

May 26, 2024 – Holy Trinity Sunday

“God’s Kingdom” by Pastor Julio Romero

Gospel: John 3:1-17

This day in our liturgical calendar belongs to the Holy Trinity but for the sake of the proclamation of the Lord’s Gospel, let’s add Nicodemus to the equation. What we know about Nicodemus is that he was a successful person, he was a religious leader, a very important priest who had worked his way up to become a member of the Temple’s Council in Jerusalem. He was a person in a position of authority and prestige in Jerusalem.

This could be the reason why he came to see Jesus at night. He didn’t want to be seen in the company of this rabbi and miracle worker from Nazareth whose name had set off all the alarms among the priests and religious figures at the Temple in Jerusalem.

It is easy to assume that everybody was talking about Jesus in Jerusalem, the young preacher whose teachings and miracles were looked at with suspicion.

Nicodemus used the darkness of the night to visit Jesus, perhaps with the purpose of finding out for himself if everything he had heard about Jesus was true.

Unfortunately for Nicodemus, he left the meeting with Jesus more confused than he was before he met Jesus that night.

The words Jesus said that night about being born from above and born of the Spirit were too difficult for Nicodemus to understand and certainly it would be for us too if we didn’t know what we now know and what we now know might not be enough to fully comprehend the meaning of Jesus’ teachings to Nicodemus.

I find two key sentences from our Lord Jesus that could help us discern and come close to the deep and profound meaning of the conversation our Lord Jesus had with Nicodemus.

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” This is the first statement, the second one is:

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”

I know I have preached on this topic before, but the importance of it in our Christian life compels me to talk about it again and again.

What catches my attention this time is that when our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, *“Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”*, He is not talking about an event that will happen sometime in the future. *“No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”* This statement from the Lord Jesus implies that the Kingdom of God is a current reality; it is here now, but not every one can see it, not everyone can enter in.

It is as if Jesus is telling Nicodemus, “Look Nicodemus there are all kinds of evil in this world, things are not the way you would like them to be: there is disobedience to God’s Commandments, there is violence, there is poverty, injustice runs rampant all over, there is no peace, there is pain, there is suffering, extreme greed and deception”. It seems as if the kingdom of God is nowhere to be found in this world and what makes matters worse is that not everybody wants to enter it and yet the kingdom of God is here but only those who are born from above, born of the Spirit can see it, can enter it.

T.Z. Koo said:

“The kingdom of God does not exist because of your effort or mine. It exists because God reigns. Our part is to enter this kingdom and bring our life under his sovereign will.”

Yes, our part is to enter God’s Kingdom that is at hand, that keeps coming to us. We may not be happy or hopeful with the way things are going in this world and with our own lives, our own health. We may not like our neighbours, our politicians or the way public services and offices are being run in this country, we may have been victims of deception, betrayal, or a scam. All these are good reasons for us to think that the Kingdom of God has not arrived yet, but as T.Z. Koo said, “The Kingdom of God does not exist because of our efforts.” It is God who brings it and all we have to do is to enter, and all that is needed to enter is to have a real relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Let’s remember that the kingdom of God is not a physical place, but it’s a spiritual realm. The kingdom of God is the place where God rules.

Alistair MacLean quotes a story from Tauler, a German mystic. The story is titled "Kingdom in my heart" and it says:

One day Tauler met a beggar. "God give you a good day, my friend." he said. The beggar answered, "I thank God I never had a bad one."

Then Tauler said, "God give you a happy life, my friend."

"I thank God," said the beggar, "I am never unhappy."

Tauler in amazement said, "What do you mean?"

"Well," said the beggar, "When it is fine, I thank God; when it rains, I thank God; when I have plenty, I thank God; when I am hungry, I thank God; and since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases Him, pleases me, why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?"

Tauler looked at the man in astonishment. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am a king," said the beggar. "Where then is your kingdom?" asked Tauler. And the beggar answered quietly: "In my heart".

The work of Christ as well as the revealing of His kingdom begins in the heart, in our relationship with Him, in believing in Him, and in following His word and example.

Nicodemus had the Law of God in his heart. His relationship with God was based on his efforts to fulfill the Law, for him to see and enter the Kingdom of God, he had to be born again, he had to experience a conversion of the heart. You and I have an advantage over Nicodemus. We have a relationship with God, with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We know of God's great love for us, forgiveness and grace for us. Now it is time to use what God gives us to see His Kingdom unfold in front of our very eyes, so that we may enter in and be part of it. **Amen.**