

NEXT STEP: STUDY & SHARE

READINGS

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills; my help comes from the Lord. (vv1, 2)

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, our leader & guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior & Lord, who lives & reigns with you & the Holy Spirit, one God, now & forever. Amen.

SERMON TEXT- John 3:1-17

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night & said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." ³Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb & be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water & Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, & what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, & 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." ⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, & yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know & testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things & you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

LISTENING TO . . .

GOD- Christian life is rooted in the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit

1. How many contrasts can you find in the Gospel reading? For instance, Jesus says "born from above" but Nicodemus hears "born again" (it's the same word in Greek & Aramaic, the same with wind/spirit); Nicodemus is an enlightened teacher, yet he comes to see Jesus "in the dark."
2. Who or what is "above" to be born from (v7)? See v12, Genesis 1:6-8, 11:4; 1 Kings 8:27; Job 22:14; Psalm 11:4, 36:5, 89:2, 103:11, 115:16, 148:4; Isaiah 55:9, 66:1; Nehemiah 9:6

EACH OTHER- Sharing & growing with our brothers & sisters in Christ

3. Review the [Small Catechism: Holy Baptism](#); what is the proper understanding of "born again"- God's work giving you a new life as his own or "rock bottom," gutter experience? Which understanding fits with Abraham & Nicodemus? How is trust in God's promises evident in the [SC](#) explanation? Available [bookofconcord.org](#)
4. Think back over important critical points/decision in the last 10 or so years of your life. Which ones had unexpected (good or bad) outcomes? How was God at work in hidden or surprising ways (v8)? What did you learn about yourself & your connection with him?

NEIGHBORS- Bearing fruit for those not yet our brothers & sisters

5. God the Holy Spirit is a person, not an emotion or feeling or force (cf. *John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 6:19, 12:4-7; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Peter 1:21*). How does this realization help you connect with others who think (erroneously) a song or an experience or even empathy is the Holy Spirit?
6. The Apostles' Creed is a "rule of faith" (cf. *Galatians 6:14-16; "faith"- Romans 12:6*) meaning a measure for faithfulness (& accuracy); how does it help you tell about God, including the Holy Spirit? See *1 Corinthians 15:1-11* *Brush up on the Creed by reading the [Small Catechism](#).*

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Wind Blown

*Just as we never know where the wind comes from or goes,
so the Spirit works in our lives to direct us in unexpected ways.*

-Notes-

KEY VERSE: The wind blows where it chooses, & 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. (v8)

-NEXT STEPS MEMORY VERSE-

The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

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