

# The New Birth

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] well if we could with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read the gospel according to John John chapter 3 John 3 and if we read again at verse 4 or verse 3 we'll say John 3 at verse 3 Jesus answered him that is Nicodemus truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God 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 Jesus answered truly truly I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again you must be born again you know everyone loves to see babies and toddlers and children it's lovely to see them at all these different ages and stages as they look and learn about the world around them and I think I would speak on behalf of everyone in our congregation when I say that everyone in our congregation they love they love to see children in church and the thing is no one cares about the noise no one cares about the crying no one cares about talking in church either it doesn't put anyone off it doesn't put me off

I think it's absolutely great to see everyone in church not only this morning but every week because children the thing about children is that they are as important in this congregation as the elders are children have a huge place in our congregation and every other congregation and you know as a congregation living in the 21st century we should be so thankful to the Lord for the number of babies we have this morning but also and the toddlers in the creche but also the children who are in our Sunday school it's not something we should take for granted it's something we should cherish as a congregation something we should nurture something we should earnestly pray over as a congregation because the thing is church isn't just for adults church isn't just for old people church is for everyone church is for the whosoever church is for the young the middle aged and the elderly in fact the biblical pattern and perspective of church is that it's meant to be a family gathering just like we have families gathering this morning because whenever you have a family gathering you have children you have parents and you also have grandparents it's a family gathering you have young middle aged and elderly and that's because the church is a family gathering where we worship we gather together to worship the Lord but this morning as we gather for worship we're witnessing something special and also something solemn we're witnessing something special and yet something solemn it's special because we're witnessing and watching six children being baptized baptized in our congregation which is so lovely to see

I think it just fills us with such excitement to see six children being baptized it's something special but it's also something solemn because vows are being promised in the presence of God and before you as a congregation but you know what I'd like us to see this morning is that the sacrament of baptism the symbol of sprinkling water which is what we're doing I want us to see that it's a symbol which preaches and proclaims a message and it's a message that we are all watching and witnessing this morning none of us are going to miss it we're all watching and witnessing this message and the message to us as a church family this morning is the same message that Jesus explained and exhorted to Nicodemus you must be born again you must be born again and so I'd like us just to consider this passage that we read under three headings the meeting the misunderstanding and the message the meeting the misunderstanding and the message so first of all the meeting we see that in verses 1 to 3 we're told that there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews this man came to Jesus by night and said to him

Rabbi we know that you're a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him Jesus answered him truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God now the gospel of John is perhaps the most well known it's most well known for verse 16 that we read earlier what it says in John 3 16 it's that verse which is known the world over and has often been described as the gospel in miniature John 3 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life but you know that wonderful verse it came at the end of this night time meeting with this man called Nicodemus and from the outset of chapter 3 we're given this description of Nicodemus and we're told also of the condition of his soul because we're told that Nicodemus was a Pharisee and as a Pharisee he lived by the strictest possible rules of his religion because Pharisees they were obsessed with the law of God they lived strict and upright lives but you know more often than not the Pharisees their hearts were far from God and their lives were just a show and a spectacle before other people the Pharisees were what you would call hypocrites because they had this facade of religion where they wanted to be seen by others for example when Pharisees gave money at the temple they sounded a trumpet when they prayed they would pray on the street corner so that everyone would see them and hear them and when they fasted they put on a gloomy face so that everyone would know that they were fasting and so for the Pharisees their religion was always a show and a spectacle it was all about outward appearances and being seen by others but none of it pleased God none of it pleased God

Jesus later said about the Pharisees these people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me they honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me and you know that's one of the great dangers of religion that we do things just to be seen by others that we come to church do the right thing say the right thing just to keep up appearances but we're not to pay lip service to Jesus because Jesus knows us he knows our heart he knows our thoughts even this morning he knows the condition of our soul and so Jesus knows when we are not genuine and wholehearted in our commitment to him Jesus knows when we honor him with our lips but our heart is far from him but you know we also read that Jesus he wasn't just Nicodemus he wasn't just a Pharisee Nicodemus was also a ruler of the Jews he was a teacher in Israel we're told he was a professor of theology

[ 8 : 00 ]

Nicodemus was someone who knew and taught the scriptures of the Old Testament he wasn't ignorant of his Bible and yet when he came to Jesus Nicodemus was seeking the truth but what Nicodemus was going to discover was that there's a radical difference between knowing the Bible in your head and knowing the Bible in your heart just like there's a radical difference between knowing Jesus in your head and knowing Jesus in your heart because my friend the Bible calls you to love Jesus with all your heart with all your mind with all your soul with all your strength the Bible calls you to know Jesus not only in your head but also in your heart but there's one more thing we're told about Nicodemus when he came to meet Jesus and it's that he came to Jesus by night he came to Jesus by night now with this

John the gospel writer he's more than telling us the hour of the day or of the night that this meeting with Jesus took place John is telling us that there's another kind of darkness a spiritual darkness covering the soul of Nicodemus because when Nicodemus came to Jesus he was walking in darkness but he was being drawn towards Jesus who as we said to the children was the light of the world and you know my unconverted friend here this morning or at home you know my unconverted friend like you after all that you have maybe like Nicodemus after all that you've heard and read and maybe learned or done in your life Nicodemus knew that there was still something missing in his life he knew that he was still walking in darkness he knew before Jesus that he still wasn't right with God he knew that he still wasn't saved but you know the best decision that Nicodemus ever made was when he came to Jesus and in many ways the best decision you'll ever make is when you come to Jesus but Nicodemus he came to Jesus by night and he came under the cover of darkness because he didn't want anyone else to know what was going on in his heart and soul because seeking

Jesus was private it was personal to him Nicodemus didn't want anyone to know that he was being drawn to Jesus he didn't want anyone to know he was interested in the gospel and maybe you're the same this morning maybe you have an interest in the gospel maybe you're just like Nicodemus drawn to Jesus interested in this Jesus who is the light of the world maybe you're being drawn to Jesus in your heart but you don't want anyone to know about it you don't want even the person beside you to know about it you don't want anybody to know because for you it's private it's personal and I want to say to you this morning my friend if you are being drawn to Jesus you're meeting with Jesus in the gospel this morning Jesus is reminding you just like he reminded Nicodemus because Jesus said to Nicodemus truly truly

I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God but you know maybe for you just like Nicodemus what Jesus is saying here doesn't really make much sense to you because the need to be born again it's met with a misunderstanding which is what I want us to consider secondly so there's the misunderstanding there's first of all the meeting but then there's the misunderstanding that's what we see secondly look at verse 3 Jesus answered him truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God 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 Jesus answered truly truly I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God you know when this meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus when it took place

Nicodemus didn't even have to ask Jesus a question because Jesus knew what was going on in his heart and soul that's why verse 3 it begins with the statement Jesus answered Nicodemus Jesus answered Nicodemus the thing is Nicodemus he hadn't asked Jesus a question and yet Jesus answered Nicodemus because Jesus knew everything about this man Jesus knew his heart Jesus knew what was going on just like he knows what's going on in our heart this morning but when Jesus answered Nicodemus he said unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God when Nicodemus heard that he was completely baffled and we can see his misunderstanding from the question he asks in verse 4 he says how can a man be born when he is old can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born now Nicodemus he's not being flippant or facetious in his reply no he's genuinely confused he's completely baffled he can't understand what Jesus is saying and he says to Jesus what do you mean I need to be born again how can a man be born when he is old how can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born how does that make sense how is that possible what do you mean I need to be born again and so Jesus he corrects the misunderstanding by explaining that being born again is not about physical birth it's about spiritual birth and what Jesus makes clear to

[ 14 : 05 ] Nicodemus and to us this morning is that the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom therefore we cannot enter the kingdom of God by our physical birth in fact it's our physical birth that keeps us out of the kingdom of God because the Bible asserts and affirms to us time and time again that we were conceived in guiltiness and sin we were born in sin we were born sinners and you know you know as we look at these beautiful babies and toddlers and children you know we find it hard to think that they're sinners and they're sinful but if you're a parent you'll know that as these children grow up it doesn't take long for us to realize that we don't need to teach our children to do wrong we don't need to teach them to fight they do that themselves we don't need to teach them to lie to us they do that themselves we don't need to teach them to speak back to us they do that themselves or even to get angry they get angry with us all the time well in our house that's what happens because they do it naturally just like we do we sin naturally because when Adam fell from that perfect estate wherein he was created we all sinned in him says the catechism we all sinned in him and fell in him in his first transgression which means that we're all conceived in guiltiness and sin we're all born in sin we're all born sinners and the wages of sin as Romans 6 says is death so my friend our physical birth that keeps us out of the kingdom of God doesn't matter about our

Christian upbringing doesn't matter about our Bible knowledge doesn't matter that we went to Sunday school as a child or we have attended church every Sunday all our life doesn't matter about these things because the only way to enter into the kingdom of God is by a new birth that's why we need to listen to what Jesus is saying to us this morning and my friend I hope you're listening to what Jesus is saying to you this morning because Jesus is saying to you you must you must it's a must of necessity you must be born again you must be born again but you know when Nicodemus hears this for the second time he still doesn't understand he's still confused he's still as baffled he's no clearer in his understanding and so Jesus says to Nicodemus in verse five truly truly I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God now when

Jesus explains that you need water and the spirit to enter the kingdom of God he's not saying that you need baptism and the spirit to enter the kingdom of God because as we've said many times before at baptism services baptism has no saving powers whatsoever baptism is not a safety feature for heaven it doesn't guarantee a child's salvation it doesn't even make them more special than a child who's not baptized because we know the thief on the cross was not baptized and so just to be clear the water we're using for baptism this morning it's not holy water it's not mystical or magical in any way it's just ordinary water straight out of the tap but even though the water is not special the point is it is a symbol it's symbolic because the water at baptism it's a symbol that we need to be cleansed from sin and made alive by the Holy

Spirit it's a symbol that we need our sins washed away by the blood of Jesus it's a symbol that we need a new birth and we need a new beginning and we need to be given a new heart and we need to become a new creation my friend the water that we're going to witness and watch at a baptism this morning it's a symbol it's a message to all of us you must be born again you must be born again and you know as we watch and witness these six children being baptized we've been reminded and reaffirmed that when each child has been baptized when Shores and Eva and Callum and Alice and Joshua James and Angus when they're all baptized we have been reminded that these children they need to be born again too they've had a physical birth but they also need a spiritual birth they need a new birth they need to be cleansed from sin and made alive by the

Holy Spirit and you know my unconverted friend whether you were baptized as a child or not as you watch and witness a baptism this morning you've been reminded and reaffirmed you must be born again you must be born again and maybe you're asking this morning well Myrdo how how am I going to be born again how am I cleansed from sin how am I going to be as you say made alive by the Holy Spirit how am I going to be given a new heart how am I going to be saved how do I enter what Jesus talks about this kingdom the kingdom of God and you know it was Jesus who said whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it now when

[ 20 : 05 ] Jesus says that you have to become like children in order to be saved he doesn't mean that you have to be naive but he does say or he does mean that you need to be dependent we need to be dependent we need to let go of self and our self-will and our self-reliance and our self-righteousness we need to depend wholly upon Jesus for salvation you know as we watch and witness these children being baptized this morning they're preaching and proclaiming a message to us all they're preaching and proclaiming a message because we're not only being reminded that we must be born again we're also being reminded that like little children we must completely depend upon Jesus for salvation because as you know the thing about little children the thing about all these babies that are here this morning is that they're completely dependent they're dependent upon someone else doing everything for them they're dependent upon Martin and Darren and Ali and Scott and Sagey and also

Marion and all these different parents they're all they all have to look after these children they're dependent upon them because well the children they can't pay for their food they can't prepare the meals themselves they can't even feed themselves they can't buy their clothes they can't wash themselves they can't dress themselves they're completely dependent that's why we call them dependents they can't do anything for themselves except throw their arms wide open and cry for help and you know that's what Jesus says that's what we need to realize that we can only be born again we can only be saved we can only enter the kingdom of God when we come to Jesus completely depending upon his finished work on the cross my friend you need to let go of self and self righteousness and self will and self reliance we need to let go of self and just throw our arms wide open and ask

Jesus for mercy my friend the Bible is saying to you this morning you must you must you must be born again and so we've considered the meeting and the misunderstanding but lastly the message the meeting the misunderstanding and the message look at verse 7 Jesus says do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again the wind blows where it wishes and you hear it 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 Nicodemus said to him how can these things be you know after all that Jesus had said and taught Nicodemus still didn't get it he's still not understanding he might have been a teacher in Israel and a professor of theology he may have been a very religious man who knew his bible inside out but when

Nicodemus met Jesus he completely misunderstood the message of the gospel because the message of the gospel is that you must be born again by depending upon Jesus Christ for salvation you must be born again by depending upon Jesus Christ for salvation you need to become like a little child and humbly and wholeheartedly come to this Jesus and commit your life to him and confess him as your Lord and Savior that's the message we're going to be watching and witnessing this morning in the sacrament of baptism the message that these children are preaching and proclaiming to you is that you must be born again by depending upon Jesus Christ for salvation in fact that's why all these parents are bringing their children for baptism their desire is that their child will be born again and depend upon

Jesus Christ for salvation their desire as parents is that their child will grow up in this congregation under the word of God their desire is that their child will be part of this church family where they're loved and taught and nurtured in creche and Sunday school and youth fellowship and you know as a congregation as a congregation we have a responsibility to not only these children but all our children that we pray for them that is our responsibility and we need to take it seriously we're to pray that they'll be born again that they'll learn to depend upon Jesus Christ for salvation we have a responsibility even as these parents take their vows that we will encourage them and enable them to fulfill their vows because the vows are serious they're solemn they're before God that's why we call a baptism a sacrament it's the sacrament of baptism the word sacrament comes from

[ 25 : 27 ] Latin meaning sacramentum or solemn oath there are only two sacraments the Lord's Supper and baptism and in the sacrament of baptism parents are making a solemn oath before God to bring up their children in the visible church to teach and train their children at home to live in submission to Jesus Christ his word and also his church and you know in a day and generation where society is teaching our children to express themselves in all different kinds of ways you know the home has become an important training ground where we need to teach and train our children the word of God and the way of God and the worship of God we need to teach and train our children what it is to be born again and what it means to depend upon Jesus Christ for salvation we need to teach and train our children what it is to be a

Christian we need to teach and train our children what it is to be a Christian but as you know the best way to teach and train your children to be a Christian is to be a living example to them the best way to teach and train our children the next generation the best way to teach them to be a Christian is to be a living example and my friend when I say this I speak to you not just as a minister standing in a pulpit I speak to you as a parent I speak to you as a parent because I know it's not easy to be a parent I know it's not easy to bring up children in a world where there are so many voices calling out for their soul I know it's not easy to always get them to church and to Sunday school it's far easier to keep them at home but the best way to teach and train our children what it means to be born again and what it means to depend upon Jesus

Christ for salvation the best way is to be a living example for them you know our example of reading the Bible with them our example of praying with them and talking to them about Jesus and going to church with them morning and evening if possible but also living a consistently Christ centered life before their eyes and I know as a parent that is not easy because you know but our children's greatest need their greatest need our greatest need is to be born again and to depend upon Jesus Christ for salvation their greatest need from us as children little children is to teach and train them to love Jesus and follow Jesus and serve Jesus in their life their greatest need my friend your greatest need is to know

John 3 16 that God so loved this world that he gave his only begotten son and that whosoever whosoever young middle-aged or elderly whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life and you know as a church family gathering this morning what we learn from this meeting this misunderstanding this message from Jesus and also what we're going to watch and witness in the symbol of baptism is that you must be born again you must be born again by depending upon Jesus Christ for salvation you must say Jesus you must be born again well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray together oh Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for the gospel that it is good news to sinners such as we are and that this good news is to be proclaimed and preached to the youngest right up until the eldest and Lord we give thanks that it is a wonderful message a message for sinners who live broken lives in a broken world but Lord we give thanks that this message is also for children and help us to teach it to our children help us to train our children to follow

Jesus but Lord help us we pray to be living examples that we would be in a way a Bible to our own children that they would look at us and see Christ in us the hope of glory bless us as homes and as families Lord that thou would speak to us and that even today Christ would have the preeminence that God would have the glory and that we as thy people would receive blessing go before us and we pray take away our iniquity receive us graciously for Jesus sake amen we're now going to sing the words of Psalm 23 Psalm 23 in the Scottish Psalter it's on page 229 if you're using the the blue psalm book Psalm 23 a psalm that may be familiar to you it's one thing knowing

[ 31 : 15 ] Psalm 23 it's one thing knowing the shepherd of Psalm 23 we have to know the shepherd of Psalm 23 we have to be able to confess with David the Lord's my shepherd I'll not want he makes me down to lie in pastures green he leadeth me the quiet waters by and as we sing hopefully the parents will all come back through and the children from Sunday school so the Lord's my shepherd we'll sing the whole of Psalm 23 and we'll stand to sing if we're able to God's praise the Lord's my shepherd I'm not want he makes me turn to die in pastures he he leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he done restore again and he to walk love me within the paths of righteousness before his own in sin he though

I walk in death are ill yet will I fear not ill for God our faith beyond thy hope has thought become for still my people my people life has furnished in presence of my foes my head her thoughts before the light night and night and life of over flows good days and mercy all my life shall surely follow me be and in the stars forever more my very place shall be do ramp to and that value into