

J.J.

BIRTHDAY AGAIN!

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

(Show photo) Baptism in the camp. Explain the meaning of baptism

(Show photo) May 23, 2024 at 6:26 p.m. Theodore Luke Fletcher Lalic was born. My first grandson. (Theodore – means gift from God : Theo (God) – Doron (Gift) (Greek) Luke (from Loukas) – giver of light

We pray that when he grows up, he will be born again.

What does it mean to be born again?

Myth About Being Born Again

Being born-again is joining a new religion.

Story : When I became a Christian, one of the things that Christians were labeled in the Philippines is “born-again.” People will say, “Uy, born again” yan. Some people say, “Look, there’s Mr. Born Against.” There’s a certain stigma. People did not really understand what that means and thinks it’s another religion or even worse, a cult. I remember when my mom first knew about this, she thought that I joined another religion.

Remember: Being born again has nothing to do with religion.

Let’s define what religion is:

Etymology: Religion in NT (threskeia); external form of worship

It's something that you do to worship God.

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

Catholicism : You need to do the sacraments and be a good person to be acceptable to God.

Islam : You need to follow the teachings of Islam and be a good person to be acceptable to God.

People with no religion : You need only be a good person.

Even the Dalai Lama wrote this :

“Whether you believe in God or not does not matter much, whether you believe in Buddha or not does not matter so much.... You must live a good life... A good motivation is what is needed.: compassion, without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy; just understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and respecting their rights and human dignity.”

This sounds noble but hear this, we cannot please God by being a good person, by living a good life. We cannot go to God by being a good person. You know why?

*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.”*

Illustration: Some people when you ask them, “Are you going to heaven?” They will say, “I think so” And they will say, “It’s because I’m a good person. I’m not a murderer.” “Me?” When I was young, I would say, “I would go to heaven because I said, that I’m in church (Catholic church) every day.” Literally, every day. That my mom would already get mad that I’m there. I don’t smoke. I don’t drink. I’m obedient to my parents and etc.” But as we all know...there’s no one good, not even one.

Again, the Bible says, If you call a person out of anger “Raca” – which is derogatory for “Gago”, you are a murderer. Have you been angry at a person before? Then you are a murderer. The Bible says, if you look at a person with lust is an adulterer. Have you looked at a person with lust before? Then have you lied before, what do you call a person who lies... a liar.

1 Corinthians 6:9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Revelation 21: 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Religion is thinking we work our way to God. 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”

This word “anothen” is used 13 times in the New Testament. 8 of those 13, it was used as “above”. Sample verse:

John 3:31 The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

So to be born again, means to be born from above. And who is the one who is from above based on what we read? The one who comes from heaven is above all.

JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF HERE. HE IS GOD!!!

We can also see that from John 1

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.

Some call it Spiritual Birth; Re-generation; In tagalog, it's Ipanganak Muli

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

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

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.

Why did Jesus say this?

Now it is very important to know the background, the context, so we will fully understand why Jesus said this.

Let's study this first :

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."

Background :

- Nicodemus was a Pharisee and Jewish ruling council (Sanhedrin) – this means he knows all the laws in the Old Testament and rituals of the Jewish practice.

Remember, **Pharisees were so strict in following the law** that they made several other sub-laws to ensure they were following it. They are also the ones trying to enforce.

Remember, **they thought they were above others and accepted by God because of what their status and that they followed the laws of the Old Testament religiously.**

Biblical Illustration: The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector

Luke 18: 9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

Why does it matter? It's because they think that by their status, heritage and their faithfulness in following the law, they are accepted by God or they belong to the kingdom of God.

This is what Nicodemus thought also but look again.

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."

First, he went there at night. Why?

Remember, the Pharisees hated Jesus Christ. He calls them snakes, vipers, hypocrites, fools and etc and our Lord does it in front of other people. So Nicodemus is avoiding his fellow Pharisees to see him talk with Jesus.

Illustration: Imagine yourself you are in a party and in that party, the Pope and several cardinals were there and then you call them, "snakes, hypocrites, fools". That's shocking and embarrassing.

Now, look at what Nicodemus called Jesus. He called him "Rabbi", this means teacher. Remember, Nicodemus is a teacher himself, highly educated and very respected in his field and then he calls a carpenter from Nazareth as teacher.

Illustration: It's equivalent of someone who has a Doctorate in Theology from Princeton University and then goes to Kuya Met's house and calls Kuya Met, "Hi Professor Frias"

Why would Nicodemus do that?

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."

This means, he has heard Jesus speak and when He speaks, it's different. It's with authority and he has also seen Jesus made the blind see, made the deaf hear, cast out demons, made the lame walk and etc.

I love how Jesus replied, even without Nicodemus asking a question.

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

Significance:

Jesus goes right straight to the point and answers in a personal way.

Remember again, Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a good one at that since he's part of the Jewish ruling council (Sanhedrin, they are a council that says what's right and wrong, what's lawful and unlawful). So he follows the law well and strict in following it.

SIGNIFICANCE It's because they think THEY ARE RIGHTEOUS AND ACCEPTABLE BEFORE GOD because of that. THEY THINK THEY BELONG IN GOD'S KINGDOM BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS AND WHAT THEY DO...

Jesus says immediately...THAT'S NOT THE WAY! TO BE PART OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. YOU NEED TO BE BORN AGAIN!!!

Now it looks like Nicodemus sincerely did not understand what Jesus was saying.
Because he replies..

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 3 days 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.

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

Our Lord was saying to Nicodemus.

I'm not talking about your flesh or your body that needs to be born.

You need to have spiritual birth.

In short, as we have explained earlier...Jesus was saying... you need to be born of God to belong to the kingdom of God.

Let me help explain this to you by God's grace.

Let's say there's a stranger who knocks on my door. He's a nice person, well-dressed, courteous but then he proceeds to go to your refrigerator. Gets some eggs, bacon and cooks and eats the food. Then goes to the couch, gets the remote, starts watching TV and then when he gets tired, goes into the bathroom, takes a bath and falls asleep in the bed.

What would you do? You'll call the police.

Now let's say, it's Zak who knocks on my door says hi to us, he says he's hungry and goes and cooks and eats, washes the dishes and then takes the remote and watches TV, and then goes upstairs, takes a bath and then goes to sleep upstairs.

Will we call the police? Of course not. Why? It's because he is our son. He is our child.

That's what Jesus was saying to Nicodemus. You do not belong into God's house or God's family unless you are God's child and in order for you to be God's child, you need to be born into that family.

It's like my grandson. He is a Lalic! Why? He was born a Lalic. A stranger, no matter how good that stranger is, no matter how polite, no matter how religious can never be a Lalic! The only way he can be a Lalic is if my wife gave birth to him or I adopt him.

It's the same with us. We need to be born by God or adopted by God in order for us to be part of God's family or God's kingdom.

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

Next week, we will talk about that it's God's initiative (it's His choice) and it's inclusive... to be part of God's family is offered for everyone.

But my question to you right now is this, "Are you born again? Meaning ipinanganak ka ba ng Dios? Are you His child?"

You might ask, "Pastor, how can I be born again, born of God?"

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.

You need to believe that Jesus is the only way to God. No Jesus, no heaven. You need to believe on who He is... He is God Himself, the Lord of your life and your Saviour, the one who paid for all of your sins. If you do that, you will be born again. Born of God.

S.G.D.