

2023-03-05 ... 10am Worship Together Sermon ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

John 3: 1 – 17

'Being Born Again'

A Quiz to get us thinking ... And so as the stories of these people indicate: you're never too old or too young to take a great leap into the unknown (***A paper was handed round, with several people on, for us to name, their age, and what they did, if we could!***)

To recap: in 2019, Jeanne Socrates, aged 77, became the oldest person to sail solo around the world. In 2021, Katie McCabe, aged 14, became the youngest person to sail solo around the UK – the same year that Oliver Daemon became the youngest astronaut aged 18, joining Jeff Bezos' space flight with Blue Origin.

Malala Yousafzai is still the youngest Nobel Laureate, earning her prize in 2014, aged 17, for championing a child's right to education. Leonid Hurwicz was the eldest awarded the prize in Economic Sciences in 2007, aged 90 years.

These are all people who dared greatly; we may not be so keen, for the stakes are high for them. Space, the sea, and repressive regimes are all potential killers. Yet the rewards are great too; any sailor will tell you of that feeling of 'flow', when you are in rhythm with the wind and the sea, and the sense of achievement when you make landfall in your own little boat.

Malala experienced the empowerment of speaking out: ***'Once I had asked God for one or two extra inches in height, but instead he made me as tall as the sky, so high that I could not measure myself.'*** The rewards are for all, not just personal, continues Malala: ***'I raise my voice – not so I can shout but so that those without a voice can be heard.'*** If Nicodemus has faith in God and is **'born from above'**, he will be saved, enter the kingdom of God and inherit eternal life ... and positive ripples will go out to others.

Of course, we're not all called to be great adventurers or Nobel prize winners. Still, we face thresholds in life – big changes such as a new school, job, or home. Changes can be smaller but still be a challenge – new routines, friendships, a change in our health. It's a safety mechanism in our nervous system to be on alert at such times; but there's an encouragement in our Gospel passage not to let this limit us from risking the new, even when we don't have all the answers.

Nicodemus is helped to understand that there's much he has to still grasp and much that he can still experience. Jesus reminds Nicodemus that we can feel the effects of the Spirit, like the wind, even when we don't know where it's from or where it's going. And God has sent his own Son to help us; we are not alone.

So this Lent – possibly alongside giving up what you've already decided to give up ... how about being open to the new too? Being open to a fresh insight, challenge, way of working with God?