

"A New Way of Looking at Things."

St. John 3:1-10

A small boy was licking an ice-cream cone unsuccessfully, as he and his older sister enter an elevator. The cone is melting faster than the kid can eat it, and it is dripping down the cones' side onto his hands. The elevator stops, and a regally dressed elderly woman in a full-length fur coat enters. She faces the door with the boy and his sister behind her. The boy is losing the battle with the ice-cream cone and looks at the back of the woman's gorgeous coat, and softly wipes the ice-cream off his hands onto her coat. The boy's sister whispers, "Be careful, you'll get fur in your ice-cream."

Ah, the power of perspective. Where we stand often determines how we see things. Our lives will change if we will see life through the viewpoint of God's grace seen in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Nicodemus came to see Jesus because he wanted to chat about religious issues. In the conversation, Jesus states something that influences faith since. Please note verse 3 again, Jesus answered: "I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it's not possible to see God's kingdom." Nicodemus is puzzled and asks what Jesus means. It is a fair question. How DO you explain being "Born from above?" or the more traditional "Born again?"

In short, it means living through a new perspective. Nicodemus' life was problematic, but it was not because of a lack of religion. He had all the religion he wanted. He was a Pharisee and could recite the Law all day long. He understood what being God's People' meant. It necessitated eating, walking, worshiping, wearing particular clothes, and observing certain days in a specific way. Nicodemus' problem was not that he was unreligious, his problem lay elsewhere.

Neale Donald Walsch says, "*Yearning for a new way will not produce it. Only ending the old way can do that. You cannot hold onto the old, all the while declaring that you want something new. The old will defy the new; the old will deny the new;*

the old will decry the new. There is only one way to bring in the new. You must make room for it."

To this religious leader, Jesus states, "Be born from above." Feeble Nicodemus doesn't have a clue about what Jesus is saying. Sometimes you and I don't either. Jesus gives old Nic an invitation to live a life of faith from the perspective of Grace. Jesus calls Nicodemus and us to a faith that carries us rather than a faith you have to carry. Jesus is here speaking about God's amazing grace that, when we see it and experience it, makes all the difference in our lives.

Do we visualize this grace as a award we earn or as a gift from God to be received? Are our lives spent in attempting to acquire more 'stuff,' or are we aware that everything we 'need' has already been given to us by this gracious God?

Into a world of rulebooks, Jesus invites people to embrace grace. In St. Matthew's Gospel Jesus says, "Consider the lilies, they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his and could recite the Law all day long. He understood what being 'God's People' meant. It necessitated eating, walking, worshiping, wearing particular clothes, and observing certain days in a specific way. Nicodemus' problem was not that he was unreligious, his problem lay elsewhere.

Into a world of rulebooks, Jesus invites people to embrace grace. In St. Matthew's Gospel Jesus says, "Consider the lilies, they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these." (6:28). And just before this Jesus counsels, "Do not worry about your life. . . ." (6:25). God is always looking out for you.

When we live from this perspective, knowing God provides, we are liberated from competition and enabled to serve in cooperation. What if we believed this? We sing as though we do. In the hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," we sing; "*All I have needed Thy hand hath provided*". What change could happen if we lived the message of this hymn? The truth of the Gospel is right there. There IS enough food, water, air, for everyone to live in comfort on this blue planet. Glory be to God. We Americans are rich beyond measure and are held in God's hands moment by moment.

The question is what we will do with this? There is no need to hoard or to be fearful. Rather, the Gospel is a clarion call to share, to give, not because we have to but because we want to. We give and share not out of guilt; but as worship, as an offering to God for what God has done for each of us. This is the perspective of grace. When Nicodemus was 'born again, he returned to those he had cheated, the monies owed and more.

When grace fills every breath you take, every moment you live, then we show the world a new way of living.

Alleluia. Amen