

Year A

Genesis 12:1-4a
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17

Second Sunday of Lent

Good morning everyone!

It's always nice to see you all.

I hope everyone's Lenten season is going just so well.
Mine's been going just fine, thanks for asking.

Truth be told, I see quite a bit of myself in this morning's gospel reading...

When I was growing up and I couldn't sleep I would, like most young kids do, shuffle my feet into my parents bedroom and nudge them awake, to inform them that I could in fact, not sleep.

My mom would always say two things. Always the same two things.

The first was this...

"Of course you can't sleep, you're standing in my room."
And the second was "have you prayed about it yet?"

Wonderful middle of the night wisdom from my faithful mother that continues to be impactful for my life today.

On those sleepless nights, I still find myself praying for the things that race through my mind.

I wonder what the prayers of Nicodemus looked like that night, before he went over to see Jesus.

I wonder if he was being kept up by racing thoughts and the idea that there were questions that he needed answers to.

Nicodemus has been awake, restless and wrestling with what he has heard from the Rabbi that everyone has been talking about.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night, wrestling...

“How is this possible... to be born again...”

And what Nicodemus does is an act of incredible bravery

He’s a Pharisee, which means that he is a teacher of the Jewish people and a leader of the community of Israel.

If the people of his community knew that he was going to Jesus alone at night, it would be costly for him.

His career, his social status, his identity are all hanging in the balance as he goes to visit Jesus.

And he knows this.

Nicodemus has been up at night, tossing and turning, wrestling not only with the questions that he has for Jesus swirling around in his head, but with what is at stake if he is to go and ask.

And what Nicodemus does is a brave thing.

Going to Jesus is a brave thing.

Walking into a new church for the first time is a brave thing.

I will tell youth the first time they come to youth group

“... hey, that’s not always easy. It’s a brave thing to walk into a space of faith by yourself. Thanks for being here.”

Being a person of faith is a brave thing.

Because it requires us to go beyond that which we see right in front of us.

It requires us to believe in that which we have not seen.

It asks us to make the love of God visible for the world that is so focused on everything else.

And that's what Jesus's response to Nicodemus is this morning
and Jesus's response to our sleepless nights as terror reigns down in the Holy Land and all across
the middle east.

Jesus looks at Nicodemus and asks him to look beyond that which he sees immediately in front
of him.

You must be born of the spirit, Jesus says.
You must look beyond what you see right in front of you.

And you can hear the perplexity that Jesus has in the midst of this dialogue because we're talking
about a teacher of the community who affirms the parting of the red sea, God sustaining God's
people in the wilderness, the prophets teaching justice and mercy.

But for Nicodemus those have all been things of this world... and Jesus is inviting Nicodemus
into a different perspective.

inviting Nicodemus to live into the righteousness of faith that Paul highlights for us in his writing
on Abraham.

Paul reminds us that faith is not simply about the things that we do. Abraham was not justified
by the works that he did, and neither is Nicodemus, and neither am I.

Our faith is about the way we understand the things that are in front of us and our hope in the
things that are beyond us.

Our faith is grounded in reality, and brings us to a new understanding of it.

Yes, there may be an abundance of items and things to be had in the world.

But there is eternal life in the storing up of our treasures in heaven, where neither moths nor rust
consume, nor thief can steal.

Our faith guides us to an internal sense of peace that allows us to preach good news as the world
continues to do everything it can to lead us into despair.

The world does not want your stuff y'all.

The world and the powers that be have enough stuff for themselves, that's not what they're here for.

The enemy is here to rob you of your peace, not your stuff.

This is why we don't need any one thing to have eternal life, just faith in Jesus.

God became man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, to show us what it means to have eternal life when we believe in God the Father.

To protect us from that which would come to steal our peace.

And we see the way in which this peace remains as we read the testimonies of Paul in prison, Bonhoeffer in prison, and MLK Jr in prison.

Even from the darkest depths of dehumanization that the world has created, the prophets who have come before us testify to the eternal life

that is found in the grounding of one's self, one's life, one's soul in the truth of Jesus Christ crucified, died, and resurrected.

From there, there is eternal life.

Jesus invites us into this eternal life, and every day we're called to pray for that daily bread with the faith that God will provide.

Every day we're called to reaffirm the knowledge that the daily bread from heaven is what we need to sustain ourselves.

In the midst of a world that is so desperate to tear itself apart, we ground ourselves in the truth of Jesus Christ resurrected, and we participate in eternal life.

Amen.