

A BIG STEP TO FIND LIFE

16.3.14

Sermon based on

GEN. 12:1-4

JOHN 3:1-17

There's something about Nicodemus that I have great sympathy for. He's part of a group with great clout and authority – the Pharisees- but he's begun to see things differently. He's no longer sure that they have got it right. He is taken by this Jesus and what he says. He wants to learn more.

But how do you just turn aside from the way you were brought up? How do you break away on your own from the rules and systems that are held in such high esteem by your group? How do you turn away from those who give you status and from those who wouldn't just be surprised but appalled if they knew you were a follower of someone who was considered to be a troublemaker with all sorts of strange values?

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night because he thinks Jesus is not just any old teacher but a teacher who comes from God. He doesn't want to be seen. There's a sense of fear and danger.

Have you ever had the sense that however much you had felt committed to certain groups or values or individuals, however much time you had given to some cause or relationship, that now you needed to follow a different route? It was what Abram was asked to do and this wasn't just a curious enquiry for Nicodemus. It would mean changing almost everything. What's that like? Have you ever taken that jump?

For Nicodemus it will be nothing less dramatic than if he was born again, given a whole new life, new breath, new spirit. That will bring a new impact and new behaviour.

If he needs convincing, then Jesus tells him that God loved the world – not just the Jews or the Pharisees but the world with all its irritating, objectionable, wild, irreligious people- so much that he sent his son. That also was a dramatic step, a huge jump.

It's an effort to bring confidence. For this man who is so upright and confident in all sorts of ways, has been brought to a place of uncertainty. He has to leave the familiar and decide to put his reputation on the line, stand up for belief and do something different. If he does it means the road to real life.

So if we have a situation where it would take courage to admit we don't want to go with the flow any more, we don't want to follow the crowd, it doesn't seem right.....then we need to remember the example of Nicodemus. He dared to go to Jesus who promised new birth, new life and an eternal hope for all who believe in the one who would come to a new life after death himself.

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