

## Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

The reading I have chosen for the fourth Sunday of Lent is **John 3: 1-21**, Nicodemus was a Jewish leader who was a Pharisee. Jesus speaks to him of being sent because of God's love, to offer eternal life to the world. He uses the image of light and darkness to explain the concept of judgement. Those who do wrong things avoid the light, because it reveals what they are doing, but those who do what is good and true are attracted to the light. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

### Prayers of Approach, Confession and Forgiveness

God who spoke in creation and brought light into the world, we come to bring our thanks and praise to you.

God, who came among us in Jesus, whose life, death and resurrection are the core of our faith, we come to learn from you.

God who works in the world through the spirit of truth, we come to be challenged and changed by you.

We come, knowing that we do not live up to our own standards, let alone yours. For the times when our thoughts, our words, our actions are subject to darkness, to falsehood, to death, forgive us.

The God of light, of life, of truth, offers forgiveness, restoration and renewal to each of us. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

***Our Father who art in heaven...***

**Song            My Jesus, my Saviour**

[\(408\) SHOUT TO THE LORD \(LYRICS\) - YouTube](#)



### **John 3:1-21 - Jesus teaches Nicodemus**

**3** Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.'

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.<sup>[a]</sup>'

<sup>4</sup> 'How can someone be born when they are old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!'

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit<sup>[b]</sup> gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, "You<sup>[c]</sup> must be born again."<sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'<sup>[d]</sup>

<sup>9</sup> ‘How can this be?’ Nicodemus asked.

<sup>10</sup> ‘You are Israel’s teacher,’ said Jesus, ‘and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.’<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. <sup>19</sup> This is the verdict: light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. (NIVUK)

## **MEDITATION**

### **Nicodemus – John 3:14 “ . . . so the Son of Man must be lifted up,”**

It was dark when I went to him that first time, the middle of the night when all was quiet – and can you blame me? It just wouldn’t have done would it, a man in my position to be seen associating with Jesus? Even a hint of involvement and my fellow Pharisees would have lynched me on the spot!

He was the enemy, the blasphemer, the one who threatened everything he stood for – not just misguided, but dangerous, evil – a threat to our society, a challenge to the very heart of our religion.

I knew all that, at least in theory, and, yes, I’d ben as shocked as any by some of the things he’d done. Yet I couldn’t get him out of my mind, try as I might. I can’t say why exactly, for it wasn’t any one word or deed that hooked me – it was all of them together, the way each reinforced the other, combining to make him the person he was.

He spoke of love and he showed what love was all about. He talked of forgiveness, and I simply haven’t met a more forgiving man.

He talked of life, and there was a quality to his own life that I couldn’t help but envy.

He talked of God, and I could see God was more real, more personal, more special to him, than I’d ever have dreamed possible for anyone.

So I went and I talked. I listened and I learned. Nervous, true, hesitant, strictly incognito, and so very, very slow to understand.

Yet little by little, the truth broke through my confusion, a ray of light in the darkness, new birth for my parched and barren soul.

It was dark when I went again, a night far blacker than that first night, for they'd taken revenge by then, as I knew they would, done him to death on the cross.

And as he hung in agony, his gasps piercing the air, suddenly the sun vanished and darkness fell.

That had them worried, you can well imagine, more than a few scuttling off in panic.

But not me, for I had seen the truth he spoke of and found the life he promised. So, while others stumbled blindly in the darkness, for me it was lighter than the lightest day, and brighter than the brightest sunshine. *(from 'No Ordinary Man' Book 2, Nick Fawcett)*

### **Intercessions**

God of light, we pray...

... for those who are oppressed by unjust systems and rulers

... for those who are in the depths of depression

... for all those who feel that they are living in darkness.

God of life, we pray...

... for those who are coming to the end of their lives

... for their loved ones, and those caring for them

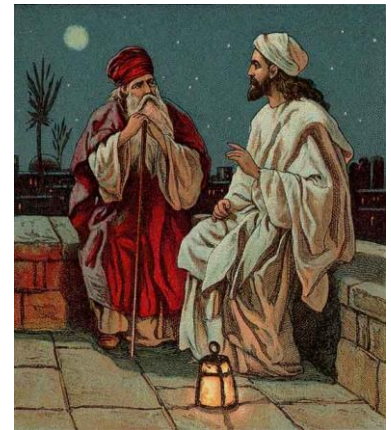
... for those who are bereaved.

God of truth, we pray...

... for those who serve in governments, both national & local

... for those who work in, and those who control the media

... for your Church.



In a moment of quietness we bring our own particular concerns to you.

And we pray for ourselves, that we may live in, and be sharers of your light, your life, your truth.

***Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.***

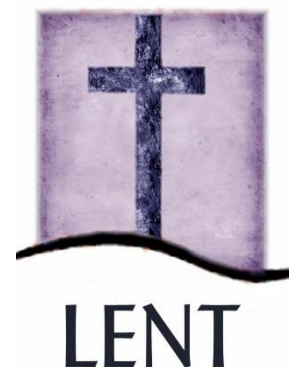
**Song            In Christ alone**

[\(408\) In Christ alone lyrics - YouTube](#)

### **Holy Communion – Third Sunday of Lent**

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,  
for in lasting love you gave your only Son,  
so that all who trust in him may have eternal life.

In great love and mercy,  
you sent your Son, Jesus, into the world,



and though he was lifted up on the cross to die,  
you gave the gift of life to all who turned to him in faith.  
Raising him from the dead,  
you have given us life in him,  
not because of any works of our own,  
but as a gift from the immeasurable riches of your grace  
given us in Christ,  
now and for the ages to come.

***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,  
we offer you thanks and praise at all times  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.***



### **The Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine**

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.  
I Corinthians 5:7

### **The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine**

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.  
Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Alleluia.*

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

### **Prayer after Communion**

God of a love stronger than death, you have given us new birth into a living hope through the gift of your Son.

God with us, you have fed us with yourself and strengthened us for journeying ahead.

God of truth and power, you take our weakness and our sin and refashion us by grace.

### **Commission & Benediction**

Go now, and live as people made by God for good works.

Live your life in God openly in the light so all may see.

Celebrate God's love with a sacrifice of praise,  
and tell your story of salvation with joy.

And may God show you the immeasurable riches of his grace.

May Christ lead you into the life prepared for you.

And may the Spirit gift you with faith for salvation.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

***In the name of Christ. Amen.***





