

What Was the Question?
Second Sunday in Lent
February 17, 2008
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Genesis 12:1-4a
John 3:1-17

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew,
he cannot see the kingdom of God."
John 3:3

That's the answer.

What was the question?

Jesus answer to Nicodemus is so familiar to us. We know it by heart.

What is missing from the text is the question Nicodemus asked, to which Jesus answered: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The Gospel of John doesn't quote Nicodemus question, but we can tell by Jesus' answer what the question must have been: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" . . .to see the Kingdom of God.

Lots of people asked Jesus that question.

A man with many possessions ran up....

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

A lawyer "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Same question as Nicodemus.

Different answers.

When the man with many possessions came to Jesus, the answer wasn't, "you must be born anew." Jesus answered that man by saying, "go, sell what you have and give to the poor."

Isn't that strange? I know a lot more people willing to be born again than I know people who are willing to sell all that you have.

When the lawyer wanted to know who his neighbor was, the answer wasn't "you must be born again." Jesus answered the lawyer by saying, "go, and do likewise" -- like the Samaritan who knows what it's like to be despised, rejected, scorned. Then you will have mercy to respond to another's hurt.

I know a lot more people willing to be born again than I know people who are willing to be hurt in order to heal hurts.

Or to leave brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers for Christ's sake – for he also said that such will inherit eternal life.

All those people asked the same question.

Jesus gave each one a different answer.

I can see how that could be.

How Nicodemus could be so tied in with ancestry, lineage, all that goes with it. He might have to be born anew.

How another person might be possessed by their possessions.

How another tries to avoid hurt at all costs.

How running away from hurts, running to possessions could block any sensibility to the life Jesus has promised.

Each time the same question was asked.

Jesus gave a different answer.

If we were to ask the same question, what answer would Jesus give us?

I'm a little afraid to ask the question, aren't you?

What must I do to be given the kind of perception of this world that matches Christ's?

What must happen to be given the kind of consciousness Jesus has promised his followers?

What must I do to inherit eternal life? – to see the Kingdom of God?

That is the question.

What answer would Christ give **us**?

The answer could be. . . multiple.

Some of us may be like Nicodemus. Our lineage blocks us. Our past, or our credentials which serve us well in our little world.

We may need a re-birth to start over, to stop relying on our past, on our credentials, on who we are.

Some of us may be possessed by possessions.

It might take massive unloading of things for us to begin to perceive what is of value to Jesus.

None of the answers sound easy to me.

It might be our job. Our job might consume us because it takes too much time, energy, we are workaholics.

God could demand our job, our health, our nationality, our identity; God might even demand we give up Sunday golf? (I'm sorry. That just slipped in.)

I don't know what **your** answer from Jesus would be.

I just know, from all those in the bible who asked him the same question, I just know the answer won't be easy!

I know it won't just be believing – it will require some acting too.

I know it won't be a formula – “Have you been saved?” -- one size fits all.

To hear Jesus answer to you – directly to you and no one else – it means listening to him, following him, doing what he commands -- so much that you live henceforth for him.

And certainly **that is** being born anew.

Born anew in whatever way, whatever form that takes for **you** – whatever form he knows you **need** to be reborn into.

Jesus holds out nothing less than life – life eternal.

Life in the presence of God which is God's Kingdom.

For those who listen, and follow him.

"Truly, truly, I say to **you**, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Amen.