- c. [Romans 8:3](#) Or *flesh, for sin*
- d. [Romans 8:10](#) Or *you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive*
- e. [Romans 8:11](#) Some manuscripts *bodies through*
- f. [Romans 8:15](#) The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture; also in verse 23.
- g. [Romans 8:15](#) Aramaic for *father*
- h. [Romans 8:21](#) Or *subjected it in hope. For*
- i. [Romans 8:28](#) Or *that all things work together for good to those who love God, who; or that in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good—with those who*
- j. [Romans 8:36](#) Psalm 44:22
- k. [Romans 8:38](#) Or *nor heavenly rulers*