

2026 03 01 WORSHIP AT HOME LENT TWO

Dear friends,

Another month begun! And we have come to the second week of Lent when we look at Jesus meeting with Nicodemus - who had waited for nightfall before going to see Jesus. Jesus challenges Nicodemus, and others like him in the synagogue, to be courageous enough to bring their curiosity about Jesus into the open. They will find this challenging, but it will be like being born all over again. This week, then, we are asked to take the risk of deciding openly to follow Jesus and to be willing to speak of him to others.

As always, I wish you all every blessing – Margaret.

Call to worship:

Come whether you feel certain or are unsure – whether you have just a few questions to ask or whether you want to ask many things – whether you have just started to ask questions or whether it is a long time since you began.

However you may question, come and worship the one who has the answers to all our questions.

Father God, we bring before you all our questions – all our doubts – and all our uncertainties – and we offer them to you, along with our praise, trusting that you hear us and love us. Amen.

We gather before you, God, like curious children around a parent's chair, eager to listen and to learn, but also with questions in our hearts and on our minds.

We gather in faith that you, all-knowing God, will hear us with the patience of a good parent, for you welcome our curiosity and are always ready to hear earnest questioning. Amen.

The words to 'Immortal, invisible' by Walter Chalmers Smith [1824-1908] [Singing the Faith 55]

1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

2 Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light, nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might –
thy justice like mountains high soaring above thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

3 To all life thou givest, to both great and small; in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree, and wither and perish; but naught changest thee.

4 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light, thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all praise we would render, O help us to see 'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

5 Immortal, invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Prayer including the Lord's Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a faithful God who always keeps his promises.

We thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus and for the gift of your Holy Spirit.

We thank you for the gift of eternal life – for your goodness, kindness and faithfulness.

We praise you, Lord, because we can and we long to do so. Amen.

Heavenly Father, you created us to be curious creatures, yet we often forget this when it comes to our faith. We hear the stories of your deeds often with complacency and without comment, so often forgetting to try and see in depth, to question.

Forgive us for this lack of respect.

Help us to renew our commitment to a relationship with you that is not afraid to ask questions for you delight in the curiosity of your children. Amen.

You forgive us, Lord, when we become lukewarm and complacent towards you.

You forgive us when we allow the unimportant things of life to distract us from the big questions we should be asking.

Praise be to you, Lord, for waiting, father-like, to hear and to forgive us. Amen.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your welcome to Nicodemus when he sought you by night.

We are grateful that we can come to you at any hour – you are only a prayer away.

We give thanks that we can ask about what is on our minds and we thank you for being available to us at all times and in all places. We thank you that you help us to come to knowledge and understanding. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

John 3: 1-17 taken from The Holy Bible ERV – copyright 2006 by World Bible Translation Centre Inc; and used by permission.

There was a man named Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees. He was an important Jewish leader. One night he came to Jesus and said: ‘Teacher, we know that you are a teacher sent from God. No one can do these miraculous signs that you do unless they have God’s help.’

Jesus answered: ‘I assure you, everyone must be born again. Anyone who is not born again cannot be in God’s Kingdom.’

Nicodemus said: ‘How can a man who is already old be born again? Can he go back into his mother’s womb and be born a second time?’

Jesus answered: ‘Believe me when I say that everyone must be born from water and the Spirit. Anyone who is not born from water and the Spirit cannot enter God’s Kingdom. The only life people get from their human parents is physical. But the new life that the Spirit gives a person is spiritual. Don’t be surprised that I told you that you must be born again. The wind blows wherever it wants to. You hear it, but you don’t know where it is coming from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone who is born from the Spirit.’

Nicodemus asked: ‘How is this possible?’

Jesus said: ‘You are an important teacher of Israel, and you still don’t understand these things? The truth is, we talk about what we know. We tell about what we have seen. But you people don’t accept what we tell you. I have told you about things here on earth, but you do not believe me. So I am sure that you will not believe me if I tell you about heavenly things! The only one who has gone up to heaven is the one who came down from heaven – the Son of Man.’

Moses lifted up the snake in the desert. It is the same with the Son of Man. He must be lifted up too. Then everyone who believes in him can have eternal life.

Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him would not be lost but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world. He did not send him to judge the world guilty, but to save the world through him.'

Comment:

Another elderly man is drawn into a dialogue about faith and the future. Nicodemus is a teacher in Israel, a leader of his people. He is drawn to – but profoundly confused by – Jesus he realises that Jesus must have come from God, and that he could only do what he does because of the presence of God with him. But Nicodemus doesn't get it.

In an account rich in the humour of misunderstanding, Jesus tells him that he needs to be 'born from above' [or born again]. And Nicodemus is even more confused because he knows – like everyone else – that you only get born once and never as an old man. But Jesus, of course, is talking about the kingdom of God, and he is stressing that those who welcome Jesus become part of that kingdom. Nicodemus thought he was already in God's tribe by being born an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham who was to be the father of the nation through which the world would be saved.

Jesus stresses that birth into the right tribe is not enough – the kingdom of God is for those who receive him. And it is possible that the sign of receiving of him is baptism [being born of water]. Shortly after this story we find out that Jesus baptised more people than John the Baptist as a sign of becoming his disciple.

Perhaps Jesus is saying to Nicodemus that he can not hide in the shadows, coming at night, keeping his allegiance secret. Rather he has to come into the open and declare his faith. This is a cost for each of us drawn to Jesus – but it is also a symbol of joining a new community of similar people who have embarked on this journey of faith. Nicodemus doesn't have to remain isolated.

We don't know how Nicodemus responds to Jesus just then – but we do know that he defends Jesus in the Sanhedrin and that he appears after the crucifixion among those who bury Jesus' body.

The secret disciple becoming more public.

Meditation of Nicodemus – taken from A Most Amazing Man – Year A [Nick Fawcett] – copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett

He was right, wasn't he! I, of all people, should have understood his words – me, a respected Pharisee, a teacher of Israel, an acknowledged expert in matters of faith.

Yet, listening to Jesus, I was like a child, struggling to make sense of what he said.

'How can this be?' I asked. 'What do you mean?'

And, believe me, I really wanted to know.

I was risking everything, remember, even *talking* to him – that's why I went at night – for I was consorting with the enemy, with someone my colleagues deemed a sinner and blasphemer. But there was something about the man that held me spellbound, his life speaking uniquely of God – cutting through the paraphernalia with which we had so earnestly surrounded him.

I wasn't just picking holes, arguing for the sake of debate. I was hungry to learn and understand.

And, for all that his words sometimes shocked me, I couldn't help feeling Jesus had the answers I was looking for – the keys, if you like, to the kingdom.

So I asked – and I pondered – and I asked again, before returning home with my mind in a whirl – past certainties shaken and new ideas warring with the old.

I'm still as confused as ever in some ways, for I can't explain all that stuff about new beginnings and being born again – but I'm certain of one thing: that what matters is responding to Jesus, not having all the answers – that if we give him both our faith and doubt we'll receive back far more than we can ask or expect – life unlike anything we've known before!

Prayer:

Almighty God – make us hungry to know you better – to understand more of your purpose – more of your love in Christ – more of what you would have us do and be.

Give us enquiring minds, eager to explore the mysteries of faith and to grow in understanding.

But help us also to recognise the limitations of our knowledge – the fact that some things are and always will be beyond us; and grant us the humility to live with questions, trusting in what we know and leaving the rest to you. Amen.

Lord, today we pray for those whose hearts are sore – who cannot lift their hands from weariness or sadness, or both.

We ask you to bring them rest and hope – to tend to their hurts, whether these are old scars or fresh wounds.

And we ask that you would renew them by your Spirit's power.

We pray for those longing for a new beginning – who feel heavy at the idea of another day.

May they know the reality of your love for them.

We pray for those who need your refreshing and ask that you would renew them by the Spirit's power.

We pray for those on journeys to which they were driven, not called – those who have been uprooted, violated, exiled.

May your redemptive power be at work even in the darkest places and on the hardest of roads.

Our eyes squint to see the light, but you can see in the dark.

God of kindness, hear our prayers for we ask them in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Close:

Go, wherever God may call you – take courage and be strong.

Be aware of the everlasting arms, ready to support you, to catch you, even to carry you, when things get tough.

Go in the power of the Spirit. Amen.

Go and live with God's Spirit within you.

Go and reach out to all those you meet.

Go and help others to experience the sense of belonging that you already know in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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