

J.J.

BIRTHDAY AGAIN! (PART 2)

John 3:1-18

John 3: 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.”

INTRODUCTION

FUNNY BIRTHDAY CARDS

Happy birthday

Forget about the past, you can't change it.

Forget about the future, you can't predict it.

Forget about the present, I didn't get you one.

Happy Birthday

Statistics show that a lot of good looking people were born on your birthday.

You're not one of them.

Happy Birthday

You don't have to wash the dishes today. You can do them tomorrow.

Last week, we talked about : What does it mean to be born again?

What we have learned.

Being born-again is joining a new religion.

QUOTE : But in a broader sense, religion is a **man-made path** to God.

We also learned that people think that the path to God is by being good.

*Romans 3: 10 As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;
11 there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.
12 All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.”*

But we can never work our way to God.

Ephesians 2: 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

We mentioned that Religion is a man-made path to God. It will not work. We need to find out God's path...How? He's the one who revealed it to us through His Word.

And according to Him, there's only one way to God.

John 14:6 I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jett said in our Bible study last Friday : No Jesus. No Heaven.

What does it mean to be born again?

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

Etymology : Born “gennao” again “anothen”

Gennao - birth; brought forth;

Anothen - anew; again; from the beginning; but also means “above” or “from a higher place”

John 1: 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

To be born again means to be born of God.

Now, here's the thing. Some of you might be attending church but some of you might not have been born again.

Let's look at the elements of being born again or being born of God.

IT'S AN IMPERATIVE, IT'S GOD'S INITIATIVE, IT'S INCLUSIVE

I. IT IS AN IMPERATIVE

NOTE: In order for us to go to heaven, IT IS IMPERATIVE for us to be born again (ipanganak na muli). There's no other way.

We learned last week that Jesus was visited by Nicodemus. Who is Nicodemus?

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."

And Jesus answered :

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

We learned last week that the reason Jesus Christ immediately told Nicodemus this is because as a Pharisee and as one who is part of the Jewish ruling council, they thought that they can enter the Kingdom of God by being religious or by following the law or by being a good person.

Now that Jesus said this, it's natural for Nicodemus to ask :

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!"

Illustration: Theo was just born a week ago...and yet, even if the parents wanted to, he cannot already go back inside the womb of Louisa. Much more, let's say Kate. She cannot go back inside the womb of Chicay.

That's why we continue our study that to be born again, it is God's initiative.

II. INITIATIVE

Look at how Jesus answered him.

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.

To understand this passage, let us remember he is talking with Nicodemus – remember again that Nicodemus is a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council – **in our day, he's like a Supreme Court justice** – this means he knows the Law... this means he knows the passages of the Old Testament.

So when Jesus said this, Nicodemus will remember what it means through the Old Testament.

Illustration :

"I am the way, the truth and the life..." Who said this? You will already know it's Jesus because you are familiar with this verse. Ask a Hindu person who grew up in Hinduism, he will not know this because he's not familiar with it.

Illustration :

Now when I say, "Crispin!!! Basilio!!!” some of you specially the older Filipino generation will remember this. But the younger generation, specially those who grew up here has no idea what this is...it's the familiarity of the concept.

That's why when Jesus said to Nicodemus

no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

He will reference it to the Old Testament since he is familiar with it given who he is.

What will Nicodemus remember?

Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your children.

But definitely Nicodemus will remember what God said to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 36: 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 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. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

What does this mean?

This passage is the symbol of being born again – of being born of water and of the Spirit.

First, "*I will....*" That's God's initiative.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

People instinctively know that in order to be acceptable to God, we need to be clean.

Psalm 24: 3 Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? (to be in God's kingdom) 4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,...

But here's the problem : We try to clean ourselves by following the law? By being a good person. But what does God think of that?

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags

Why? It's because we use ourselves to make ourselves clean when we are not clean.

Illustration : I remember during summer camp at Riverview, the men's duty is to clean the gym. We will put out the trash, put aside the tables and chairs, sweep the floor and then once that's done, someone will get the big mop bucket with water and the mop. I remember, Orlan said, "We need to replace the water in the bucket. It's because the water is so dirty, it's not really cleaning the floor, we're just putting back the dirt on the floor."

It's like us, we think we can clean ourselves before God by being good, by following the law and etc. but it doesn't clean us.

So if we can't clean ourselves, what can clean us? Remember this hymn?

What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

*O precious is the flow
that makes me white as snow;
no other fount I know;
nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

As John wrote again in his letter:

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

In short, God is the one who initiates cleansing us.. to be cleansed from our sins means to be forgiven of our sins... and forgiveness was already offered to us 2000 years ago, when God's Son gave His life... as payment for our sins...that's why all of our sins are

And then Ezekiel also mentions :

26 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. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.
forgiven.

This means, GOD WILL GIVE US NEW LIFE!!!

I love it in our Bible study, we have the same topic taught by Roger... when Roger asked what does it mean to be born again...his wife Jett replied, "New life"

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone if you have a heart of stone...it means we're dead. The Bible says, we are dead in our sin... (Ephesians 2:1-10)

and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

LISTEN CAREFULLY : To be born again, means we have been

- Cleansed from our sin because of Jesus Christ
- We have a new life...
- And that new life is because the Holy Spirit is in you in order to help us follow God's will in our life.

That's why Paul wrote this to Titus:

Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

Notice the Holy Trinity working here? God the Father is the one who initiated this. **God the Son** was the one who washed away our sins because of His death on the cross. **God the Holy Spirit** is the one who gives us new life.

IT IS ALL GOD'S WORK, NOT OURS! GOD GETS ALL THE GLORY!

The question is, "Why?" Can't we do it ourselves? To make ourselves spiritually clean and to give ourselves a new life?

It's because we are dead. Dead people cannot respond to anything. Dead people cannot do anything.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

How do we know we are dead? We are following the ways of the world. We do not want to follow God.

Since we are dead and we can't do anything...IT NEEDS TO BE GOD'S INITIATIVE TO CLEANSE US AND TO GIVE US NEW LIFE!!!

That's why Jesus says :

6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

I love how the New Living Translation wrote this.

John 3:6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. (NLT)

That's why Jesus said:

7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ (IT’S AN IMPERATIVE)

Here our Lord is anticipating Nicodemus’ question... how is one born of the Spirit...when, how? What happens?

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.

It’s just like the wind...we do not see it...IT’S NOT IN OUR CONTROL BUT YOU SEE THE EFFECTS OF IT.

Let’s read again the NLT

John 3:8 The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.

Story: Talking about “hear the wind”. When my father-in-law and I were in Korea. We were ministering in this small church at night. This was a small church, with all the windows closed. During the time that my father-in-law was asking people to give their lives to Christ and people were praying. I also closed my eyes and suddenly, I heard a strong gush of wind in the room. I thought somebody open a door or a window, that’s why I looked up but it was only people praying.

Illustration : we do not see the wind but how do we know there’s wind...you see it swaying the leaves of the trees or you feel it in your skin. What you are seeing is THE EFFECT OF THE WIND!

It’s like being born again... we do not see how it works but you see ITS EFFECTS!!!

What are the spiritual effects? We want to obey God. We want to worship God. We want to hear God’s Word. We want to follow Jesus.

Now you see that? The evidence that we have a new life...is a Changed Life.
Why? Because we have become a new creation... a new person.

2 Corinthians 5:17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (NLT)

And this promise of being born again IS AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES...

That’s why it’s INCLUSIVE... we’ll study that next week.

Now let me end with this.

Remember earlier, I said Just as you can hear the wind... that's the Holy Spirit

Some of you are here right now and you can hear the Holy Spirit in your heart.

Let me tell you the story of Elijah. He was tired, afraid and depressed and he hid in a cave. And God wanted to talk to him, to encourage him. He said this :

1 Kings 19: 11 The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."

Look at the next verses :

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. (a wind) 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?

(Remember, God knows that Elijah was scared, tired and depressed)

Our Lord Jesus is talking to some of us here right now and asking "What are you doing here and He's calling you by your name." He knows you're tired, scared or even depressed... and here's what our Lord is saying to you.

Matthew 11: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

(Ask people now to speak with Jesus. Give time) *If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts. (Hebrews 3:15*

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

S.G.D.