



# the Source

*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...*

Our February theme is *telling your Jesus story*, and the readings include this encounter Nicodemus has with Jesus. It appears Nicodemus wants to be taught by Jesus...but what? As a Pharisee, he has a standard answer to the question about knowing God: observe the Law of Moses as closely as possible. He seems to sense that something is missing from this path, but he does not ask Jesus directly.

Jesus, however, immediately begins talking about the Kingdom of God, and a need to *be born from above*. And Nicodemus is caught off guard. How does birth enter a dialogue about faith? Birth is about a beginning, not adding to what he already has learned. Does Jesus really mean all Nicodemus has practiced for years is worthless?

A birth, of course, isn't a surprise. There is a time of expectation and preparation leading up to the *blessed event*. Nor is it finished once the baby arrives. We celebrate birthdays regularly, with expectations of new abilities and responsibilities as the years pass. Failure to grow and thrive are disappointing and sad.

Nicodemus knows this human trajectory, and is perplexed. And then Jesus speaks of God's Spirit entering into the picture. There is some unpredictability to God's action in our lives. Our own efforts to define God's will for us may not be where we are led!

It's unusual for a character to reappear in the gospels, but Nicodemus does...twice. In John 7, he is in council with the Pharisees, and counsels them not to be hasty judging Jesus' teaching and disciples. Then in John 19, he joins Joseph of Arimathea in burying Jesus, with Nicodemus bringing the spices needed.

So now the question: how did John learn all these things? Nicodemus' meeting with Jesus was at night, with secrecy implied. And none of the disciples hung around in the Jewish councils. Don't you suppose that here we have Nicodemus telling John and the community of disciples his "Jesus story." Will we have one to tell like his?

— Dr. John Clifford, First Church Clergy-in-Residence

## A Family Affair

Have you ever lost something? Recall the feeling of looking for something you lost. It could be very important to you. You search and search. You double check under the couch, on top of your dresser, even in the refrigerator! You know this thing you are looking for is somewhere, you can almost see where it is in your head but you just don't see it. Imagine the feeling of searching, following a persistent need to find something that is just beyond your grasp.

Nicodemus felt the pressing need to search for an answer. He respectfully followed the teachings of Jesus but couldn't shake the feeling of looking for something.

Turn to the New Testament and read John 3:1-8 out loud. We all have a need to search for answers. The answer is accepting Jesus in to your heart. God loves each one of us and he wants us to love each other. You have found what you are looking for when you live with Jesus in your heart every day. For this coming Valentine's Day and every day, let's remember God as he is all we are searching for.

*Dear God, help us to live with Jesus in our hearts. We want to talk to him daily so we never lose sight that he is all we need. Amen.*

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

## Consider the Source John 3:1-8

### Monday: John 3:1-2; Genesis 1

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, with overtones of a secret visit. Yet we discover that God often works "at night" in our world. From "evening and morning of the first day" of Creation, to the emptying of the tomb, night leads to light.

- Why do you think we usually see "the terrors of the night" rather than the good?
- How are the hours of darkness enriching for you?

### Tuesday: Luke 8:4-8

Jesus speaks of new life in many ways. One image he used often was that of a seed, which only produces when it "gives up the old" to become new.

- Who planted the "seed of faith" in you? How well is it growing?

### Wednesday: Luke 1-2

When is your birthday? How do you celebrate it? We all know when that day is; we count the years as milestones of life. Why are they important?

- What makes certain birthdays (18, 21, 65...) so special?
- Do we also mark other "special days" as when we began part of our life journey?

### Thursday: John 3:7-8

The Greek and Hebrew words for "spirit" and "wind" are the same. Jesus uses them together to express the mystery of God's Kingdom at work. It blows and we notice, but not where it comes from!

- How have you been surprised by the Spirit?
- Are you ready to welcome more of God's unexpected calls to you?

### Friday: John 3:4-5

Jesus is the champion of new beginnings – repentance, forgiveness, resurrection. For Jesus, the past faded before the possibilities of tomorrow.

- When in your life have you found a fresh start, a "new life"?
- One term we use is "revival" – "return to life." Are there areas of your life needing reviving?