

Trinity Sunday

Our gospel reading from John today refers to Nicodemus the Pharisee and leader of the Jews, coming to Jesus by night. One reason for this might have been that Nicodemus didn't want the others to see him, as generally we are 'seen' in the light but 'not seen' in the dark.

There are various references to light and darkness in the bible. The contrast is striking both in the physical world and the spiritual world. In Isaiah we read; 'The people who walk in darkness, will see a great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.' In Paul's letter to the Colossians he writes. 'For he rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.' And in 1 Peter in reference to God to his people we have 'Him who has called you out of darkness in to His marvellous light.'

John's gospel begins with Jesus, the Word being referred to as the light and Jesus later says of himself; 'I am the light of the world, he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

The light seems a good place to be. Of course darkness in a physical earthly sense has its place. We might associate it with peace and restfulness. Nicodemus seemingly came from a tradition where religious men of his ilk would study late into the night. But light is good, both in the physical world and most certainly in the spiritual world.

When Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, he comes out of the darkness into the light. No doubt there was some light where Jesus was abiding, but more importantly Nicodemus came into the light that was Jesus. Nicodemus came to the light itself. Respect must be given to Nicodemus who was an educated and religious man of good standing and we see him in a good light on two occasions further on in John's Gospel. He insists to his colleagues in the Sanhedrin that Jesus must have a fair trial, that he must be heard before being judged and then after the crucifixion, he helps Joseph of Arimathea prepare the body of Jesus for burial.

Nicodemus also has some belief that Jesus is a man of God. Perhaps sent by God even. He says to Jesus. 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Nicodemus and his friends may have thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, or Elijah or one of the prophets of old. But Nicodemus nonetheless is despite this, struggling in the darkness, because he doesn't know who Jesus is. He doesn't know that Jesus is too God the Son, sent by God the Father. And Jesus will shortly talk about God as Holy Spirit.

Jesus says. 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above.' To this Nicodemus questions the idea of being born again. 'How can anyone be born after having grown old?'

Nicodemus is curious and perhaps genuinely wants to know more. Of course he can't really think that anyone could enter the womb a second time?

Flesh is after all flesh, which Jesus refers to. But Jesus is talking of another birth through water and the Spirit. And it's through this birth that we might enter the Kingdom of God.

Just as through earthly and physical life we are born, starting as babies to children to adults, maturing in some sense. So in spiritual re-birth we start a journey that leads to maturity of faith. We're not there straight away and our infant faith needs nurturing. After all did not St Paul say in his first letter to the church in Corinth. 'I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed you are still not ready.'

But we have to start somewhere and the message from Jesus to Nicodemus and indeed to all of us is; you don't have to stay in the darkness, which can range from leading a really bad life, to a not too bad life, to even a Nicodemus life. A life that doesn't know Jesus; can't see Jesus! No, we can come out of the darkness and into the light. All we have to do is trust. Trust in the wind and let it blow us in the right direction and

be born again of the Spirit. Just as in physical life, we do not always know what direction we are going to go in, so too with the spiritual life. As with all journeys of life from birth to maturity, there are risks and challenges. But in catching the wind of the Spirit we will see what we didn't see before, what we couldn't see in the darkness.

And that is the kingdom of God. For 'what is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.' A child of God that lives in God's Kingdom.

In name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen