

The Story of Nicodemus “God so loved the World”

Short drama – NICODEMUS AND JESUS. Read by Alison, mimed by Stuart Cross and Nigel Gunter

Well, that was a version of the story of Nicodemus by Dave Hopwood of Area 52 creative worship ideas and it certainly was quite creative! It's originally told in the Bible in the Gospel of John where there's no mention of bats, mice or fleas.....but that's just using a bit of imagination, the rest of it's quite truthful. And it's truth we're going to be talking about today.

Nicodemus was a well-educated and respected Jewish religious leader, known as a Pharisee. He would have been much looked up to by the ordinary Jewish people as someone who knew and taught the truth of their religion. But Nicodemus must have heard of all that Jesus was doing and teaching and suspected there was something in it; something more; something he wanted to know about. He wanted to find out the truth of it all.

Where would you go if you wanted to find out the truth of anything? There are lots of possibilities....You might look in books or newspapers, or, realistically, in this day and age, you'd probably start with the internet. You might talk to family or friends, to teachers, politicians.....well, no, maybe not that last one.....If you really want to find out the truth of something you'll search everywhere possible. As you might say, you'd leave no stone unturned.

So let's try turning over a few stones and see what we find.....(*interactive illustration with pebbles – we find all sorts of aspects of knowledge but not necessarily the truth*)

Well, it seems we haven't found the absolute truth yet. Is it important to do so? Some people might say not, but truth does matter. Think of a court of law.....or having an illness....or your relationships with other people.....(*ad lib exploration of these examples*). Nicodemus thought it was important to know the truth. So much so that he was prepared to take a risk. He wasn't content with listening to what people were saying about Jesus. Being seen with Jesus could badly damage his reputation, but, rather than not go at all, he went under cover of night. He went to the one whom he knew would have the answers; to the source; the authority.

So, let's find our last stone, the elusive stone of truth.....It's with Jesus (*final stone handed over by Nigel*).

Jesus told Nicodemus all about how knowing and accepting Him can give you a completely new start in life. He describes it as being born again. It's as if an unseen power blows through you giving you new understanding of life in Christ. (*Illustration with windmill*). You can't see it or touch it or predict how it's going to work, but you can see the results! To use a familiar phrase, it's like feeling stale or tired or negative or disillusioned and suddenly there's a breath of fresh air that completely revives you, and this particular fresh air is Jesus's special gift to us, the Holy Spirit. It's a gift that stays with you – a gift that keeps on giving.

Jesus also told Nicodemus about how He would die on the Cross to save us from our sins – a pretty hard concept to grasp. I know we're always talking about it in church but it's by no means easy to understand.

Did Nicodemus understand? Was he convinced? Did it change him? We don't know for certain. He only appears in the Bible twice more but the first time he is defending Jesus in the Jewish Council, asking that he be given a chance to speak for himself; and the second time he's helping to prepare

Jesus's body for burial after the Crucifixion – another very risky act. So, I think we have a fair idea, don't you?

John doesn't tell us any more after recounting Nicodemus's conversation with Jesus, but he does make a comment after the story, and this comment is often described as the most important, or, at least, most famous verse in the Bible. It is one that encapsulates the truth that Jesus told Nicodemus.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that all that believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him”. I wonder if Nicodemus finally understood this as he helped to bury Jesus? The depth of love of a God who would allow His Son to suffer the agony of death on a cross to save us undeserving human beings!

If you forget everything else I've said today, just remember John 3.16 – and to help you do so, here's a bookmark with that very verse on it, and a picture of light shining onto our dark world, for everyone. I hope they bring you reassurance, comfort and encouragement.

*In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Amen*