

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -2nd Sunday in Lent - March 1, 2026

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the third chapter.

Glory to you, oh Lord.

Now, there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus,

a leader of the Jewish people.

He came to Jesus by night and said to him,

"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God,

for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

And Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you,

No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above

Nicodemus replies how can anyone be born after having grown old?

Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?

Jesus answered

Very truly. I tell you no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit

What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit

Do not be astonished that I said to you you must be born from above

The wind blows where it chooses and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes

Well, so it is with everyone born of the spirit

Nicodemus said to Jesus, "Well, how can these things be?"

And Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, yet you do not understand these things?"

Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know, we testify of what we have seen,

and yet you do not receive our testimony.

If I've told you about earthly things and you do not believe,
then how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven,
the Son of Man.

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man
be lifted up,

that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

for God so loved the world that he gave his only son,

that everyone who believes in him may not perish,

but have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the son into the world

to condemn the world, but in order

that the world might be saved through him.

The gospel of our Lord.

Won't you be seated.

The Sermon

Grace sent peace to you from the one who is our peace.

Don't you get it?

Roosevelt School, Miles City, Montana.

Marge Griffith, bless her memory, trying to teach some fourth graders long
division.

I know you were fine with it.

But there was this toe-headed, tall-for-his-age kid in our class who just wasn't getting

it.

In case you were wondering, well, there's Mrs. Griffith, rhythmically beating her head

against that green chalkboard.

No, no, no.

I wonder, however you like to picture God, if God does that sometimes, as humanity doesn't

seem to get it.

We don't, do we?

You want me to ramp up the litany or are you up for that?

Goodness me, we are five years now, fifth anniversary, or I'm sorry, fifth year of the war in Ukraine. All manner of violence just immediately south of the US and in the US and some of it finds its way to Canada.

From the time that I wrote some remarks for today and today the world has changed again. We have yet another war going on and you might not like what I say next but I think I'm gonna say it anyway.

However you feel about so-called regime change, the fact that schools get bombed

and over a hundred kids die, I think God weeps. And I think maybe God does bang a

forehead against that celestial chalkboard. No, no, no, don't you get it.

Sometimes our prayers of lament probably feel like prayers of accusation.

God, when will things change? When will we get it? Enter Nicodemus. This poor guy

has had preachers diss him left, right, and center because he doesn't get it.

Well guess what? Nicodemus is all of us.

But here's the good news of it all. Nicodemus eventually gets it. Oh not right away, not in this off-the-record little chat that he has with Jesus by night. He's not there yet, but he's gonna get there. When he speaks to a counsel about proper procedure because said counsel fears for their own lives because Jesus is now on the Roman radar screen and this could mean that everybody's a target. We have to do something about this Jesus. He is disturbing things to the point where it is making life unstable for us too. Now Nicodemus doesn't defend Jesus but he does point out I guess it would be their version of Berno's rules. Well, you know, when someone's accused, they get to face their accusers, right? And that diffuses the moment. So he's moving along this Nicodemus person. And as the preacher and teacher of preachers, Anna Carter Florence, tells us that as Nicodemus moves along, this is exactly what John hopes for us to. This reminder that yeah we might not get it. First we might not get it the 23rd time but you know God is still God. Spirit is still Spirit. God is going to manage to bring us around. And yes, Nicodemus does get it eventually. He

and Joseph, they arranged for Jesus internment after he's executed by the Romans. That was a risky thing he did.

I think God is in this for the long game anyway when we think about it. That this curriculum, this kingdom of God that Jesus speaks about, it's ancient and it's always. I think we can go back to the conversation that God has with Cain. You remember this?

Cain kills his own brother,
buries the body.

God, as God often does,
shows up and starts calling for justice.

And Cain's snarky question,

I'm reading it that way,

I don't think it was a question board of faith,
says, "Well, am I my siblings keeper?"

And it seems to me that all of the rest of

Scripture is this big answer why yes, yes you are.

When Moses the liberator frees people and they go from freedom to wandering, he asks

them to remember.

Do you remember what it was like to be on the run looking over your shoulder because

the army was coming?

Do you remember what it was like to go into these strange lands and interact with people

that you don't know?

You remember how scary that was to be the minority?

You remember that?

Hold that thought because there's going to come a day when in your land there are going

to be people looking over their shoulder, running for their lives, people who are coming

into the land fearful.

gestation in the wilderness is a school as Pastor Dan Erlander liked to put it.

The manna for dinner was also an object lesson. God will provide and God will

invite us into friendship with each other, with God, with creation, and even

with ourselves if we just let God, Spirit, do what God does. Now generations later,

after some occupying and going home and occupying and going home and well we

didn't totally get the memo then either, but the Spirit rested a prompt the

prophets and it was some 800 years before Jesus that one of them said our

Our call, if God wants anything out of us, is to live justly, to be kind, and to be reverent before God.

That's what God is after. That's the curriculum. That's the Kingdom of God right there.

And so when Jesus and Nicodemus had this conversation about this Kingdom of God, how does that come about?

Wow, that sounded very Martin Lutherany,

the small catechism-y, and it probably is

because if you sneak to the back of the hymnal,

and you can do that any time you like,

there are questions about, well,
when we pray the Lord's Prayer,
and we pray about this kingdom,
how does that come about?

God brings it to us, and births it in us.

To be born anew is not something
that we can engineer ourselves,

Your experience may be different, but my experience was the first time I was born,
I didn't have a lot to do with it except I was there.

I have a hunch that to be born anew, to be born from above, is very much the same
enterprise.

We're there, but the person we're the one doing the birthing really is God.

Back to some words from Pastor Anna Carter Florence who says that John's
agenda in this

gospel as we hear the story of Nicodemus is to assure us that we like him.

We may not get it at first, but we'll come around.

And the fact that the story is told in slow motion should tell us something.

It won't be right away.

It won't be instant.

But it will be.

Gods and game.

kingdom of God, if you listen to those final words in the Gospel, God does not
send the Sun into the world to condemn it, to judge it, to punish it, but that

through the Sun the world might be saved, it might be blessed, it might be rescued.

God's ancient and always-curriculum. It is something that this spirit of God relentlessly teaches us and loves us into and reminds us that guess what?

This kingdom of God that you're seeking, God has birthed it into you already.

This kingdom of God, it goes by many names.

can hold on for one if you prefer the English the restoration of all things

as we pray the Lord's Prayer today if you were to punch out that line your

kingdom come your will be done that are just everywhere we probably thank you

We pray that the rule and the realm of God, that always curriculum, may it be so

on earth as it is in the mind and heart of God.

Amen.