**Morning Praise @ Home 26th May 2024**

**Trinity Sunday**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading John 3:1 – 17

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**Reflection from Philip**

 **Nicodemus visits Jesus in the night**

In the gospel of John we are given an account of a night time visit to Jesus by a Pharisee, named Nicodemus.

It might have been a night time visit because, as a Teacher of Jewish Law, Nicodemus would have been busy teaching during the day, leaving only the night for study and enquiry. However, I suspect that John mentions it was night for a reason—Nicodemus probably wanted to see Jesus discreetly, under the cover of darkness. He was a well-known figure, and it would not have gone down well to be seen meeting and asking questions of this Jesus from Galilee.

Nicodemus had heard a lot about Jesus. He had heard about his teaching– he had seen ‘signs’ or miracles, in the presence of God. He didn’t think Jesus was just another healer, or another ‘Holy man’; he recognised Jesus as someone ‘come from God’.

But Jesus immediately responded to him saying ‘no one can see The Kingdom of God without being born from above’. Nicodemus was trying to grasp Jesus’ meaning. So Jesus told him he needed to be born of water and spirit.

Water and Spirit? Jesus was referring to the cleansing power of the Spirit, also to baptism in water, also to physical birth – the water of the amniotic sack that accompanies child birth. Nicodemus got the wrong end of the stick, taking Jesus’ words too literally – how can we be born again?!

In this meeting with Nicodemus, Jesus unusually discusses all three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That’s why this is such an appropriate passage to read on this, Trinity Sunday.

We read of **God** – who loves the world, unwilling to let us perish.

Also, we read of **The Son** – sent by God to save us. The New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek word for ‘save’ is ***Sozo*** and its meaning is to rescue, to heal, to make whole again. That reads as more than just ‘saving’ us. The Son is the Son of God but also the Son of man—human. Jesus connects heaven and earth. Jesus says the Son would be ‘lifted up’—like Moses and the serpent—referring to Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

And we read of **The Spirit —** Those who trust Jesus will have eternal life and be reborn from above with water and the Spirit. The Greek word used for spirit is ***pneuma*** – it means spirit, breath, wind. It’s the source of our word pneumatic – Jesus’ word play on ‘the wind blows where it chooses’ makes more sense when you realise the same word pneuma means spirit, breath and wind. The Spirit gives life to believers.

New life? Being reborn? For all his training, Nicodemus was struggling. He kept trying to think literally.

God’s gift of new life is described as The Kingdom of God and eternal life. Nicodemus could grasp the idea of becoming part of the Kingdom of God – Jews believed this would happen not when they died, but when the Messiah came to restore Israel. However, the idea of an eternal life beginning now, if only he would accept and entrust his life to Jesus – was difficult for Nicodemus to grasp straight away. Nicodemus had extensive knowledge, training, but he struggled to grasp hold of a new, eternal life, just by using his intellect alone. It was apparent he needed to do more.

Jesus’ words in John 3: 16 are perhaps some of the best known in the New Testament. For God so loved the world…. This verse brings together The Father, the Son and the promise of an eternal life, a life lived to the full, enriched by the Spirit.

Jesus wanted Nicodemus to work it out for himself – he was clearly an intelligent man. If he entrusted his life to Jesus, then the Spirit would enable him to be reborn into a new person, shaped and sustained by the Spirit.

Jesus wants just the same for us all. We can all become new people, with the slate wiped clean, able to grow into stronger people, living fulfilled lives. But not through logic and intellect. It takes faith to entrust your life to Him.

So what became of Nicodemus? Did he go away from this night meeting with Jesus dejected, as the Rich Young Ruler did?

Well, possibly. He was certainly given a lot to think about. Given his own status in the Jewish establishment, he had been brave in coming to meet Jesus (even if it was a night visit). But John gives us two tantalising glimpses later in the gospel…

In John 7: 50-51, Nicodemus is described as ‘*one who had been to Jesus before’* and he is challenging the authorities as they arrest Jesus to give Jesus a fair hearing – for which he is rebuked.

Then, in John 19: 39-40 we read that after the crucifixion, ‘Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes…’ - to prepare Jesus’ body for burial.

So once again, Nicodemus takes another step towards his own commitment by bringing these perfumes for Jesus’ burial at a time when it was dangerous to be associated in any way as a follower of Jesus, especially given his status as a leader among the Pharisees.

Sometimes, people are not able to make a full commitment to Christ immediately. Sometimes, it develops over time. It seems to me that Nicodemus was on his own journey of faith, and I don’t think John would have specifically featured him three times in his gospel if he had not gone on to play an important part in the early church.

We should ask ourselves where we are on our own journey of faith. Maybe we have lived nominally as Christians, but not fully entrusted our lives to Jesus. Maybe we are not living a life filled with The Spirit… it’s not too late to take that leap of faith and entrust our lives to Him, that we may experience ***‘sozo’*** that we be rescued, healed, made whole again. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Amanda**

O Triune God, what an exciting mystery we celebrate today, that you, our God, are three persons in one being. Your essence is so awesome, it is beyond our understanding. O Father, you adopted us as your children through the death and resurrection of your Son. O Holy Spirit, you gave us faith in Jesus through explosive power of the gospel. You testify that we are God’s children, and you guarantee our inheritance of eternal glory with Jesus. O holy Trinity, your saving love overwhelms us. Keep us as your own, and each day move us to declare: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty! We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, through all eternity.

**Our God three in one, in your mercy, hear our prayer**

Father, we thank you for your creation and all you richly promise for us. We thank you for the wonder of nature and your artistry which you sew into the rhythms and motions of each season; the beauty of delicate blooms with so many colours, shapes and forms and varied landscapes showing your love for diversity. We know we have fallen short as stewards of the environment entrusted to us as we ask for wisdom, knowledge and solutions to the damage done so that each generation from now to your return can thrive in the world entrusted to us. Where there is devastation either by our hand or by nature we ask for insight as to how to bring relief, how to ease the suffering and how to bring about change for the better.

**Our God three in one, in your mercy, hear our prayer**

Jesus, you taught us to live with true humanity. We ask that you minister to us this morning. Meet with us as a church community this morning and help us reflect you in our communications through this coming week. Give us a heart for your people across the world who are suffering, those caught up in or fleeing war, those living in fear, those being abused, harmed or trafficked and those who are unwell physically, mentally or emotionally. Show us where we can be of use and give us strength to step out of our places of comfort to be purposeful to your will. We pray for our Governments particularly in this time of preparation for a General Election and ask that your hand be evident in the process.

**Our God three in one, in your mercy, hear our prayer**

Holy Spirit, we open our hearts and spirits to you. We ask that you reveal yourself to us in new ways and as we seek you we ask that we become more aware of your inspiring presence. We ask that we be honourable to your gifts as we seek to develop a closer relation with you. Through prayer, bible study and fellowship we ask to know you deeply and intimately.

**Our God three in one, in your mercy, hear our prayer**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**