

Saving Love – Teaching Notes

(John 3:1-16; 4/9/17)

Introduction: A key idea in today's Sunday School material is Jesus talks with Nicodemus about being born again. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to make sure that we are born again and help others do the same.

Body:

Read John 3:1-3

I. Nicodemus Meets Jesus. Nicodemus is presented as a religious leader. He approaches Jesus at night with an acknowledgment that Jesus is a teacher from God. Jesus replies by telling him about the necessity of being born again.

Applications -

- **Being a Christian, instead of a Pharisee.** Notice in vs. 1 that Nicodemus was a Pharisee, not a Christian. On one hand, we know that he subscribed to following the law and man-made traditions in order to be right with God. He did not accept Jesus as His savior by faith. On the other hand, there are too many in our churches today who are closer to being like Pharisees than being like Christians. They are more concerned with a list of does and don'ts than with what God is concerned with in His word. For example, there are too many who are more concerned with the order of worship, song list, and wardrobe than with helping lost people get saved and helping baby Christians grow in the Lord. God is much more concerned with the latter than the former. *Let's work on being Christians more than Pharisees.* "Yes," there is a need for a certain amount of rulemaking for the sake of excellence. However, too much rule making can be harmful.

- **Being right with God, through Christ.** Notice in vss. 1-3 that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. First, he may have come at night because he was afraid of peer pressure in the day (see Jn. 12:42-43). But give him credit for making his way to Jesus. There are too many people who don't come to Jesus in the day nor in the night. Until we get right with God through Jesus, we are lost. Second, Nicodemus came to Jesus, even though he was already a religious leader. There are some who have been in church so long that they confuse being in the church organization with being right with God. These are not the same things. No matter how long you have been in church, if you are not right with God through Christ, you should come to Jesus, **now**. *Let's make sure that we are right with God through Christ.* And let's urge others to do the same.

Read John 3:4-8

II. Nicodemus Engages Jesus. Nicodemus inquires about how to be born again. Jesus talks about being born of water and the Spirit. The Spirit is compared to the wind.

Applications –

- **Receiving and appreciating the things of the Holy Spirit.** Notice in vs. 6 that the Spirit gives birth to spirit, and flesh gives birth to flesh. On one hand, there are people who are obviously intelligent. But if they are not saved and indwelt with the Spirit, they cannot really understand spiritual matters. On the other hand, those who are saved and indwelt with the Holy Spirit have a capacity to receive and understand spiritual matters. Therefore, activities like Bible study, prayer,

and praise mean one thing to those who are saved and something different to those who are not. *Let's make sure that we are saved, so we can receive and appreciate the things of the Holy Spirit.*

- **Living like we are disciples.** Notice in vs. 8 the implication that Nicodemus being a Pharisee meant that he should have understood more of what Jesus was talking about. Similarly, as disciples of Christ, there are some things that we should understand by now. We should understand at least basic matters like the authority of Scripture, salvation through Christ, discipleship, and biblical principles of the church. *Let's make sure that we are living up to what is expected of as disciples of Christ.* More important than our knowledge is our living. We should live according to the will of God, not just be familiar with the will of God.

Read John 3:9-19

III. Jesus Critiques Nicodemus. Jesus inquires about Nicodemus being so slow to understand, even though he is a teacher. Jesus talks about how He is like the snake lifted in the wilderness with the Jews. God loves the world so much that He gave His Son to die for it.

Applications –

- **Accepting the testimony and word of God.** Notice in vs. 11 that there were those who heard but did not accept the testimony. In like manner, there are many in and outside the church who hear but don't accept the testimony about God and His will for our lives. It is easy to see this with those who are outside the church. However, when we don't obey God's will, we are acting like we don't accept it either. We can tell the tree by the fruit that it bears. *Let's live like we accept the testimony and word of God.*

- **Salvation through faith.** Notice in vs. 16 that believing in Jesus is the key to salvation. It is not enough to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, died, and rose from the dead. We are called to believe that His death is the only substitute payment for **our** sin debt. When this is true, we should have an assurance of salvation that is not shaken by the criticism of others nor by our struggles with sin. *Let's live like we have accepted Jesus as our savior by faith.*

Conclusion: Let's work on making sure that we are born again and helping others do the same. God has much for those who obey His will.