

December 2, 2018

La Jolla Christian Fellowship

JOHN 3 in 3D: Episode 3

Celebrating Advent With Nicodemus And Friends

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Introduction: We just celebrated “Thanksgiving.” Now, as Jesus’ disciples, we enter “Advent” – a holy season of *preparation* for the “coming” Christmas Day. The four NT gospels each declare the “Greatest Story Ever Told,” including Jesus’ miracles received as *signs* by those responding with newborn faith. *In John’s gospel*, the first was turning water to wine at the Cana Wedding (2:1-11). In Jerusalem, his Temple cleansing and Passover acts drew many (2:12-24). He knew humanity’s “mixed bag” better than to trust Himself to them. Yet Jesus *proclaimed God’s love & eternal life!* Nicodemus’ wary night visit brought the “coming f2f” of seeker and Savior. Today, “Let every heart prepare Him room!” Informing our Advent reflections, there are...

Early Voices Declaring Who Jesus Is (see Wm Barclay, *Jesus As They Saw Him*)

- The Apostle John says (1:1-14) Jesus is the glorious *Logos/Word of God* incarnate
- John the Baptist (1:15-36) calls Jesus the *Only Begotten, Lamb, Son... of God*
- Andrew and friends (1:37-42) declare Jesus is *The Rabbi and Messiah*
- Philip (1:43-46) claims *Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph’s son, fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy*
- Nathanael, called by Jesus (1:47-51), shouts out to *Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel*
- His Mother Mary at the wedding (2:5) directs servants: “*Do whatever He tells you*”
- Many, with His *glory revealed* (1:14) across the ages, have sung “*I Saw the Sign...*”

Early Moments Indicating Jesus’ Approach

- Question “What do you want?” and Invitation “Come and see” for Philip (1:43-46)
- Rebukes Temple dealers: “Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” (2:16)
- Hospitality to Nicodemus (3:1-21); also Samaritan Woman (ch4), Invalid at Pool (5)
 - He lovingly works with all: role-conflicted, baggage-laden, culturally-stereotyped
 - Whether hearing confession or confusion, goes beyond transactional to *relational*
- So starting where “Nick at Night” is, Jesus calls out to his heart, mind and soul.
- Given N’s repeated “How?” – Christ counters: “HOW will YOU believe...*heavenlies?*” He then (3:13-21) presents core Gospel/Eternal Life/Light, as *Son of Man* (3rd per)

Early Fruitfulness in Nicodemus’ Life

- We note as Jesus’ scene with N closes, He offers a *best next step* growth invitation:
 - “*Whoever lives by the truth comes into the Light, so that it may be seen plainly*
 - *that what he has done has been done through God.*” Start where you are & grow...
- We later meet N (7:50-51) exhorting fellow Pharisees to listen to Jesus. Also, having heard (3:14) “the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life,” N reappears (19:38-42) after Jesus has been “lifted up” on the cross – and helps Joseph of Arimathea with the burial process and place. John 3:16!

Responding to Jesus' "grace & truth," Nicodemus found faith & eternal life! In Latin, the term *sacramentum* originally meant an earnest "vow of loyalty."

At the Lord's Table, may ours be renewed - embracing His Advent & Sacrifice!

Today's "John 3 in 3D" message, with earlier Sunday teachings by Brother Elliott Stearns and Pastor Harry Wilson, are available on our LJCF website.

In the 4th century, with Christianity legal in the Roman Empire, and Christmas 1st celebrated on Dec. 25, writers reflected on John 3, Christ's Sacrifice & Life...

"The text 'God so loved the world' shows such an intensity of love! For great indeed and infinite is the distance between the two. The immortal, the infinite majesty without beginning or end loved those who were but dust and ashes, who were loaded with ten thousand sins but remained ungrateful even as they constantly offended him. This is who he 'loved.' For God did not give a servant, or an angel, or even an archangel, but 'His only begotten Son.' And yet no one would show such anxiety for his own child as God did for ungrateful servants... He laid down his life for us and poured forth his precious blood for our sakes... We put gold necklaces on ourselves and even on our pets but neglect our Lord – who goes about naked and passes from door to door [knocking; Rev. 3]..." ***John Chrysostom, Sermon 27 on John***

"Let us praise the Son first of all, venerating the blood that took away (*expiated*) our sins. He lost nothing of his divinity when he saved me, when like a Great Physician he stooped to my festering wounds. He was a mortal man, but was also God. He was of the race of David, but Adam's creator. He who has no body clothed himself with flesh. He had a mother who, nonetheless, was the Virgin. He who is without bounds, bound himself with the cords of our humanity... He offered up his blood and cleansed the whole world. He was lifted up on the cross, but it was sin that was nailed to it. He became as one among the dead – but he rose from the dead, also raising to life the many..." ***Gregory of Nazianzus, Poem 2.***

"As far as it lies in the power of the physician, he has come to heal the sick. Whoever does not observe his directives/prescriptions destroys himself... Why would he be called the Savior of the World unless he actually acts to save the created order?" ***Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on John's Gospel 12:12***

"I know, Lord God Almighty, the chief duty of my life is the devotion of all my words and thoughts to you. The gift of speech you've given can bring no higher reward than the opportunity of proclaiming you, and displaying you as you are – as Father, and Father of the Only-Begotten - to a blinded and rebellious world. As this is my sincere desire, I pray your gift of help: that as I hoist the sail of my faith, you'll fill it with the breathed wind of your Spirit, directing and empowering me in this voyage. We trust the promise of One who said, 'Ask, it shall be given, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened (Lk 11:9). ***Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity 1:37-38***

"Nicodemus said: I spoke to the Jewish elders in assembly and asked, 'What would you do with this man who has offered useful and glorious miracles as none before?'

The Jews said: 'Have you then become his disciple, speaking out in his favor?'

Nicodemus replied: 'Amen, I receive his teaching casting my lot with him as you say.'

Author Unknown, Gospel of Nicodemus/Acts of Pilate 5