

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

Nicodemus is confused. It's apparent in the gospel reading. That's why he comes to see Jesus – to make sense of this Jesus, and figure out where Jesus fits into his well-ordered world.

It's completely understandable that Nicodemus would be confused. One does not rise to the level of attainment he has achieved without a clear worldview, consistency, and respectability. As a man among the most distinguished men of Jerusalem, Nicodemus is well educated, refined, successful, a person of influence and power. He is on the council and sought out and deferred to by others because he has ascended the ladder of human affairs.

Usually, Nicodemus and people of his station know instantly where a person belongs in the scheme of things. Among the rich or the poor; among those who exercise control or those to be controlled; a person of distinction or an indistinguishable person; a person of learning or among the toiling masses; a person of great religious stature or one of those sad little people to whom the Lord is a mystery; ***usually Nicodemus knows just where a person fits into his well-ordered world, but that is not the case with this man Jesus.***

Jesus has ***no wealth and yet he shows no regard or deference for those do.*** The ***people call Him "Rabbi" – teacher,*** and He does seem well versed in the Scriptures, yet He lacks all the certification and degrees conferred by scholars, and ***no one know where this Jesus learned all this.*** Jesus moves among people of power, erudition and distinction speaking with absolute confidence and ***shows them no deference,*** and ***yet speaks to fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes and beggars as though what they have to say is of the utmost importance.*** He ***demonstrates the power of God*** by casting out demon, healings and performing miracles over nature, ***yet takes no payment, wants no recognition and nor takes any offerings.***

This Jesus clearly has ***a profound connection to God, yet He has little regard for the religious establishment.*** He could tell any of the masses that follow Him what

to do, and *they obey without question, but He asks nothing of them for Himself*. Jesus is all this and does all this, *yet displays no arrogance, makes no rules by which others need to live, and refuses to judge other people* – even people whom the world think worthy of disdain.

To top it all off, *despite the many ways Jesus makes God's presence among the people alive and vital* – His profound understanding of the Torah, His repeated displays of healing power, and His ability to teach with authority to both scholar and fisherman alike – *the leaders and religious establishment want Him to disappear*.

Jesus simply doesn't fit into Nicodemus world. Nicodemus has never seen or met anyone like Him. People either love Him or despise Him. Jesus is *out of place in Jerusalem, in Palestine, in the Roman Empire. Jesus simply doesn't fit here*.

There is *no place for Jesus in Nicodemus' world; Nicodemus would have to tear down the structures and values his life has been built around*; he would need to *walk away from living by the standards by which he has distinguished himself*; he would have to *count himself no better than anyone else for Jesus to have a place* in Nicodemus world.

That's why he comes to Jesus. *Nicodemus wants answers; he wants to make sense of this man Jesus; he wants to fit him into his world*.

He comes at night because *there are those in his circles who would defame him if he was seen to talking to this renegade rabbi*. But more than that, *his coming at night makes sense because Nicodemus is so profoundly in the dark*.

You see, *there's no place for Jesus in Nicodemus' world, but there is a place for Nicodemus in Jesus's world*.

All through the conversation on which John's gospel allows us to eaves drop Nicodemus cannot seem to grasp what Jesus says. It's as though they speak at cross purposes because they do speak at cross purposes; **Jesus point of reference is the Kingdom of God and Nicodemus' point of reference is the world Nicodemus knows**.

*To understand Jesus' world – His kingdom, His power, His glory – Nicodemus must walk away from all that he's come to know as normal, acceptable, just and right. If we want to know Jesus, follow Jesus, live with Jesus, I can promise you this: **Jesus will be the bull in the china shop of your life.***

*Jesus doesn't really fit in our world, **because of what we've made our world into.** If we want Jesus to be more than a prop in our lives – someone you can say you know, a little statue on your mantle, a picture on your 50 years of perfect attendance Sunday school pin – **the ways you've functioned and succeeded in the world won't work in His world.** They'll **wreak havoc, cause division, hurt people; I know because I have wreaked havoc, have caused division, have hurt people and still do when I operate out of my own value system.** Following Jesus isn't about applying some thin veneer of gentility and civility to our lives. **Living in Jesus' world means loving honoring and treating people with dignity before all else.***

Truth is, **Jesus has no desire to fit into our world; innocent, righteous people end up on crosses in our world, and no one speaks up, no one says a word.** No, Jesus doesn't want to fit into our world; **people litter our streets like so much trash in our world, and people act like they're not there; no one speaks up; no one says a thing.** Jesus doesn't want to fit into our world; **people cross a border just looking for safety for their family, hope for a decent life, respite from bombs and bullets and tanks in our world, and we shoot tear gas at them, lock up their children, treat them like so much livestock because their skin is brown; no one speaks up; no one does a thing, no one says a bloomin' word.**

You **know your living in Jesus' world when** you find yourself doing something for someone you're in no way obligated to help, speaking up for people who you have never and probably will never meet just because their people, objecting when you see or hear of another person being treated as though they matter less. *“the Spirit blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

Jesus came, not to restore innocence to our jaded, violent, indifferent,

hateful world, but to teach us, show us, prepare us to live in His world. When we seek to follow Him, we will meet resistance; count on it. When we seek to speak out in His name, people will try and shut us up. When we love as Jesus would have us love, this world will say we're do-gooder chumps. When we spend our money to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, the people of this world will say we have more money than sense.

But seek to follow Jesus, to speak out in His name, to speak out in His name, *when we love as Jesus loves and think later*: feeding the hungry, *clothing the naked*, housing the homeless, *visiting the sick*, the dying and those in prison; we *will know that we're not just living in this world where Jesus didn't fit. But we'll be fitting ourselves for Jesus' world.*

In time, Nicodemus will become bolder, and accept that he must act on Jesus' behalf without certainty or guarantees. In chapter 7 he will defend Jesus before the Sanhedrin saying: "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" And *after Jesus has dies on the cross Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea ask Pilate for Jesus' body and prepare Him for burial. It's clearly not for their own benefit that they do this, but purely for Jesus and because no matter what anyone thinks, they would rather live in Jesus' world.*

Jesus dead body has come to the moment of redemption for precisely the same reason. Despite the fact that a cross waited for Jesus in Jerusalem, He goes because it is the will of His Father. Despite the certainty that he will suffer and die, Jesus enters Jerusalem. Jesus believes and follows the promise of God's way of life. Even if it costs Him his own life, *Jesus knows that the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit demands love. That's the world in which Jesus lives, and that's the world in which He calls and desires us to live. Can*

Can we? *Only with repentance and the help of God through the Holy Spirit. We can begin now.*

Amen !!!