

Core Theme

- Nicodemus comes searching, cautious and uncertain.
- Jesus speaks of new birth, not self-improvement.
- Lent reveals that faith isn't inherited or achieved, it's received.
- God's love moves toward us before we understand.

The Human Experience — Quiet Questions

- Many people carry spiritual questions privately:
 - “Is there more to life than this?”
 - “Why can't I change what needs changing?”
 - “Why do I still feel unfinished?”
- We learn to look confident while wrestling internally.
- Lent exposes truth beneath routines and habits.
- The deeper issue isn't behavior alone, it's the heart.

Nicodemus — A Religious Insider Who Still Seeks

- Pharisee, teacher, respected leader.
- Morally serious and spiritually educated.
- Comes **at night**:
 - Possibly caution.
 - Possibly curiosity.
 - Possibly spiritual uncertainty.
- Important reminder:
 - Questions aren't signs of weak faith.
 - Even faithful people search for deeper understanding.

Jesus' Unexpected Response — New Birth

- Jesus doesn't offer a checklist.
- He speaks about being **born again / born from above**.
- Birth is not something you accomplish.
- Birth is something you receive.
- Religion often focuses on improvement.
- Jesus focuses on transformation.

Lent Connection

- Lent removes illusions of control.
- We confront limits:
 - Willpower isn't enough.
 - Knowledge isn't enough.
 - Habit change isn't enough.
- Lent prepares us to receive grace.

Born of the Spirit

- Flesh produces flesh.
- Spirit produces spirit.
- Spiritual life originates with God.
- Wind metaphor:
 - You hear it.
 - You see effects.
 - You don't control it.
- The Spirit reaches places we cannot.

Faith Is Not Inherited

- Church background is a gift, but not salvation.
- Faith proximity ≠ spiritual life.
- Personal transformation must be received individually.
- Nicodemus shows:
 - Religious knowledge doesn't equal new life.

God Moves First

- God loved first.
- God gave first.

- God sent first.
- Jesus didn't come to condemn.
- Jesus came to save.
- God's love moves toward people before they understand.

Salvation vs Condemnation

- Condemnation: "You're hopeless and alone."
- Salvation: "You're broken, and I've come for you."
- The cross reveals:
 - The seriousness of sin.
 - The depth of God's love.

Receiving Instead of Achieving

- We often try to:
 - Fix ourselves.
 - Earn worth.
 - Control outcomes.
- Jesus invites surrender, not performance.
- Faith means trusting God's action through Christ.

The Wilderness Connection

- Life seasons where:
 - We feel stuck.
 - We cannot fix things.
 - Control disappears.
- These moments prepare us for grace.
- God often meets us where self-sufficiency ends.

Nicodemus' Journey — Encouragement

- Starts with questions in the dark.
- Later shows courage and faith.
- Spiritual growth often begins quietly.
- Transformation unfolds over time.

Application Questions

- Where am I trying to achieve what God wants me to receive?
- Where do I feel unable to change?
- Am I leaning on inherited faith instead of living faith?
- What part of my life needs new birth right now?
- What would trusting Jesus look like today?

Key Truths to Remember

- You are loved before you understand.
- Transformation comes from God's Spirit.
- Faith is trust, not performance.
- New beginnings are possible at any stage of life.
- God doesn't wait for perfection to move toward you.

Lenten Invitation

- Bring honest questions to Jesus.
- Admit limits without shame.
- Release control.
- Ask the Spirit to breathe new life.
- Receive what God is giving.

Key Takeaway

Born from above means new life that begins with God, not us.

Closing Reflection

- You can't control the wind.
- You can open the window.
- God's Spirit is already moving.