

## **Lent Day 5**

Monday February 19, 2018

### **Reading:** John 3:1-21

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

### **Reflection**

One of the greatest capacities we have is the capacity to lie to ourselves. An example from my own life: I knew that my eating habits were out of hand for years. I kept going up in size in my clothing and became bothered by my gut, especially when I sat down. Rather than doing something about it, I told myself that all men got bigger as they got older and I was just bothered because I had grown up skinny. The truth was I was over eating, under exercising and I had become over weight as a result, plus I was unhappy with the way I looked to boot. I lied to myself and I believed the lie. But, it’s not just lying to ourselves that’s important, at some point, we need others to believe our lies as well. And, we go to lengths to make that happen. That’s similar to what is happening in this story.

Nicodemus is a Pharisee and he’s diplomatic. He comes to Jesus at night so as not to be seen — we wouldn’t want the neighbours to talk. He starts to massage Jesus a bit with flattering speech — trying to get Jesus on side, perhaps so he can speak some wisdom to him, guide him on how to be a rabbi without ruffling the political feathers, both Jewish and Roman. Remember in Saturday’s reflection I said sometimes the renovation comes violently. Jesus cuts right over Nicodemus and says flatly, “You must be born again.” Labour and delivery is a violent event — there is blood, sweat and tears then, finally, a baby. New birth is no less pain-filled.

Like Nicodemus we want to get God onside — keep him under control. Pair this with our capacity to lie to ourselves and we see that our biggest job is trying to get God to believe our self lies. If we can do that then we can have control over God and he can just bless the things I want blessed. Then God will be useful. That’s why Jesus cuts so directly. He says effectively to us, “You are lying to yourself and you want me to believe it so I will leave you alone. But, leaving you alone is a guarantee of your destruction. I’ve come to save you and give you life, not death. So, what needs to happen is for you to wake up, stop lying to yourself and put your trust in me.” Lent is a season for examination — an opportunity for the Spirit to reveal to us the places where we have been lying to ourselves and to have those things exposed to the light of Christ.

### **Prayer**

Our Lord and Our God, forgive us for trying to use you for our personal gain. For trying to make the God who made the whole universe our personal pocket idol. Thank you for coming to save us rather than to judge us. Help us to submit ourselves to you so we may be reborn of the Spirit and be remade in your light. Amen.