



## SERMONS THAT WORK

### Trinity Sunday Year B

#### **The Ordinary and the Extraordinary**

**[RCL]: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17**

Every extraordinary experience sparks from the ordinary. Take a moment and reflect on the moments that have made you who you are today. Some of them may be spectacular, earth-shattering, heartbreaking, and more. But when we really take the time to reflect on what made us who we are right now, today, this moment, we will come up with the names of people who have filled our lives. Little things they did or said to us, that they may not even remember today, but that stayed with us and changed us. In reflection, we will realize it was the mundane, weekly habits and rituals that ordered our lives, thus shaping us into the people we are today. This truth is a hint to us that God – our awesome, all-knowing, omnipotent God – is right there with us, taking what might be the most ordinary of moments and breathing that little extra into it, so that over time it becomes something extraordinary.

On a not-so-special night, full of curiosity, Nicodemus sought Jesus out for a conversation. Here we see God at work with that little extra. Jesus transforms what was an inconspicuous evening into a remarkable, life-changing event. By the end of the Gospel of John, Nicodemus is a new person. If someone asked him what made him who he was at that time, he may have found himself returning to this night.

The power of this Gospel is the way in which we readers, thousands of years later, are turned into witnesses. We become witnesses to not just fact-based, hard-nosed, “real news,” but to God’s reality on earth. We become witnesses, not to an ideology, but to the Movement of God. With the telling of a simple story, we are suddenly standing alongside Nicodemus, bound by our physical bodies and limited perspective, about to have our minds blown by a completely new way of seeing and being in the world.

In this particular story, we see Jesus launch the transformation of Nicodemus from questioning leader, in verse 1, to witness, in verse 11, to the Movement of God. The Movement of God is Trinitarian – physical, spiritual, and divine. It takes our full selves to be part of this movement. We cannot compartmentalize it to one hour or one day; we cannot compartmentalize it to a single choice and belief.

This is difficult for us to grasp because our entire world is about compartmentalization. We count the minutes and hours of our days, divvying up our time for work, relationships, goals, celebrations, conversations, and chores. This is also difficult for us to grasp because so much of our lives is about

reaching certain dates, milestones, and achievements. We live by the idea that once we reach that particular place, we will have “made it.” Nevertheless, the Movement of God blurs and smudges the lines by which we have ordered our lives. The Movement of God never stops. The Movement is, in essence, God’s full self – Father, Son, and Spirit – set loose in all of creation to breathe that extra into the ordinary.

During this late-night conversation, Jesus invites Nicodemus to wake up, be “born again,” move beyond the limits of his occupation and title and join the Movement. Jesus is not interested in simply answering Nicodemus’ questions, or giving him a summary highlighting the most important information that he can then mull over and decide whether he agrees or not. Jesus is inviting him to participate in an entirely new way of seeing and living—a way of seeing and living that only happens with the participation of his full self.

In *The Divine Dance*, Father Richard Rohr describes the Movement of God as *flow*. To join God’s movement is to step, jump, or dive into the flow of God’s full self with our full selves. The tide of God’s movement leads us to a way of life that is always growing, evolving, transforming; a way of life that is about unification, alignment, and action.

Like Nicodemus, it takes a little time for us to catch on. It’s hard to be moved from all that we know – this one body, this one life, our understanding of science and creation. Yet, even without fully understanding Jesus’ words, Nicodemus is caught up in the tide of conversation and can’t stop himself from asking, “How can anyone be born after having grown old?” Jesus doesn’t back down. With Jesus’ response, we 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers are no longer merely observers of a late-night conversation. Jesus’ reply vibrates and echoes from the pages of the Bible to us, today. “You must be born from above.” With these words, Jesus calls us to move beyond dualistic thinking into a Trinitarian way of being, the place where our bodies, minds, souls, and spirits meet.

Jesus calls Nicodemus, and each of us here today, to live into the realization of all that we are. We are not just machines, a body moving by habit and functionality. We are not just spontaneous balls of unaware reactivity to the life being lived around us. God made us to be part of the Movement. While we struggle with discernment, wondering what God is truly calling us to, remember that the answer will always involve our full selves, it will involve our transformation (often over and over again), it will involve us physically moving, following the example of Jesus, and getting *into* it.

Consider the social movements we witness in history books and the news today. These movements do not appear from nowhere. They are products of an accumulation of factors, but we often wonder where they came from. Like the wind, we hear the sound of it and see the effects of these movements, but we do not always know where they came from or where they will go. Yet, once these movements are set into motion, we often speak of them as though they were inevitable. Isn’t this just like the Movement of God? Isn’t this exactly what Jesus is calling Nicodemus, and all of us, to join?

The Essence of God, our source of life, surrounds us. Often when we look back on our lives, we speak of the inevitability of God’s hold on us, even if we did not know it at the time. This story of Nicodemus is an

opportunity to not just look back on our lives with this knowledge, but to move forward, fueled by it as witnesses to the transformative power of the Trinity. Jesus doesn't just want us to pass on information like simple gossip. Jesus calls us to live fully immersed in the abundant life for which we were created.

Jesus knows we are suspicious. Jesus knows we are trapped by our need for tangible, provable facts. Yet, in this conversation, Jesus doesn't stop there. We are called to join the Movement. Despite ourselves, we are made witnesses. We are not witnesses of our own understanding, but of God's action, movement, in the world, for the world. Receive the testimony given to us by the Living Word who walked among us. Bear witness. Wake up. Be moved with your full self – your emotions, your mind, soul, and strength. Rise up. Join the Movement of God and breathe in that little extra that comes from the fullness of God with us.

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