

Lenten Devotional Reflection

8th March, 2020 (Lent 2)

Scripture: John 3:1-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” 3 Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, and no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ 8 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.” 9 Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

11 “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

17 “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Message

This is the Second Sunday of Lent, and the Gospel taken today is John 3: 1-17. In the readings, there are three verses by Jesus which summarize the main points of the entire passage. They are :

- (1) “ No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” (3:3)
- (2) “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.” (3:8)
- (3) “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (3:16)

Let me try to quote the following interpretations from the materials provided by

different hermeneutics in the Bible study books:

1. "Rebirth or born anew":

1.1 There are three explanations for the word "rebirth":

(i) It can mean from the beginning, completely radically. (ii) It can mean again, in the sense of for the second time. (iii) It can mean from above, and, therefore, from God.

1.2 The "rebirth or born anew" of man is to undergo fundamental changes so that he is like a new born. But this new birth is not born from the mother's womb, but must happen in the spirit. Although it can be described as "regenerate once", the whole process is not what man can do, but the grace and power from God

2. "Wind" and "Spirit" :

2.1 "Wind" is the same word as "spirit" in Greek. But because the Scriptures here refer to "blowing" and "voice", so this means "wind", not "spirit".

2.2 So is the new birth from the Holy Spirit. You do not know how the Holy Spirit works and you cannot see the process of the new birth, but you can see the transformation and effect of the Holy Spirit in human life.

2.3 As long as we obey the law of the wind, the wind will help us. Similarly, as long as we obey the law of the Holy Spirit, we can experience the rebirth of a new life.

3. "John 3.16" :

3.1 This verse is called the verse for each person;

3.2 Martin Luther called this verse a microcosm of the gospel;

3.3 This is the most familiar verse in the Bible. It simply and directly tells us the true meaning of the gospel;

3.4 "John 3:16" is known as the essence of the gospel.

Reflection

1. In your personal life experience, or in the brothers and sisters you know, are there any significant "rebirth or being born anew" life experiences?
2. The Holy Spirit has come down like a thunder, wind, and fire, and filled the twelve disciples of Jesus (Acts 2: 1-4). Have you ever had these experiences in your spiritual life?
3. "Eternal life" takes place right now? Or is it a future thing?

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