

Second Sunday in Lent (3/01/2026)

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Why Should I Openly Embrace and Live Out My Faith? Lessons from Nicodemus

Our Scripture readings today present two very different responses to God's call.

In **Genesis**, God calls Abram to leave his homeland and go to a place he has never seen. Abram does not hesitate. He gathers his family and his possessions and begins the journey toward Canaan. His faith is visible. It is bold. It is public. Abram openly trusts God, and through that faith, God blesses his life and makes him a blessing to others.

But when we turn to the **Gospel of John**, we meet a very different person—Nicodemus.

Nicodemus is not an ordinary man. He is a Pharisee, a respected teacher of Israel, a man of influence and learning. He recognizes something special about Jesus. He tells Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.”

But notice how Nicodemus approaches Jesus.

He comes **at night**.

He does not want to be seen. He does not want to be associated publicly with Jesus. He believes, but his belief remains cautious and hidden. He fears the judgment of his colleagues and the rejection of his community.

Nicodemus represents a faith that is real, but hesitant—a faith that prefers the safety of darkness rather than the courage of daylight.

Later in the Gospel, Nicodemus does show some devotion. After Jesus dies, he joins Joseph of Arimathea and brings spices for Jesus' burial. But by then, Jesus' public ministry is over.

Nicodemus' faith emerges only after the danger has passed.

So the Scriptures present two models: **Abram and Nicodemus**.

Abram openly lives his faith.

Nicodemus hides his faith in the shadows.

And this raises a question for us today:

Why should we openly embrace and live out our faith?

We live in a culture that often tells us that religion should remain private. We are told that faith belongs in the personal sphere—something quiet and invisible. But the faith we receive from Christ is not merely private. It is transformative.

When someone is **born again**, their life begins to change. They begin to see the world through the lens of Christ's love. Their relationships change. Their priorities change. Their actions change.

Faith becomes part of their identity.

A life transformed by grace has nothing to hide. It begins to reflect God's holiness, and that holiness naturally becomes visible in the world.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that to see the kingdom of God, one must be **born from above**, born of **water and the Spirit**.

This rebirth is not something we manufacture by our own effort. It is the work of the Holy Spirit—like the wind that blows wherever it chooses. We cannot control it, nor can we fully explain it. It is God’s grace moving within us.

But Nicodemus struggles to understand this. He asks a strange question: “How can a man be born again? Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time?”

Nicodemus is a great teacher of Israel, yet he cannot grasp the transforming power of grace.

And Jesus responds almost with surprise: *“You are a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”*

That question is not only for Nicodemus. It is also for us.

Many Christians today resemble Nicodemus. We are comfortable practicing religion through rituals, traditions, and rules. But transformation—that is something different.

Rituals can be performed without changing the heart. Religious obligations can be fulfilled without practicing love or justice.

But the grace of Christ calls us to something deeper.

It calls us to a life of **holiness**, a life where God’s love reshapes how we live and how we treat others. It calls us to extend that holiness into the public sphere through acts of mercy, compassion, and justice.

What is the value of religion if it never transforms our lives?

What is the purpose of religious law if it does not lead us to receive the free grace offered through Jesus Christ?

The life of faith cannot remain compartmentalized—private on Sunday but disconnected from the rest of our lives.

A life transformed by grace expresses itself through the sigh of the heart, the cry of the soul, and the work of our hands. It longs to grow deeper in grace and to move toward the perfection of love.

Holiness breaks down the barriers that separate us from God. And once we are restored in our relationship with God, that restoration becomes visible in how we live.

We begin to love more deeply.

We begin to serve more faithfully.

We begin to participate in God's work in the world.

And that cannot remain private.

The good news is that this transformation is not something we achieve through our own effort. Jesus does not give Nicodemus a command to accomplish something impossible. Instead, he extends an invitation to him.

The Spirit of God does the work.

Our role is to receive the gift.

When God gives us new birth through water and the Spirit, our faith begins to grow. But faith cannot remain forever in the womb. A faith that never grows beyond its hidden stage remains immature.

Faith must eventually step into the light.

To believe in Jesus is not only to think about him.

To believe is to live.

To believe is to act.

To believe is to bear witness in the world.

The invitation that Jesus gives to Nicodemus is also given to us today.

Come out of the darkness.

Step into the light.

Receive the new life that God offers.

When we allow God to work within us, we discover that believing in Christ is not merely a private conviction—it is a way of life.

So let us come to Christ not in the darkness of night but in the light of day.

May God help us to walk before Him in the light and to live our faith openly in the world.

Amen.