

BIBLE STORY: HOLY TRINITY, JESUS CATECHIZES NICODEMUS

John 3:1-17

Central Thoughts

- The Holy Trinity testifies to the gift of salvation in the death of the Son of God for the world.
- God's nature is self-giving, sacrificial love.
- Faith in Christ is a miracle of the Holy Spirit through the testimony of God's Word and the new birth of water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism
- Whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish but has the gift of everlasting life.

Discussion Questions

What do we celebrate on Holy Trinity Sunday?

That we worship one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "One God in Trinity and Trinity in unity" (Athanasian Creed)

Where do we especially hear Jesus teaching us about God the Father and God the Son in His words to Nicodemus?

Verse 16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." God the Father gave His only Son.

Where do we hear Jesus teaching Nicodemus about God, the Holy Spirit?

Verse 6: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit..."

Verse 8: The Holy Spirit is compared to the wind. "The wind blows where it wishes...So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Where does Jesus refer to all three persons of the Holy Trinity together?

Verse 11: The plural pronouns refer to the persons of the Holy Trinity. "We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness." (See also John's catechesis on the testimony of the Holy Trinity in 1 John 5:4-13.)

How does God the Holy Trinity testify to the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ?

Through the preaching of God's Word and the Sacraments.

What does Jesus teach Nicodemus is God's nature?

Self-giving sacrificial love in the gift of the only-begotten Son to be offered up in death upon the cross for the salvation of the world.

Why does Nicodemus come to Jesus by night?

He does not want to be seen by his fellow Pharisees

What does Nicodemus ask Jesus?

"Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

What is meant by the word "signs"?

Miracles that demonstrate the love and compassion of God for sinners

What does Jesus tell Nicodemus?

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
("Born again" is better translated, "Born from above").*

What does the expression "born from above" mean?

The new birth of faith in Christ is a miracle of God.

How does Nicodemus demonstrate that "by his own reason or strength he cannot believe in Jesus Christ, his Lord, or come to Him"?

He thinks that Jesus is talking about a man entering a second time into his mother's womb to be born again.

How does Jesus respond to Nicodemus' sinful human reasoning?

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

What is Jesus referring to by being "born of water and the Spirit"?

The Holy Spirit brings about the miracle of faith (the birth from above or regeneration) by the water and Word of Holy Baptism.

How does Jesus teach that the sinful flesh is incapable of causing the new birth of faith?

"That which is born of flesh is flesh"

How does Jesus give all glory to the Holy Spirit for the new birth of faith?

"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit"

To what does Jesus compare the Holy Spirit's work?

To the wind. One hears it but does not know where it comes from or where it goes.

How do we "hear" the Holy Spirit?

Through the testimony of God's Word. Through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the Holy Trinity "testifies to the gift of salvation in Christ.

To what does the Holy Spirit draw a sinner in the call to repentance and faith in Jesus?

To the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, to be "born of water and the Spirit."

Who alone descended to earth for the salvation of the world?

The Son of Man, who is the Son of God.

What do the expressions "to see the kingdom of God" or "to enter the kingdom of God" mean?

"To see" and "to enter" is to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died for the world.

How does Jesus teach Nicodemus about His death for the salvation of the world?

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." To be "lifted up" is to die upon the cross.

How is the love of the Holy Trinity demonstrated to the whole world?

That God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for the world's sin.

What promise is given to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, God's only Son?

They will not perish but have the gift of everlasting life.

Meditation on the Bible Story

God the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—brings about the miracle of new birth to faith in Christ through the testimony of God's Word and the gift of Holy Baptism. Nicodemus learned the lesson of the Catechism: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called me (to faith) by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts (the Sacraments), sanctified and kept me in the true faith." Through ongoing preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the Holy Trinity testifies to Christ and the Holy Spirit "blows" like the wind "to call" to repentance and faith in Christ. "To see" and "to enter" the kingdom of God is to believe in God's only begotten Son, who was lifted up upon the cross for the sins of the world. The promise of Holy Baptism, the new birth of water and the Spirit, is given by Jesus to everyone, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Prayer on the Bible Story

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we give thanks to You for the new birth of water and the Spirit that we have received in the miracle of Holy Baptism. Guard and keep us in the one true faith, that trusting in Your love for us in Christ, we may not perish but have everlasting life: for You live and reign, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.