

**Chapel—February 19, 2014**  
***Jesus Comes to Us in the Dark***

I. Jesus Meets Us in the Dark

We live in a dark world. A fallen world. A dark place. From Afghanistan to Syria, from Moscow to Pyongyang, this world is filled with darkness. People in this dark world seek power and position; use people to get things; treat people as things. Consequently, citizens of this world are held captive by al-Qaida and Assad, Vladimir Putin and Kim-Jong-Un. In addition to their evil reign, a more subtle gospel of darkness, of greed and lust and pride, pervades all the world.

As Christians gathered to worship God, it is good for us to remember that all of us are looking for a better way, a brighter path, a way out of the darkness that has invaded the world.

For centuries mankind has been searching for a way out of the darkness; hoping to find someone who knows the way to the light. Today's Word highlights the story of man who was seeking answers. This man was a respected member of his church, yet he was embarrassed to show that he did not know the answers. So what did he do? He sought out someone he thought knew the answers; his name was Nicodemus and he came to Jesus by night:

*Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 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." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "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 the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3: 1-7*

Nicodemus was successful, respected; a man of importance at the temple, those around him would consider him a man of spiritual maturity. Yet despite his station in life he was still seeking, longing and looking. To protect his reputation, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, unseen, without appointment, under the radar of his fellow Pharisees, to ask Jesus the most important questions.

I like this story. I can relate to Nicodemus. I often think I've got my spiritual act together, I'm supposed to be the giver of answers, not the asker of questions. I'm to show people the way, be the spiritual head of my household, a university president. But then, in those quiet times, away from earthly reputation, when I lie awake at night in my bed, and I think about who I really am and what I do and don't understand, what I do and don't like about myself, what I've always hoped I'd

become, what I've really become. Then I know, I'm very much like Nicodemus. Seeking, longing, searching, looking for answers in the dark.

Nicodemus represents me, represents us, when he comes to Jesus in the dark. That shouldn't surprise us; the entire world is in darkness. We reside in darkness. Darkness is the color of our fallen existence. And here comes Jesus; He meets us right where we are. Do you want to know the good news for today? Jesus Meets Us in the Dark.

My brothers and sisters in the Lord, do you remember when you resided in the dark? If you're like me you knew you didn't know the truth, in fact you may have been hiding from the truth. I tried to live my life in an artificial world, a place that I pretended wasn't dark; I had grown so accustomed to the darkness that it no longer seemed dark to me. In the darkness of my existence I had lost sight of the presence of light. I needed to hear the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 139:

*Where can I go from Thy spirit?  
Where can I flee from Thy Spirit?  
If I say, surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night, Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee. Psalm 139*

This morning I want to declare to us all--The Light Has Come!  
[And yet, the world has missed the coming of the light—as **John notes:**

*The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it. John 1:5]*

## II. Jesus Invites Us into the World of His Light

Nicodemus was seeking **something**, Nicodemus must have wondered if this young carpenter from Nazareth might be the Messiah. Why else would he risk his reputation to come to Jesus in the dark?

Yet the questions Nicodemus asked and the answers Jesus offered were two completely different things. Jesus didn't play word games with Nicodemus. He cut to the heart of things.

Jesus announced a completely new way, so radical it was like being born again. Jesus was telling Nicodemus, the answers you seek about this and that, are not what you should search for. Jesus did not come to provide an explanation about something—Jesus came to reveal SOMEONE

In the eighth chapter of John, Jesus declares:

*I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life. John 8:12*

Nicodemus came seeking something; he left that night having found someone. Jesus, the Light of the World has come and the world, this dark world, will never be the same.

*Jesus said, I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. John 12: 46.*

Jesus is light. Jesus sees things as they are. For Him it's not dark and light as much as it's evil and righteousness. Jesus Illuminates THE Way, The Truth, The Life—This new way is radically different than life in the darkness; it's so different that Jesus tells Nicodemus it's like being BORN AGAIN. When Jesus proclaims the fact that He is Light, and has come to dispel the darkness, He is inviting Nicodemus to leave the world of darkness and be born into the world of light. This is the good news of life in Jesus.

Nicodemus Had to Choose—We Must Choose.

Jesus Invites Us into the World of His Light. Are we willing to be changed by the power of the Spirit? Or will we reject the light and retreat to the dark. Jesus knew many would turn from the light: He told Nicodemus near the conclusion of this encounter:

*This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. John 3: 19, 20.*

Friends, aren't you glad that you have come to Him? That you have stopped searching for answers in the dark, and instead you have found the light of the world—Jesus! The one, who meets us in the darkness, calls us to live in the world of His light.

Lest you think this is just inspirational rhetoric, let me do some Jesus review. Remember with me the fact that Jesus kept warning/preparing the disciples for the fact that He would soon go away. But He repeatedly told them, He would not leave them alone.

*I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment. When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you. John 16: 7, 8, 13-15*

Here's what I want us to realize. Jesus invited Nicodemus, and Jesus invites us, into a relationship so intimate that we become increasingly aware of how God would have us live. You wonder if something is right or wrong, dark or light? You need only draw near to God, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Spend time in prayer, quiet time, no Christian elevator music, or outside distractions, and bring your life before God.

Guess what? He who is the light of life, will convict us regarding sin, righteousness and judgment. Yes, on occasion, we may hear a brother or sister in Christ speak the truth in love to us, but it is God who is at work through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, working to do more in us than we could ever ask or imagine. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us out of the darkness and into the light.

### III. Jesus Calls Us to Be His Light

Let's return to our story, as we look at the scriptures, we see that Nicodemus chose to follow Jesus, to live a life so radically different it was as if he had reentered his mother's womb. In the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of John it was Nicodemus who joined Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for burial. Three days later, Nicodemus realized the one who talked of being born of the Spirit, was Himself raised up by the power of God to life eternal.

Each time we gather to worship we should be aware of the darkness we have left, and our choice to walk in the light.

So where are we right now? You and me? Do we need to confess that we have allowed shades of darkness into our lives? Have we developed a false sense of security and let our guard down, entertaining shadowy things that place us on a slippery slope, which eventually leads back to the world of darkness?

The dark calls us to live a lie. All the while, Jesus is gently whispering, come to me, find yourself in me, lose yourself in me. Burn brightly in me.

We are called to die to self and live in Him. Only then does His light burn brightly in us. What do you need to extinguish today in order for Him to burn brightly through you?

Jesus said:

*He who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. John 3: 21*

Here is what we must realize, Jesus comes into our darkness with His light, and invites us to share in that light; but He's not done there—He calls us to carry that light—to become the light.

The wonder of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus is the fact that He is unveiling a whole new way of living. Hear the words of First John:

*This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.  
If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;  
BUT if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. I John 3: 21;  
1 John 1: 5-7*

This morning I want us to reflect upon what it means to be the light of Jesus. We must choose, both individually and collectively. We must constantly choose to flee the darkness, live in the light and shine forth the light. We must resist the temptation to live in the shadows of a compromised life. To be God's light were ever life takes us—at work, at school, over the back fence, in times seen and unseen.

Here is the good news, now and always. Jesus has come and dispelled the darkness of sin, death and the grave.

Jesus has emerged victorious. Jesus has won. The powers of darkness have been defeated.

Jesus has come to us in the darkness and shown us His light.

He calls us to live in His light and to be His light in a dark world.

Why is this important for us right now? I'm here studying.

Why is this important for NNU? This is a university, not the church.

Because people are still searching, people are still coming to Jesus in the night, unsure, yet hopeful.

Wondering if He has the answers.

And guess what?

He has given you the answers.

We have the privilege and responsibility of sharing Jesus and His light with them.

You and I have a story to tell, a life to live and a light to shine.

Now is the time to shine. To be light right here, right now. As you live in and work may you seek Him and His light, may God use you to dispel darkness through your loving acts. May you become His light, shining in a dark world.

Song—This Little Light of Mine