

STUDENT



CONCORD
SUNDAY SCHOOL

LECTIONARY
LESSON 10

SUNDAY,
MARCH 8, 2020

John 3:1-10 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, 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?”

Background

The lectionary passages this season focus heavily on what it means to be reborn and remade. This particular story comes one chapter after Jesus turned water into wine and chased the money changers out of the temple. His first few public actions

were likely to cause a good bit of gossip. Thus, we are introduced to Nicodemus who comes to Jesus “at night,” probably to reduce any additional gossip people may spread. Our lesson covers verses 1-10, but the lectionary passage extends to verse 17.

Most people’s first memory verse is John 3:16. With this story as the context, we might infer why Jesus was compelled to explain the faith so concisely. In your own devotional period, continue to read past these verses. What do we learn about Jesus’ understanding of his own ministry in this chapter?

Today’s lesson will focus on **curiosity**.

Read the scripture out loud together.

Discuss with a partner. What do you think the difference is between “curiosity” and “nosiness?”

What’s happening during this passage?

A leader of the religious community comes to visit Jesus at night. He refers to Jesus as Rabbi and says “We know you have come from God, no one else can make things happen the way you do.” Jesus answers a question that Nicodemus didn’t ask. He says, “no one can enter the kingdom without being born from above.” Nicodemus takes this literally and wonders, “you mean we have to re-enter the womb?” to which Jesus replies, “no, it requires being born of water and Spirit.” Further, “the wind does what it does, you hear it but you don’t know where it comes from. That’s how it happens when you are born of the Spirit.” Still, Nicodemus does not understand. He’s stuck. He needs help with this concept, to which Jesus sarcastically responds, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

Why does Nicodemus come to Jesus at night?

In these times, there is no such thing as night lights or street lights. Night time is completely dark. Nighttime means that Nicodemus, the religious leader, can walk without being stopped. Going to see Jesus during the day would be risky, as people would wonder why a man like him was going to see the one who just caused a disturbance in the temple. Going to see Jesus at night would have been a different risk. Muggers, uneven roads, and other dangers might be less obvious at night. Nicodemus takes this risk to see Jesus because he’s curious about what Jesus is up to.

Is Jesus approachable?

Nicodemus does not have the privilege of history that we have. As Christians, we have constructed entire theologies around what it means to be “born again.” We’ve heard sermons, sang songs, even have Christian tee-shirts that talk about “being born again.” But for Nicodemus, this is a foreign concept. Try to empathize with Nicodemus. Put yourself in his shoes. What would you do if someone told you that the way to enter heaven is to be born again? How would you go about making that happen?

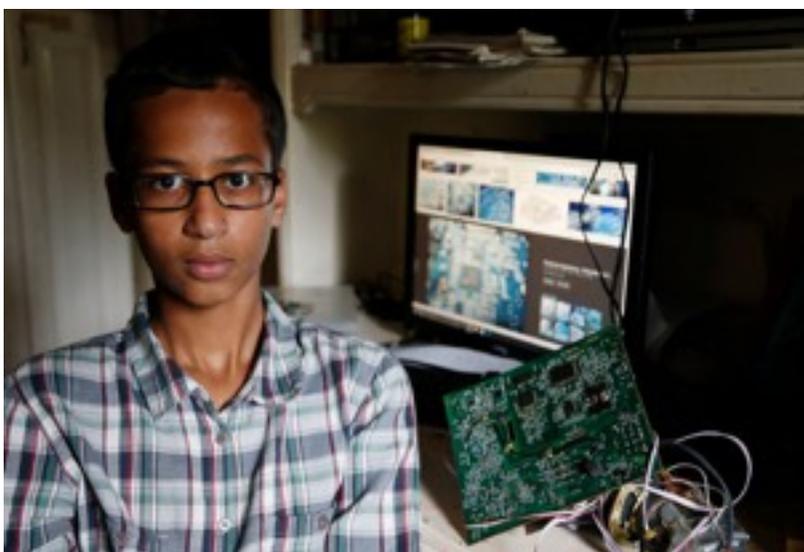
For many, people believe being born again means you must forget the life you had before knowing Christ. Or for others, some say that they cannot come to church until “they get their lives right.” But not only does Nicodemus come to Jesus at night, Jesus **receives** Nicodemus at midnight. Jesus welcomes us as we are.

Jesus also does not require Nicodemus to convert in order to be welcomed. Nicodemus had already confessed that he knew that Jesus could “do things that no one else could do.” Jesus later argues that everyone who believes will not perish. Jesus never requires Nicodemus to do anything. He engages him in the middle of the night and talks with him. Nicodemus may get a bad reputation for being confused, but if we are honest, God’s grace is confusing. How can God continue to meet us, love us, decide to be involved with us? Is it not a curious thing?

What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?

Connection to Today’s World

Ahmed Mohamed was a high school student in Texas in 2015. He brought a



homemade clock to school. Of course, because he is a Black Muslim, the teachers called the police and they arrested him. This sparked a social media craze. People from all across the globe sent their support to Ahmed, including then-President Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Arne Duncan, a host of celebrities and everyday people. Ahmed was profiled because he is a Black Muslim. Anything he did would be automatically suspicious because we live in an

Anti-Black and Anti-Muslim world. But people reached out to support him, including Massachusetts Institute of Technology where Ahmed wanted to apply. Curiosity is a healthy thing to encourage in children. May we all be rewarded for our questions.

Journal: What is something you've always been curious about? What doesn't make sense to you? Write it down and commit to researching this week.

Closing: Sing "Holy, Holy, Holy" with a small edit.

*Holy, holy, holy
Though the [nighttime] hide Thee
Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love, and purity*

Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the God who meets us at any hour of the day. You hear us during the morning commute, the afternoon rush hour, the night time quiet.

As we journey through this Lenten season with you, be gentle to us. Help us to come to you with our questions and wonders. Teach us to be persistent about the Faith. We will seek your face knowing that you will open the door and talk with us.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen

For more:

<https://www.cnn.com/2015/09/16/us/texas-student-ahmed-muslim-clock-bomb/index.html>