

starters for Sunday

Second Sunday in Lent

12 March 2017

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Margaret Whyte, retired Minister previously of Pollokshaws Parish Church, Glasgow, for her thoughts on the second Sunday in Lent.

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Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

What links these passages is faith and trust in God.

[Genesis 12: 1-4a](#)

The call of Abram and his subsequent journey of faith is one of the most important stories in the whole of the Bible. Abraham is mentioned over 50 times in the OT and nearly as many times in the New. But it is also one of the best examples of individual faith. For ministers and anyone called into God's service, the call of Abram, later Abraham, is very special as in God's call to him we recall God's call to each one of us. God chose Abram, singling him out from among his fellow people, people who worshipped a variety of gods, so that God would have a people who worshipped God alone. Abram was tested to leave all, leave his family ties, his home, and his familiar surroundings to go into the unknown, to an as yet unknown country, with this unknown God. The temptation to stay was very real. The promises were amazing, almost unbelievable: that Abram would be blessed and would be a blessing, that this childless man would become a father and have many descendants, that he would be famous, that he would become the head of a great nation, and through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

The change of name to "ab-hammon" means "father of many," so it has probably more to do with his role in uniting the various peoples which became known as the Israelites, than anything else. Sermons on testing and temptation could follow on from Jesus' temptation in the Wilderness from last Sunday.

How vague God's command is – Go! He had no idea where he would be going. And this is a great example of unquestioning obedience. An illustration jumped to mind from "The hunt for Red October" when the commander of the submarine was sent out with sealed instructions, to be opened when they are at sea and told – go! And in many ways we are still sent out by God in this



way, we don't need to know the why, the wherefore, the destination. If we go! As God calls each of us, God will show us the way and supply all our needs.

The confidence Abram places in the promises of God and God's ability and willingness to fulfil these promises forms the inspiration, the guiding principle, the foundation of Abraham's very being, in every subsequent situation, in good times, in bad, in peace and in danger.

The supernatural character of these theophanies have had many doubt their veracity or historicity and consign them to the realm of poetic fiction.

However whether the stories surrounding this migration are tribal legends or actual events, there is no doubt that they became a formative part of Israel's faith history. Subsequent generations would look back to this first of Israel's patriarchs and see in Abram's obedience to the divine summons the initial response to God's covenant with Israel. Christians too look to Abraham's call and his obedience mirrored in their own experience.

Genesis 11: 31 states that Abram's father, Terah, had earlier migrated from Ur of the Chaldeans, near the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to Haran in the upper Euphrates valley. It was from Haran that Abram and his nephew Lot migrated to Canaan (12:4b). Later known as Babylon, today it is Iraq. It was the route of the migration of Amorite tribes and an ancient trade route, so perhaps already known to Abram.

Abraham is a biblical giant; Jews, Christians and Moslems all regard him as their spiritual father, inspiration and guide.

[Psalm 121](#)

Last week, surveying the wondrous beauty of Ben Lomond and surrounding hills covered in snow, though even without snow this Psalm never fails to come to mind. "I to the hills will lift mine eyes" though this is the Scottish Paraphrase of course. Sung roundly and soundly for many generations, this is one of the best known Psalms after Psalm 23.

It states simply and incredibly powerfully that God is our rock; that God's love and care are as permanent, actually even more permanent than the mountains which surround us. (they've only been there for a few million years)



I read that this is sometimes known as the soldiers Psalm as verses 3 and 4 reflect the fear that the soldier on sentry duty might fall asleep. There is no fear that our God will neglect us! David may have written it whilst hiding for his life from fear of King Saul, in the high places of Israel. Or it is alternatively known as the Pilgrims' Psalm as Pilgrims may have sung it as an antiphonal hymn as they approached the temple on its holy mountain, after the dangerous journey through a land infested by robbers, just like the road to Jericho in the story of the Good Samaritan.

It is a truly wonderful Psalm in any version. The repetitive parallelism resounds with trust and faith. It speaks deeply of our confidence in God. By faith we can have complete confidence in our God. We are under his protection and care and we must not worry what the future might bring.

[Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17](#)

Paul asks, "Are we justified through faith or through works of the law?" He uses Abraham's faith as an example that faith comes first for Abraham is justified, put right with God through faith. If we are justified through works then we have something to boast about! But we are not, we are justified by faith alone.

Abraham and his call from God is of course, the greatest example of obedience and faith and would have been very well known to the well trained Rabbi, Paul. And as Christians we would do well to emulate Abraham's example, for this is the basis for Paul's argument throughout these verses.

Commentaries say that rabbis argued that Abraham was justified by works of the law even before it was given. The Jewish tradition is that righteousness or being in a right relationship with God depends on obedience to the law. Paul bases his whole argument that we are justified by faith alone on Abraham's example. Faith must come before the law. The relationship between faith, works and righteousness is the distinctive heart of the Christian Gospel, faith comes before works and righteousness and indeed proceed from faith.

The law doesn't save us because we are incapable of keeping it which makes God angry according to Paul. The wrong doing is not breaking the law but in breaking trust with God, denying God's loving, caring purpose for us. God's plan of redemption is centred on a relationship of trusting love –faith - instead of law-keeping.



Also we are not really saved by faith. We are saved by God's grace. Charis, freely given. This shows us that faith does not mean doing nothing but doing all with trust and reliance on God.

[John 3: 1-17](#)

Night interview of Nicodemus with Jesus

Last Sunday the organist chose as the Anthem for the choir "For God so loved the world" by Stainer! Who could not be moved by the wonderful music and by the words which are precious to every Christian. However this best known and loved verse can blind us to the rest of the chapter.

Nicodemus is a member of the Sanhedrin. He is seeking like so many today. He declares that Jesus is "Come from God" – a phrase normally used only of heavenly messengers, so it hints at his believing "something more" but at this point afraid to commit himself and Jesus is only a "teacher".

Nicodemus, settling in for a theological/philosophical discussion, would not have expected Jesus' blunt retort in verse 3 about being born again. Jesus meant to really challenge Nicodemus to think deeper (out of the box) about his own faith and about who Jesus is. AND it is not for Jews alone but for all humanity.

"Being born again" has come to have so many negative Christian connotations!

An almost modern day John the Baptist, knocked on the door of the manse. "Are ye saved Hen?" Yes I replied I'm a Christian. "Aye but are ye saved hen?" On my metal, I replied in this sort of vein, "I'll have you know my good man this is the manse and I am the minister here!!!" "Weel" he said, "Is that no jist like the Church o'Scotland. But are ye saved Hen?"

Born again, saved... Begin life anew with God, conversion, a fundamental change of thinking and being.

Up until then Conversion meant only of Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith: it would have been a very confusing concept that Jewish people needed to be born again and Nicodemus' rather stupid or cheeky answer shows this. The same is true of Jesus saying "of water and of the Spirit." as water of course was for symbolic and spiritual purification. "How can this be" is the



response yet he must have been very familiar with the words of Ezekiel (36:25-27) and his prediction.

Water was already used in the Jewish faith in the baptism of Gentile proselytes, used by John of course, and became the rite of passage into the Christian church.

Breath and spirit are of course one word in both Hebrew and Greek, and used interchangeably throughout the bible. As new birth is a spiritual dimension it can only be brought about by the Holy Spirit, the breath of God himself. The wind, these 2 millennia later is still a mystery and so is the salvation of God. Yet not to Jesus who speaks of “what he knows and has seen.” Only he claims that exclusive right “as the only Son”.

Jesus is teacher no longer but “the only begotten son” through whom the whole salvation of God will come about when Jesus is lifted high at Calvary. Just as Moses lifted high the snake and all who believed were healed, those who believe in Christ will attain their eternal reward. It is not for Judaism alone but for the whole world and it is not about judging and punishment but about love, about grace.

This deeply spiritual discourse does not appear in any of the other Gospels. Why? It is significant that Nicodemus was a leader in the Pharisees and it reflects the conflict between Judaism and Christianity in the early Church. In the 80s when John’s Gospel was written at the Synod of Jamnia, the Pharisees held sway and brought about the banishment of all Jews who followed Jesus. John perhaps in response to this, records this meeting of Jesus with Nicodemus in the hope that a leader who became a follower of Jesus would convince the Pharisees and Jews would be more sympathetic to the cause of Christ.

John introduces the crucial question of “Who is this man Jesus!” Throughout the Christian year it was a favourite of mine to explore exactly who Jesus is and during Lent is the perfect time. Who is Jesus for you? Teacher, fool, zealot etc... or is he the son of God, the Saviour of the world...



Sermon Ideas

To begin this sermon this morning I'm going to ask some rhetorical questions to get you thinking about Nicodemus and what Jesus said to him. And try sharing your answers over coffee after church.

Where were you born?

What time of day was it and what day and month, and if you want to tell, what year? Were you born in hospital or at home?

How did you celebrate your birthday as a child?

When did you first hear about Jesus?

Can you remember a day when you decided to become a Christian, or did it all happen over a period of time?

Now it may seem silly for me to ask these questions not expecting any answers but they allow us to talk about being born again.

Jesus says that being a Christian is like being born again. It is when you start your life all over again and make a fresh start with Jesus.

In many ways those who have had a dramatic, what we call a Damascus road experience of God are lucky, blessed that they know when that happened to them.

I am not aware of that happening to me, and here this morning there will be people who know the moment when they gave their hearts to Jesus and people who have like me been nurtured in their faith throughout their whole lives. The confirmation for each one of us of being born again, comes day after day in the way we journey through life with God.

We can also say that being born again, doesn't happen only once, like God's love which is new every morning, we all have to start afresh every day, born again into God's love, it is not only about newness or fresh starts but about being born again into deepening our relationship with God.

For the next 3 weeks we will be finding out more about Jesus from people in the Bible who got to know Jesus personally and got much more than they bargained for in those encounters with



Jesus. Today there is Nicodemus, next week it is the woman at the well and on the 30th of March it is the Man who was born blind.

If you want to find out about a person there are several ways you can do it. You can ask other people who know the person well to tell you what they know about him or her. You can observe how the person behaves - what they do. You can listen to what they say. You can read what others have said about them. Or you can get up close and personal and get to know that person personally.

The best way of all to find out about Jesus is by putting your trust in him, by walking with him, by listening to what he had to say and talking to him in prayer.

Nicodemus came to Jesus to find out more about this teacher who was making such an impact on the people. We don't know how Nicodemus got to know about Jesus, whether Nicodemus heard Jesus teaching or whether he had only heard of him through others. Now Nicodemus wanted to know Jesus personally. But he came by night.

Was this the only time he could come or was he not yet ready to let people see that he, a member of the powerful Jewish ruling council, was associating with Jesus? Jesus who was becoming a major problem to that very council.

There is a good question for us here, that jumps out immediately. Are we afraid of being seen to be a follower of Jesus? Through our dancing classes Tom and I are meeting all sorts of new people, but I am dreading the moment when they ask me, what you do for a living, for as soon as people know that you are a minister, their behaviour changes; for one thing they start watching their language! But why should I be afraid of revealing that I am a follower of Jesus? Why should any of us.

In the conversation that followed, Nicodemus found out much more than he was expecting as he asked his first questions. Our first questions to Jesus might also be tentative ones but if you are genuinely seeking to know Jesus he will reveal himself to you just as he did to Nicodemus.

Forget about small talk. Jesus always moves to the heart of things, he swiftly moves on from Nicodemus' opening comment to the real issue. If you want to be part of the kingdom of God you need to be born again, born of the spirit.



Being a Pharisee or a rabbi or a minister, a church member or a leader in the church does not guarantee being in the Kingdom. The new birth through Christ does. You have to be born of the Spirit.

A great teacher himself, Nicodemus should have linked Jesus' words to those of the prophet Ezekiel who said that God would pour out his spirit and give people a new heart and a new mind. Yet he was confused. Nicodemus didn't understand.

And Jesus goes on to reveal more about himself. He reminds Nicodemus of a well-known event – the rebellion of the Israelites in the desert and the way they were saved from God's punishment by looking at the bronze snake on the pole that God told Moses to set up. Up to this point Nicodemus may have thought the conversation was between two teachers, but now he learns that Jesus is not just another teacher.

Jesus explains he is the Son of Man, sent from heaven, who is to be lifted up so that everyone who believes and turns to God will be saved. God is not the cruel judge some people expect, but the saviour of the world.

We don't know how Nicodemus reacted that night but his conversation with Jesus about the work of the Holy Spirit, the new birth and about Jesus himself did change his life.

He became a supporter of Jesus, spoke up for him in the Sanhedrin, tried to stop him being arrested and condemned to die on the cross. He was there at the cross. He carefully helped Joseph of Arimathea lift Jesus' broken body down and laid it gently in the tomb.

Nicodemus came by night but he came into the light.

For God loved the world so much that he sent his only son to be its saviour.

Have you realised that God loves you, that God gave his Son for you and that there is a new life and eternal life for us all?

Like Abraham, God calls each one of us to start out on a new "journey" too. It doesn't involve moving house or leaving good things behind – but it does involve a new kind of life altogether. It is called a journey of faith. The thing that makes it special is that, like Abraham, it means being aware at every moment that God is going with you. Amen



Time with Children

At Junior Church you will be learning all about Abraham and how God spoke to him and asked him to leave his home and start out on a long, long journey to a new home that God had planned for him.

When we go on a journey apart from trusting your parents, how do we know where we are going, what things can help us to go the right way?

Sat Nav, Phone, Map, lights, street signs, compass, you can ask someone.

But what if you had none of these things. Think of before these things were invented, what did people use to help guide them to a destination?

During the day, they used the sun, because we know the sun rises in the east and sets in the west.

And at night they used the stars, to guide them, the stars are gathered together in Constellations which are just a random pattern of stars in the sky named after animals or mythological creatures.

Test knowledge.

Looking North just now, can see these two constellations, ... Plough (part of Ursa Major) , and Cassiopeia, looks like a giant W in the sky. Looking South Orion and Gemini.

One star in particular – the North Star or Polaris. This is positioned above the North Pole and so it seems to stay still in the night sky as the earth rotates beneath it.

And as a result it has been used for Navigation for centuries.

And how did they find their way if they were in Scotland and the sky was always cloudy. I have no idea but ask Grandad when you get home.

Abraham had no idea where he was going but he trusted God because God knows.

We are all on a journey with God, a journey of faith, we have no idea where God is leading us but God asks us to put our trust and our faith in him. Because he loved us so much he sent us Jesus.



Prayers

Choir Prayer

Grant O lord Our feet have brought us to this place of worship,
Our lips long to praise you in word and song,
May our lives witness to your great love for us.
May our hearts trust your continual presence with us;

Call to Worship

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies are new every morning.
Great is His faithfulness to us, Great is God's faithfulness.

Opening Prayer

Lord God you are here, You are everywhere we go.
Lord God you guide us. Lord you Protect us. You are wherever we go.
Lord we need you, Lord, we trust you. You are wherever we go.
Lord we love you, Lord we praise you, You are wherever we go.

Lord God you love us more than there are stars in the sky.

We praise you that you care for us more than there are planets in space.

Your devotion to us is bigger than the universe itself.
And so this day and always, we praise you and worship you,
honour and serve you, trust and love you.



Closing Prayer of St Patrick

May the strength of God pilot us;
May the power of God preserve us.
May the wisdom of God instruct us.
May the hand of God protect us;
May the way of God direct us;
May the shield of God defend us;
May the love of God hold each of us in his hand.

Prayers of Intercession

(this may have come from Spill the Beans sorry if its use upsets anyone)

Loving, faithful merciful God these are the journeys that we enjoy making.

Going on holiday, trips out for the day, a journey to meet someone we love.

Thank you Lord, for these journeys.

Renewing, inspiring God, there are the journeys that we don't like making; going to the dentist, sitting in a traffic jam, for some people going to the shops, going to visit when it is a hard duty.

Help us lord on these journeys, help us to know that you are with us, wherever we go.

We pray for those in the congregation who are travelling in the near future, anyone who travels as part of mission and service.

We pray for safety for commuters, children on their way to school, HGV and public transport drivers and all who will holiday, now or later in the year.

We travel this journey of life together, knowing that you are with us every step of the way. We give you praise and thanks.

When difficulties face us, Help us Lord, to keep following

When temptations distract us,

When failures discourage us,

When tragedy makes us doubt

When opposition makes us fearful



When tiredness makes us feel like giving up

Help us Lord to keep following

When you call us to something new

Help us Lord to keep following.

You my Lord, are the laughter, you the joy, you the dance;

You are beauty in the wilderness, the resting place of the traveller, the hope of the dark night;

Your promises will stand as long as sand is in the desert, as long as stars are in the sky;

You are the held hand, you are the calmed mind, you are the soothed wound;

You alone are wisdom, you are justice, you are hope;

You are certainty for all who put their trust in you;

To you unparalleled, be glory and praise;

Keep calling us on to a new day, a new place, a new life with you, born of the spirit, born from above, born anew and again and again, each new day.

Lead me on, Lord to the place where you would have me go.

When I am uncertain of your plan, lead me on faithfully.

When I am fearful of the consequences, lead me on with integrity.

When I am frustrated by circumstances lead me on patiently

And may I never lose sight of you on the journey

Until I meet you face to face, Amen.



In addition to the above prayers, prepared by our contributor, other prayers may be found in *People of the Way* which is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It was also the theme for Heart and Soul 2016. *People of the Way* is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



Musical Suggestions

CH4 194	This is the day
CH4 600	Spirit of God
CH4 251	I the Lord of sea and sky
CH4 502	Take my life
CH4 475	We have heard a joyful sound
CH4 81	I to the hills...
CH4 533	Will you come and follow me
CH4 111	Holy Holy Holy
CH4 404	I danced in the morning
CH4 162	The God of Abraham praise
CH4 605	Thanks to God whose word was spoken
CH4 530	One more step along the world I go
CH4 316	Love came down at Christmas
CH4 123	God is love: let heaven adore him



Additional Material

Illustrations

A church warden arrived at a vicarage to keep his appointment with the vicar, but his teenage son answered the door. I'm afraid he won't be able to see you after all. He's just had a letter offering him the post of Bishop of the Bahamas!

But he's only just been appointed to this parish.

Yes, but he's been offered a car, 8 week's annual holiday and twice the salary. So he's gone to his study to pray for guidance.

Is your mother praying with him?

No she's up in the bedroom packing the suitcases.

On a serious note , Isabel Kuhn Missionary to China said:

'When is the search ended? In one sense, it is finished when our hand, stretched out to God in the name of Jesus Christ, feels the answering grasp and knows that he is there. But in another sense the searching never ends, for the first discovery is quickly followed by another, and that by another, and so it goes on.

To find that he *is*, is the mere starting point of our search. We are lured on to explore what he is, and that search is never finished, and it grows more thrilling the further one proceeds.'

I find this quotation particularly appropriate for me.

The Spiritual life consists only in a series of new births. There must be new flowerings, new prophets, new adventures, always new adventures – if the heart of mankind, albeit in fits and starts, is to go on beating.

John Milton. He who brought me hither will bring me hence: no other guide I seek.

Prayer

God of all times and place, thank you for leading us safely to this moment. We go from here, lord with you to guide us, May friends and visitors enrich us, May we be continually aware of your



presence with us as our guide and companion. May what you have revealed to us teach us, may the Bible and our prayers direct us, And so may every step of our journey please you. Amen.

Story

There was a man who was asleep one night in his cabin when suddenly his room filled with light and the Saviour appeared. The Lord told the man He had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might. This the man did, day after day.

For many years he toiled from sun up to sun down, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmoving rock pushing with all his might. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out, feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.

Seeing that the man was showing signs of discouragement, Satan decided to enter the picture placing thoughts into the man's mind such as; "You have been pushing against that rock for a long time and it hasn't budged. Why kill yourself over this? You are never going to move it?" Satan said many other things like this, giving the man the impression that the task was impossible and that he was a failure.

These thoughts discouraged and disheartened the man even more. "Why kill myself over this?" he thought. "I'll just put in my time, giving just the minimum of effort and that will be good enough."

And that he planned to do until one day he decided to make it a matter of Prayer and take his troubled thoughts to the Lord."Lord" he said, "I have laboured long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock a half a millimetre. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"

To this the Lord responded compassionately, "My friend, when long ago I asked you to serve me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push. And now you come to me, your strength spent, thinking that you have failed. But, is that really so?"



Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back brown, your hands are callused from constant pressure, and your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. Yet you haven't moved the rock. BUT YOUR CALLING WAS TO BE OBEDIENT, TO PUSH AND TO EXERCISE YOUR FAITH AND TRUST IN MY WISDOM.

This you have done. I, my friend, will now move the rock."

Sketch Philippi Marlowe and Nicodemus

(This is a bit of a pain to prepare but well worth it)

The day had been hot, real hot. So hot that every scorpion had high-tailed it to under the nearest rock. Except of course for those two legged scorpions - the Romans. Parading up and down, just to remind us, like we had bad memories or something. Bad memories? Yeah, we had them.

And the night was no cooler. That's when the rats come out. Tax collectors sweating us more than the sun ever did. I'd spent the last two hours dodging them, and then did my own bit of high-tailing back to the office to get some shut eye.

That's when he appeared. Like another bad dream looking to off-load on someone. And that someone was me.

He was a Jewish leader called Nicodemus, who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. A capable guy, but this time he was coming apart a bit...

Philippi Marlowe (alternative beginning)

There was a Jewish leader named Nicodemus, who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. One night he went to Jesus to ask him some questions. But just suppose, just suppose, that before he ever went to Jesus, he had called in at the offices of Philippi Marlowe's detective agency.

Nicodemus: Mr Marlowe, I need your help.

Marlowe: That's what people pay me for. What's your problem?

Nicodemus: Jesus is. People are saying the most extraordinary things about him.

Marlowe: I expect he's a crank. Why don't you forget him?



Nicodemus: There must be more to him than that. He couldn't do what he does, say what he says, be what he is, unless he's got something going for him.

Marlowe: You don't know what to make of this guy Jesus, so you want me to check him out for you. Is that it?

Nicodemus: That's it, exactly!

Marlowe: It won't be easy. I'm getting too old for this caper. I don't do fieldwork no more. Morse is in Macedonia. Poirot's in Pergamum. Hey!! Why don't you do the fieldwork yourself? From what I've heard of this guy he's not going to get violent.

How about you slipping round there when there's no one else to see you? We'll get you wired up, then we'll listen to the tapes together. You can manage that, and I'll knock ten percent off my fee.

Nicodemus: Make it twenty percent and you're on.

Marlowe: One night Nicodemus went to Jesus and said to him...

John 3: 2-17 with Jesus and Nicodemus in dialogue.

Nicodemus: Well, how did I do?

Marlowe: He saw you coming. He ran rings round you.

Nicodemus: Never mind that! What I want to know is: who is he? There must be something on the tape you can use. Did God send him? And if so, why? What's Jesus going to do? Should I follow him or just hope he goes away?

Marlowe: Nicky, I can help you build up a picture, but there are some things I can't decide for you. You're going to have to join the big boys and make up your own mind about Jesus. I'll tell you what I think, but then it's up to you.

Let's go back to something very revealing he said at the beginning.

(Play the tape of v 5-6)



Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God is for everyone who trusts in him, for people born of the spirit. We can't earn our way into the kingdom or force our way in. We are members only because of God's gift. And that gift is for everyone.

Now to the heart of it.

(Play the tape of v 16-18)

Jesus says God is going to send his Son down here to do something about clearing up the mess we've got ourselves into.

Do you get it Nicky? He's talking about himself! We are so precious to God, that he sent Jesus not to judge us, which we deserve, but to save us, to bring us back to God... to save us.

Well, that's big stuff, life-changing stuff. I can understand why some people might think he's a crank, but it's your decision, Nicky.

Nicodemus: Making claims like those, he's either mad, bad... or who he says he is... the Son of God. And it's up to each of us to decide which it is going to be. Having got to know him personally there is no doubt in my mind – he is the Son of God. And I now know what it was that made him come into the world.

Marlowe: What's that?

Nicodemus: You and me. It's hard to believe, that God could love us so much. But God has sent this man. You better believe it.

To be taped (or whatever) – Jesus and Nicodemus verses John 3: 2-17 omitting phrases like “he said” etc. Then of “Jesus” reading verses 5-6 and verses 16-17 again.

Nicodemus: Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent by God. No one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God were with him.”

Jesus: I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again.”



Nicodemus: How can a grown man be born again? He certainly cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!"

Jesus: I am telling you the truth. No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. A person is born physically of human parents, but he is born spiritually of the Spirit.

Do not be surprised because I tell you that you must all be born again. The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus: How can this be?

Jesus: You are a great teacher in Israel, and you don't know this? I am telling you the truth. You do not believe me when I tell you about the things of this world; how will you ever believe me, when I tell you about the things of heaven? And no one has ever gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from heaven.

As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.

Verses 5 – 6

Jesus: I am telling you the truth. No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the spirit. A person is born physically of human parents, but he is born spiritually of the Spirit

Verses 16 - 17



Jesus:

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.



Additional Resources

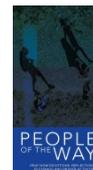
Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [People of the Way](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Margaret Whyte for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

