

When I was a young child, my friends and I used to search the fields for four-leaf clovers, not quite knowing what good luck was, but the joy of finding a rare four-leaf clover is something I still remember with great fondness. The four-leaf clover symbolizes "good luck", but do you know what the three-leaf clover symbolizes? There are several symbols, but it is commonly said that it symbolizes "happiness".

When you think about how people trampled over three-leaf clovers to find the four-leaf clover, it's a reflection of life in a sense: trampling over everyday happiness to find the elusive luck. Luck sounds nice, but I think everyday happiness is more valuable: a life where we laugh with family and friends, appreciate what we have even if it's not much, encourage each other, and cry with and comfort each other when we encounter something sad.

Today is Memorial Day Sunday, but it's also Trinity Sunday. As you may know, St. Patrick is said to have used the shamrock to evangelize people and explain the Trinity with each leaf representing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three leaves of a shamrock are also said to stand for faith, hope and love.

In the Lectionary given to us today, there is a scene where Jesus is talking to a man named Nicodemus in John chapter 3. The name Nicodemus means victory of the people. True to his name, he was smart, accomplished, a Pharisee, and in a high position of power. He was a member of the Sanhedrin Council that was the highest decision-making body at the time, consisting of 70 members and 1 chair. Today, we have political, economic, social, cultural, and religious divisions, but 2,000 years ago, religion was everything in Israel, and the power of the Sanhedrin was immense.

Because the Pharisees had vested interests within Judaism, most of them disliked Jesus for challenging that system. However, Nicodemus was one of

those impressed by Jesus' teachings and miracles. He came to Jesus and told him two things: first, you are a teacher who came from God, and second, that no one could do the miracles that Jesus was doing unless God was with him. At least Nicodemus was someone who was willing to look at things objectively, without bias.

As soon as Jesus heard Nicodemus say to him, "You are a teacher from God, and God is with you," Jesus said to him in verse 3, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again all of a sudden.

Jesus' answer to Nicodemus shattered the Jewish assumption that their racial identity, their ancient birth, guaranteed them a place in God's Kingdom. It was taught widely among the Jews at that time that since they descended from Abraham, they were automatically assured of heaven. Jesus made it clear that a person's first birth does not guarantee a kingdom. Only being born again gives this assurance.

Jesus says only when you are born again, you can see the Kingdom of God. What does it mean to be born again? In Greek, the original language of the New Testament, this word is "anothen." This word has two meanings: first, "From above" second, "Anew". Essentially, this means to have new life. Then in verse 4, Nicodemus asks how one can enter the womb and be born again. So, Jesus used another way to explain, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." Earlier, He said "born again," but now he says one must be "born of water and spirit" to enter the Kingdom of God.

John the Baptist, who at the time baptized with water, declared: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Being baptized by water means to repent, receive the forgiveness of sins, and living a new life by the grace of God. Of course, the kingdom of God here emphasizes God's rule rather than the concept of place. The kingdom of God has a futuristic meaning, but the

kingdom of God also has a present meaning, and it is already in your life.

If you believe the Word of God and let it rule your life, you are already living in the kingdom of God. One person put it this way: 'While you live on this earth, the kingdom of God is within you, and when you leave this earth, you enter the kingdom of God.' In other words, the kingdom of God is not something like elusive luck for the born-again, but something like everyday joyful gratitude and happiness.

The new birth that Jesus speaks of is offering a new way to come to God. Nicodemus forgot for a moment the two meanings of *anóthen* and asks Jesus one question. Jesus speaks of being born again from above, and we see that Nicodemus's language and thoughts do not follow Jesus' words. "How can a man be born when he is old?"

Jesus answers. "(Amen Amen Lego), truly, truly, I say unto you, unless man be born of water and of the Holy Spirit..." He repeats the "water" on the physical level and the "spirit" on the spiritual level. In verse 6, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." In verse 8, he uses the parable of the wind to explain the new birth. As we can feel the wind blowing even if we don't know where the wind is coming from, he said that we can know when we are born again and receive the Holy Spirit.

So what changes happened to Nicodemus, who secretly came to Jesus and met him at night? In fact, there was a significant change in Nicodemus who met the Lord in person. He felt that his attitude in life was not right. He sublimated his position as a God-given seat of life, the Sanhedrin, not as a tool for him anymore, but as an instrument for the Lord, who is the truth.

He publicly pointed out the high priest's error in arresting the Lord, and furthermore, when the Lord was crucified, he went out to buy spices and buried His body with Joseph of Arimathea. At that time, even the devout

disciples of the Lord had fled terrified. These public works of Nicodemus were sufficient to be criticized by the Pharisees and Sanhedrin. But Nicodemus no longer tried to avoid others' censure. He did it in front of everybody.

Rightly recognizing that obedience to the Lord was more important than people's acknowledgment, he had the principle of living that whatever he did, he lived for the glory of the Lord. I believe he saw the Kingdom of God and was in the process of entering God's kingdom. So he stands before us as an example of true faith, unlike other Sanhedrin councilors who lived only for their own desires.

There's a hymn titled Lately the life of Christ that has the following lyrics:

Verse 1. *Lately the life of Christ burst out alive in me!
Old things have passed away, even myself is new.
His life floods through me, like rivers towards the sea,
His love shines on me like sun shining on the dew.
With Christ I'll savor life Unending every day;
Now and forever I'll walk with Him all the way.*

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, for John that "eternal life" that Jesus promises is not just life in eternity, it's life right now that is touched by the eternal gifts and grace. Living a born-again life doesn't mean you have to become a missionary and go to the mission field. Living a born-again life means thanking God for the life you've been given, one day at a time, and doing your small acts of love for your neighbor. I hope and pray that the grace of God will touch your life and change your life and the world. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.