

# *South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges*

*Second Sunday of Lent – March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

**Prelude:** by Christie Coatsworth

## **Welcome & Announcements:**

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - [Southbuxton.ca](http://Southbuxton.ca) and [Talbotstreet.ca](http://Talbotstreet.ca)

## **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

### **Call to Worship:**

**Eric:** Come into the wilderness.

**People:** **Step into the unknown possibility that is here in this place with all of our questions.**

**Eric:** The sun might be shining but it still feels bleak.

**People:** **We step into the wilderness because we have questions and it is here that it feels safe to ask what we long to know.**

**Eric:** We come together to a find deeper understanding of God's love.

### **Opening Hymn:** VU 333 "Love Divine, All Loves..."

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver;  
let us all thy grace receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee,

changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise. \*\*

### **Prayer of Confession:**

**People:** Looking out into the wild possibility of this moment, O God, it feels like an impassable mountain or a vast, deepening sea hindering our way forward. We feel discouraged and overwhelmed. We don't move from where we are.

You know our hearts, O God, and the disbelief that has come to live there. You know how the bleakness of this night immobilizes us. We are timid. We fear failure.

We confess fear of dying even if it is for the sake of truly living. Amen.

### **Reflection Music: "Hold Us in Your Grace"**

### **Words of Affirmation:**

**Eric:** Beloved, the God who calls us to take bold steps outward, is the One who journeys closely within. In God, there is companionship and renewed strength through the wilderness of every night. Thanks be to God.

**People:** Amen.

### **Children's Story & Lord's Prayer:**

### **Children's Hymn: VU 663 "My Faith Looks Up To Thee"**

My faith looks up to thee,  
thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine.  
Now hear me while I pray;  
take all my guilt away.  
O let me from this day be wholly thine.

While life's dark maze I tread,  
and griefs around me spread, be thou my guide,  
bid darkness turn to day;  
wipe sorrow's tears away;  
nor let me ever stray from thee aside.

May thy rich grace impart  
strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire.  
As thou hast died for me,  
O may my love to thee  
pure, warm, and changeless be, a living fire. \*\*

### **Responsive Psalm 121:**

#### **The Lord Will Protect His People**

I look to the hills! Where will I find help?

**It will come from the Lord, who created heaven and earth.**

The Lord is your protector, and he won't go to sleep or let you stumble.

**The protector of Israel doesn't doze or ever get drowsy.**

The Lord is your protector, there at your right side to shade you from the sun.

**You won't be harmed by the sun during the day or by the moon at night.**

The Lord will protect you and keep you safe from all dangers.

**The Lord will protect you now and always wherever you go.**

**Scripture: John 3: 1 - 17**

### **Jesus and Nicodemus**

There was a man named Nicodemus who was a Pharisee and a Jewish leader. One night he went to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know that God has sent you to teach us. You could not work these miracles, unless God were with you." Jesus replied, "I tell you for certain that you must be born from above before you can see God's kingdom!" Nicodemus asked, "How can a grown man ever be born a second time?" Jesus answered: I tell you for certain that before you can get into God's kingdom, you must be born not only by water, but by the Spirit. Humans give life to their children. Yet only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God. Don't be surprised when I say that you must be born from above. Only God's Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. Jesus replied: How can you be a teacher of Israel and not know these things? I tell you for certain we know what we are talking about because we have seen it ourselves. But none of you will accept what we say. If you don't believe when I talk to you about things on earth, how can you possibly believe if I talk to you about things in heaven? No one has gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from there. And the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as the metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert. Then everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life. God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!

**Reflection: "Through The Night"**

When we enter into the night, sometimes the darkness is scary; sometimes it brings peace. In the stillness of the night, we may experience God. We may experience God in ways we have not before. In the stillness of the night, we wrestle with the questions of our lives, may we come to know what really matters.

In the stillness of the night, we can ask questions about God's plans for us and our plans with God. We are told in scripture that in the night, the Lord keeps watch and does not slumber. In the deep of night, we bring our questions to God that we may not wish to ask during the day. In the stillness of the night, we can easily be in a meditative state as we are not so distracted by the sights and sounds of the day. The night is dark and quiet. We are able to be and to think.

The words of Psalm 121 offer comfort to those who are awake and asking questions of God in the middle of the night. "I look to the hills. Where do I find help?" This is a Psalm that is used in Legion Services. It was a Psalm consider to

bring strength and comfort during times of battle, fear and the unknown, including the very possibility of death. Where do we find God in the middle of the battle?

In John today, Nicodemus comes in the night to meet Jesus. What is Nicodemus' motive? Nicodemus is a Pharisee, a pious Jew, a teacher, and probably a member of the Sanhedrin. An important man with disciples of his own, he would represent the authority of both the temple and the governing council. Nicodemus comes at night, which is a good time for scholars to debate, and possibly with his disciples as Jesus addresses him using the plural form of "you." However, Nicodemus was also still "in the dark" about life in the Spirit.

The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is about what matters and what is at the heart of Jesus' ministry. While the night was an acceptable time for scholars to debate, the imagery also raises questions for modern-day readers. What questions do we think about most in the middle of the night? Jesus draws some concrete lines between saved and unsaved, heaven and earth, those born of the Spirit and those who have not.

These are questions many Christians struggle with in their faith lives. We wonder, "How do we know what we know?" "How did we come to believe what we believe?" Some Christians believe that saying that you are a follower of Jesus and saying you are sorry for your sins – is the ticket to heaven. For some of us, we feel the Holy Spirit calling us to ministry in our church and community. Does the Holy Spirit call us to question assumptions and move to different understandings?

As we like Nicodemus, move through the deep of night, we might ponder with Nicodemus, the question of what matters most about life and faith. Relying on the fact the Holy Spirit is with us, we can move forward and not be afraid.

John actually starts this story in the previous chapter, where the crowd's reaction to Jesus' miracles and signs, are lackluster at best. Jesus distrusts the crowd. Compared to the depths and meaningfulness of Jesus' teachings, their interest is petty. It is in this distrust and disinterest that Nicodemus comes to find out more about Jesus. Does it seem that Jesus trusts Nicodemus? Jesus does say to Nicodemus, "How can you be a teacher of Israel and not know these things?"

During the great depression in America, millions of people travelled from the dustbowl in the Midwest and southern plains states to California, seeking a better life. It was not uncommon for travelers to wait and drive across the desert until nighttime when temperatures were cooler, and there was less risk of engines overheating and dehydration.

Some of us will find the nights full of fear, worry, and anxiety. Some of us will find the night a time to seek a closeness with God. Whatever is our experience of the night and darkness, let us be assured that God's grace will sustain us through our physical and/or metaphorical nights and times of darkness. Jesus offered grace to Nicodemus and answered his questions about what matters in life and faith. As we hear today's story, we see that God's grace is with both Jesus and Nicodemus, with the teacher and with the student, and God's grace is also with us. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

**Reflection Hymn: VU 382 "Breathe on Me, Breath..."**

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until my will is one with thine,  
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
till I am wholly thine,  
until this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God:  
so shall I never die,  
but live with thee the perfect life  
of thine eternity. \*\*

**Invitation to Share Our Gifts:**

**Eric:** As we offer our gifts to God, we also bring with us our faltering steps, our brokenness, our hopes, our risking and our hearts, that as God transforms our gifts, God will also transform us to be God's blessed people. We give as an act of gratitude and worship.

**Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

**Offertory Prayer:**

**People: We bring you gifts, O God, with all our questions. We know that you will work wonders with all we offer to renew the bleakness with new wonders. Amen.**

**Prayer Hymn: MV 66 “Senzeni Na?”** *(What Have We Done?)*

Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?  
Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?  
Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?  
Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?

**Pastoral Prayer:**

**Closing Hymn: VU 562 “Jesus Calls Us...”**

Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult  
of our life's wild restless sea,  
day by day his clear voice sounding,  
saying, 'Christian, follow me.'

Long ago apostles heard it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for Jesus' sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship  
of the vain world's golden store,  
from each idol that would keep us,  
saying, 'Christian, love me more.'

In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,  
'Christian, love me more than these.'

Jesus calls us: by your mercies,  
Saviour, may we hear your call,  
give our hearts to your obedience,  
serve and love you best of all. \*\*

**Benediction:**

**Eric:** The wildness of night can feel endless and so lonely, but the wind blows, and the Spirit moves again. God will protect you and watch over you, now and forever more.

**Sending Out Hymn: MV 71 “When the Wind of Winter...”**

When the wind of winter blows  
bringing times of solitude,

fill the silent icy night,  
be our hearts' compassion.

*Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter,  
Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.*

**Amen, Amen, Amen.**

**Postlude:** – Christie Coatsworth

**Prayers:** - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.  
It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

**Cancer:**

**Chris  
Paul  
Carol  
Maureen  
Susan  
Cara  
Margie  
Marcus  
Susan  
Ingrid  
Jerry**

**Reg and Mary Jane  
Dave  
Bill  
Jane  
Donna  
Martin and Family  
Larry  
Kerigan  
Fran  
Ken**

**Natalie  
Ruth  
Dave  
Marj  
Sue  
Evelyn**

**Richard and Evelyn  
Elaine  
Wayne**

**Ed Sykes  
Arley Smith  
Eric  
Ron  
Wes  
Turkey/Syria  
Mass Murders  
Grant Family**