

Title: Born By grace
Text: John 3:1-15

¹ Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

I. Born Again.

- A. The value of illustration and metaphor.
- B. Misconceptions about what Born Again means
- C. Surveys
- D. The Don’ts (Don’t believe, Don’t know, Don’t care)
- E. 31% of American adults call themselves Born Again
 - 1. 54% say there is no consistent standard of moral truth
 - 2. And 38% say Jesus was guilty of sin
 - 3. 70% of non-believers wouldn’t want someone born again as a neighbor

- F. Some think it means emotional experience
- G. Others think it also means strict rule-following, hypocrites, holier than thou
- H. Some think it's the name for a brand of Christianity

II. What's Jesus says about it

- A. What can the person and character of Nicodemus tell us about the need for new birth?
- B. What brings Nicodemus to meet with Christ?
- C. The non-sequitur: from teacher to new birth
- D. Jesus says Nicodemus should know better because Jesus is paraphrasing new birth from the OT (Deuteronomy 30:6)

“The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”

- E. Jesus tells us what new birth means by telling us what's wrong with the world in Verse 6, flesh gives birth to flesh
 1. Flesh makes us prideful
 2. Sinful desires that war against our soul
 3. Hero and heroine of our own lives
 4. But the truth is we're the villains in the story
- F. Then He tells us what the solution to the world's problem is, “the Spirit gives birth to spirit”
- G. Who is “The Spirit?”

Ezekial 36: 26-27 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

H. Born again life is new life, spiritual life, transformed life.

Ephesians 2:1, ¹ “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,” ⁴ “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.”

III. Transformed mental Life —

- A. We're given a new way of understanding the cosmos
- B. Science can give us the what, and who, and how, and even when
- C. Philosophy attempts to answer the why
- D. Christianity offers us a revelation from the one who made everything and knows everything
- E. Growing up quarantined in a house with no knowledge of the outside will create one kind of surmising about the world
 - 1. But when someone comes into the house and explains the world, it changes opinion and supposition into knowledge
 - 2. You don't have to agree with Christ, but you have to acknowledge Him as a person who did certain things and made certain truth claims, then wrestle with those claims

IV. Transformed spiritual Life

- A. A new conscience
- B. Living by flesh focuses us inward, we look to ourselves for meaning
 - 1. Religion makes us believe it's us grasping for God
 - 2. Finding meaning through fleshly pursuits, experiences, and satisfying desire
 - 3. Looking for meaning in secular pursuits and bending our neighbor to our own will
- C. Living by spirit means we receive from God — love comes from the Father, to Jesus, through the Holy Spirit to us and then out to the world

V. Transformed volitional life

- A. Rebirth changes your desires
- B. It gives you new power
- C. It makes you a new creation

2 Corinthians 5:17-21, ¹⁷ “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

- D. We still struggle, but the Spirit gives us the power to do it joyfully, freely, and knowing whatever happens we're already forgiven.

VI. Who must be born again?

- A. He doesn't tell Nicodemus, "you've earned your reward, now let me give you a little boost over the top."
- B. He says, you have to start from scratch, from birth
- C. Nicodemus is in the same spiritual position as tax collectors and prostitutes
- D. Nicodemus doesn't get insulted, he listens and thinks
- E. Most commentators believe Nicodemus becomes a Christian
- F. But for Nicodemus, it seems to be a process of thinking and not a moment

VII. How do we apply being born again?

- A. Have you experienced the radical change that comes from new birth
- B. Is born again a non-sequitur?
- C. You must transition as Nicodemus did from Jesus as Godly teacher, to the God who saves

John 3:13 "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man."

- D. What does Jesus mean by the Son of Man?

Daniel 7:13-14 ¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

- E. The reference to the serpent being lifted up

John 3:14-15 ¹⁴ "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

Numbers 21: 4-9. ⁴ They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; ⁵ they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" ⁶ Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray

that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” ⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

- F. Nicodemus saw Christ lifted up on the Cross
- G. Born Again is not a brand of Christianity, new life defines Christian living

VIII. God’s gracious gift of new life

- A. The Gospel is a free gift
- B. We all start in the gutter, but Christ puts his arms around us and invites us to new life

John 3:16 -“for God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son.”

- C. The Father doesn’t loan the son, or rent Him, or lease Him; He gives Him
- D. It’s a gift you can never pay back because the One who gives it already has everything

Romans 11:35-36 says, “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them? For from him and through him and for him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.”

- E. You pay the gift forward. Martin Luther said God doesn’t need your good deeds, but your neighbor does.
- F. God thinks you’re so important He offers new life, eternal life, as a gift for free.

IX. Communion

- A. Reflecting on the miracle of the Gospel and the new life Christ offers
- B. But we often think it’s something we do
- C. Birth comes through pain, and blood, and anguish
- D. But the mother holds her new born and knows it’s worth it
- E. New birth requires sacrifice as well, but Christ suffered the anguish because He believed you were worth it

- F. If you understand that you've received new life thanks solely to the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ, then this table is for you
- G. If you don't believe that, then see an elder after the service

X. Benediction

2nd Corinthians 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.