

May 31, 2015
Sermon for Trinity Sunday
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
John 3:1-17

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

John 3:1–17 (ESV)

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, 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 the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Grace, mercy, and peace from the one who touches our lives, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

One of the lasting symbols to come out of the Reformation is Luther's coat of arms. We see this symbol quite often, but we don't always take time to recognize the words on it.

On his seal are the words: *Sola Fide* (faith alone), *Sola Gratia* (grace alone), and *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone).

Only by faith are we justified in this life; only by grace are we saved eternally; only by Scripture are we to judge all teachings.

Each *sola* is cemented into the centrality of *Sola Christe*, only Christ. Faith is in Christ, grace is Christ, and Scripture is fulfilled by Christ. So, we must listen carefully to Christ when He speaks about another set of *solas*, or "onlys," that, on this Trinity Sunday, teach us about the Holy Trinity.

Hear Jesus spell them out to Nicodemus:
The Holy Spirit brings man to the only knowledge that saves—that of the only God, the Holy God, through His Only Son, the Most Holy Son of Man.

Truly, truly, one can see the kingdom of God only by being born again.^(vv 1-3) Nicodemus opens his inquiry with an "only" of his own: Jesus could not do the miracles He's doing unless or only because God is with Him.

That's a good start, but it shows us Nicodemus doesn't yet know Jesus as the only Son of God. He's feeling around the edges but he doesn't yet know the triune, the only, God.

The fact is, Jesus has the only "onlys" that count here.

The only way to see the kingdom of God or to be saved, Jesus says, is through rebirth, being born again (v 3). The Greek *gennēthēi anōthen* means “born anew.”

We and our world think we can know God—or what we want our god to be—by other means. We want concrete answers.

By intelligence, science, or logically deciding for Him. Show me on paper, give me the formula. I know what the Bible says, but I want real proof. Is it logical that God would so easily forgive? Surely I have to pay my debts somehow. What about those fossils? The carbon dating? What was before Genesis 1:1?

The world, sometimes including us, run with our feelings and by our feelings or best guesses, we try to find conclusions outside of what God says in His Word. We look for proof rather than acting in faith and finding things by human means, starting with and applying human reasoning to natural things, rather than starting with God and applying God’s Word first.

Truly, truly, one can be born again only by water and the Spirit (vv 4–8). Nicodemus doesn’t get it; his thinking is earthly. When told about being born anew, he automatically went to earthly means. If it happened today, I could almost hear Nic telling Jesus, “Well duh Jesus, you can’t return to your mother and be born again.”

Although Nicodemus totally missed it, Jesus was talking about a miracle from above. A spiritual rebirth. Being born “anew” also includes being born “from above.” How much of a decision did you have in being born?

Your parents may or may not have planned on having a child, but despite their

plans, God moved and conception occurred and around nine months later, you were born. Ready or not, it was time and you were brought into this world.

No decision or planning on your part.

Being born again, knowing the Holy Trinity, is totally passive by us, only a work of the Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit at work in that miracle! In Baptism, we are “born anew” “from above.”

When water is applied with God’s Word, the Holy Spirit comes down and creates faith in us, a whole new person who knows God. Hearing His Word, the Holy Spirit works also. You might hear and understand what the words are saying, but again, it is the Holy Spirit that works faith in you to believe.

Truly, truly, we know we’re saved, because these words of the only Son of Man are the words of the triune, the only, God (vv 9–17).

Jesus says, “*We speak . . . we know . . . we have seen . . . our testimony*” v11 He’s talking about the Holy Trinity. Being true God as well as true Man, Jesus, the Son, speaks what the Father and Holy Spirit know—one God in three persons.

Listen to what He speaks: “*God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*”

You know these Words, you’ve know them for probably most of your life. But have you broken them down? If they are new to you, hear them and understand, God the Father gives God the Son to die on the cross, for you!

God the Holy Spirit brings you to believe it.

And you have eternal life!

It's that simple for you. It wasn't simple for God the Father; it was horribly painful, filled with suffering for God the Son, but He did it for you!

September 28, 2003, Sid was born again, born from above. Promises were made on his behalf as his parents and sponsors answered questions and confessed their faith in the Holy Trinity.

Today Sid answers those same questions himself, confirming those answers that were made on his behalf eleven years ago. Showing, making his confirmation of faith, of being born from above.

I'll be asking you to answer with him today as a reminder of you making your own confirmation of faith. If you have never confessed your faith, you can do so today along with everyone else.

Only by being born again, through birth from above, only by a washing of water and Spirit, and only because Jesus speaks for the Father with the Holy Spirit can we know and believe heavenly things. But we do. Truly, truly!

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory