

2022-06-12 ... 6.30pm Evensong Sermon ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

John 3: 1 – 17

'Nicodemus'

Introduction ...

Nicodemus is an interesting character ... though we don't know a great deal about him. Today's New Testament reading has the most references to him – and then he disappears off the scene for quite a while. He is only mentioned in John's Gospel.

To notice in passing ... without Nicodemus we may not have had one of the most precious and valued Bible verses: **John 3: 16**

**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life**

Stage 1 ...

In this passage – Nicodemus comes as a leader of the Jewish Faith: one God ... monotheistic. He comes with certainties ... with knowing 'what's what.'

This comes across in his opening words to Jesus:

We know that you are a teacher who has come from God ... etc.

But Jesus – instead of saying: 'Well thank you very much – very kind of you to say so' ... Jesus leads Nicodemus from certainty to uncertainty ...

**The wind blows where it chooses and you hear the sound of it
but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.**

So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

With our Trinitarian belief: God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit ... we need to be influenced by each and all members of the Trinity.

When our certainties start to extend much beyond God's love as shown in Jesus Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit ... we can become too rigid ... we can think we know too much ... what God should be doing ...the way things should be done.

Being too certain can lead us to fear that things that are "new" will undermine us ... something about a loss of control ... a fear of change ... and a risk of stifling the Spirit.

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Stage 2 ...

It seems that Nicodemus went off to ponder these things. We don't hear of him again until **John 7**.

Here Nicodemus is still named as one of the Pharisees or Jewish leaders ... but he speaks out to stop an automatic judgement on Jesus.

In this episode – Nicodemus is the one who introduces uncertainty ... perhaps he has learnt this from Jesus.

Stage 3 ...

Nicodemus then disappears off the scene again ... until the end of John 19 ... when Jesus has been crucified and his dead body is on the cross. Nicodemus accompanies Joseph of Arimathea. Together they take the body of Jesus down from the cross, they have taken great quantities of expensive spices for his body, together with the linen cloths.

For us ...

This strongly suggests that he had come to some decision about Jesus ... in a positive way ...

He had moved or was moving away from Faith as defined by certainty in religious practice as a Pharisee ... he was experiencing the new life of the Spirit ... because he sensed the uniqueness of Jesus.

For each of us ... it's worth reflecting on the story of Nicodemus and asking God to show us what he wants to say about our openness to the Spirit.

Amen.