

**Osceola Sermon**  
**Jesus encounters Nicodemus the Pharisee (John 3:1-18)**  
**Pastor BobVale / August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Biblical Focus:** John 3:10 "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council."

**Scripture Lesson: John 3:1-18** "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." <sup>JN 3:3</sup> In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "  
<sup>JN 3:4</sup> "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" <sup>JN 3:5</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, `You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."  
<sup>JN 3:9</sup> "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. <sup>JN 3:10</sup> "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.  
<sup>JN 3:16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

**Opening Hymn:** # 61 Come Thou Almighty King  
**Prayer Chorus:** # 191 Jesus Loves Me (One verse and chorus)  
**Hymn of Discipleship:** # 301 Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross

**John 3:1** "“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.”"

**What was a Pharisee in Jesus day?** (They were basically the local pastor / "Religious" lawyer in town.)  
A lawyer because they dictated and interpreted Jewish Law.

1. The Pharisee was the pastor to the blue collar people, who taught and preached in the local synagogue. (conservative)
2. The Sadducees were the Jewish priest for the wealthy and land owners, who taught and preached at the local temples. (Liberal) (Interesting they had two different denominations in Jewish history. Actually there were more; Essenes, Zealots, Scribes, Teachers of the Law)
3. The Pharisees were seen as legalist who dictated the hundreds of Jewish laws for everyday living.
4. They created a "Brotherhood" where they publically swore allegiance to three other Pharisees to become holy and to not touch or be around anything that is impure, according to Jewish Law. They went to school at an early age to begin to learn the torah.

**John 3:2** "He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

- A. Nicodemus gave Jesus a compliment by both calling him a **Rabbi** and also recognizing Jesus' power of healing and that **God was with him.**

B. Why did the Pharisee; Nicodemus come to Jesus at **night** rather than the middle of the day?

1. Perhaps he was afraid his other Pharisee buddies would see him talking to this "Uneducated Rabbi."
2. Remember Jesus is an outcast to the religious community. They both despised each other.

**Let me ask you something: Would the church SPRC allow the following person to be hired as your pastor? (A man in his early 30's)**

1. Has no formal education. (No seminary degree, no undergraduate degree and not even a completion of a high school or equivalent.)
2. Has never been a pastor of a church of any size in the past.
3. Works part time fixing people's homes and furniture.
4. Claims to be able to heal people of sicknesses, so they don't have to see a doctor.
5. Enjoys going down to the city square preaching and teaching to the people who walk by. (Noted as a local philosopher)
6. Oh yeah, he claims to be the son of God and the Messiah to bring all people to God.

**If you said no, you just rejected Jesus as your new pastor.**

This is what the Pharisees, Sadducees and teachers of the Law thought about Jesus. (Jesus did not go through the normal ranks and education to become a rabbi.) What authority, mentor or rabbinical school did he graduate from?)

- a. I believe Nicodemus was spiritually hungry! Somewhere in the back of his mind / or part of his spirit, he felt something real about this Jesus.
- b. Maybe he was just academically curious about the teaching of Jesus.
  1. Jesus said in those days. (If you have seen me you have seen the father. I am the alpha and omega, I will tear down the temple and in three days I will build it up again. (All of these statements either angered the religious leaders or peaked their interest.)

**Do you want to know what Jesus really thought about the Pharisees? Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 23:13**

**MT 23:13** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

**MT 23:15** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

**MT 23:23** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. <sup>24</sup> **You blind guides!** You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

**MT 23:25** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup> Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

**MT 23:27** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

**MT 23:29** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. <sup>30</sup> And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' <sup>31</sup> So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup> Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!

MT 23:33 "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

**\*These are just a few of the highlights of Jesus' thoughts.**

**Oh is there a lesson for us today! Have a clean heart and don't be worried about the outside appearance.**

**These two groups were so quick to jump to conclusions and be so very judgmental about things.**

Not long ago in California, an elderly woman went to the grocery store to do some shopping. When she returned to her car, she noticed four men getting into it. The woman dropped her shopping bags, reached into her purse, and pulled out a small handgun that she carried for protection. She ran to the front of her car, aimed the pistol at the men, and began screaming at them at the top of her lungs. She ordered them out of the car and warned that if they didn't, she would blow their brains out. "I know how to use this gun, and don't think I won't!" she screamed. The four men didn't hesitate. They threw open the car doors, scrambled out, and started running as fast as they could.

The woman was trembling, but kept her composure. When she was certain the men were gone, she put the gun back in her purse, picked up her bags, and loaded them into the back seat of the car. She then climbed into the driver's seat and decided to go immediately to the police station to report the incident.

But there was a small problem. Her key wouldn't fit in the ignition. A quick glance around the interior confirmed that she was in the wrong car! Her vehicle was parked four spaces away in the same aisle of the parking lot.

She loaded her bags into her own car and drove to the police station to confess what she had done. When she told the story to the sergeant, he couldn't control his laughter. He just pointed to the other end of the counter where four very shaken men were reporting a car jacking by a mad, elderly white woman. The woman apologized, and no charges were filed.

**\*Sometimes we tend to jump to conclusions ourselves.**

**Jesus went straight to the matter with the Pharisee. He talked about unseen spiritual matters rather than the physical "Seen" things.**

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is **born again.**"

**This had to be a new phrase for the Pharisee. He was used to such religious words as: Clean, Chosen, Animal Sacrifice, Letter of the Law, but not born again.**

JN 3:4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" JN 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of **water and the Spirit.**"<sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.<sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'<sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

**Jesus just gave him two examples of the unseen spiritual world.**

- 1. Flesh vs. Spirit.**
- 2. The Wind we can hear, but cannot see.**

**Jesus was trying to take the "Jewish Scales" Off his eyes. Do you remember Saul on the road to Damaacus, in Acts 9, when he was confronted by Jesus? He was blind, but when he was later healed, scales came off his eyes and he saw everything differently.**

JN 3:9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. JN 3:10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"<sup>11</sup> I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.<sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?<sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone

into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

**Nicodemus' mind was blown!!!! He could not believe his ears!!!**

**Jesus continued to talk to him to help him understand, still going contrary to all that he was taught in Pharisee school.**

**I want to point out to you the meaning of verse 14 & 15. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.**

Jesus jumped back to Jewish history, which the Pharisee was very well aware of. The Snake that Moses lifted in the desert is found in

**Numbers 21:6-9** “ Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>NU 21:8</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.”

**Nicodemus must have thought this man was crazy. The son of man will be lifted up and those who believe in him will have eternal life? How confusing that must of sounded that side of the cross.**

**Perhaps Jesus was setting him up to have this knowledge after seeing all the events that would take place in the coming year. Perhaps Jesus knew, Nicodemus would be a link between the Jews and the new Christian way in the future; if he knew the truth.**

**Now that we are on the other side of the cross, we know that just as the people lived from the snake bites in the Old Testament, we can live eternally in a spiritual & physical sense for all eternity. Here again Jesus was paralleling the physical with the spiritual.**

**Jesus then gave Nicodemus the truth of the gospel message. The Good News in one verse; John 3:16**

<sup>JN 3:16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”

**I could spend a month of Sunday's preaching on these three verses.**

**Jesus was giving Nicodemus the “who” in the get saved formula.**

**Paul also reflected this same verse in Romans 10:9-12** “That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. <sup>11</sup> As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**Jesus met a man who felt he had to earn his place with God by doing good things and obeying a strict set of rules called the Jewish Law. Jesus was telling him over and over again, just believe in your spirit in me and you will be saved. That is still the truth today 2000 years later.**

### Saving Private Ryan:

One of the most powerful films in recent history is Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*. The film begins on D-Day, June 6, 1944, as the Nazis were advancing across Western Europe. Faced with the ugly possibility of defeat, the Allied powers staged on the beaches of Normandy the greatest military invasion in history. Their goal was to cripple the German army and ultimately force Hitler and his army into retreat.

Following the bloody battle, Captain John Miller (played by Tom Hanks) and his surviving company of soldiers receive very unusual orders from their commander. They must locate and rescue a soldier, Private James Ryan (played by Matt Damon), who is fighting somewhere behind enemy lines. We are told that Ryan and his three older brothers enlisted in the Army. What Private Ryan doesn't know is that all three of his brothers perished during the Normandy invasion. To spare Private Ryan's mother the anguish of losing all four of her sons, Miller and his men must find James and bring him back alive.

As Miller and his eight men move deeper into enemy territory in search of Ryan, they engage in an intense debate about why one man's life is so important that they should risk theirs. "This Ryan better be worth it," Miller says. "He better go home and cure some disease or invent a new longer-lasting light bulb."

Despite their misgivings, Captain Miller's band of soldiers bravely carry out their orders, with several of them paying the ultimate price as they successfully locate and rescue the young soldier. In the final battle scene, Miller takes a bullet that will ultimately cost him his life. But before he dies, he whispers to Private Ryan, who is kneeling by his side, "Earn this...earn it."

The movie ends with a scene set some fifty years after the war, with the elderly James Ryan standing over Captain Miller's grave at Arlington National Cemetery. With a trembling voice, he says, "Every day I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge. I've tried to live my life the best I could. I hope that was enough...I hope I earned what you did for me."

In the movie, Ryan then asks his wife, "Have I been a good man?" For 50 years, he was tormented by the realization that he could never do enough to earn what Captain Miller and his men did for him. Contrast that with Jesus, who gave his life so that we could live. His dying words were not "Earn this." Instead, he said, "It is finished!"

Had Jesus said, "Earn this," you would have quickly come to realize that there's no way to earn what it cost for Jesus to give his life for yours. To spend a lifetime trying to earn your salvation only leads to frustration and despair.

That's why Jesus said, "**It is finished!**" He declared once and for all that nothing more needs to be done. He was also telling the Jewish Religious leaders the same thing. You don't have to follow the letter of the law for your eternal salvation. (Look to Grace) You don't have to earn it. The free gift of salvation is yours—no strings attached. Just believe and accept him as your savior and friend.

Does that mean we live our lives as if nothing happened? Do we go on living as we did before? "By no means!" writes Paul in Romans 6:2. Instead, we demonstrate that we have new life in Christ by living in obedience to him. Our good works won't earn our salvation, but they will provide evidence that we have gratefully received it.

**Let's Pray**