

Sermon for May 27, 2018
Trinity Sunday
“Being Born Over”

John 3:1-17

One day Farmer Brown realized that he needed a new plow, the old one wasn't cutting right. So he went to town to buy one. When he got to the store the storekeeper told him that they had the newest scientific advancement in plowing available. They had a “No Work Plow and Horse Team.” Farmer Brown explained that his horse was fine. All he needed was a new plow for the horse to pull. But the salesman told him that this horse and plow would save him hours of back breaking labor and in the end would pay for itself. So Farmer Brown bought the newfangled scientific plow.

When he got home with it he took it straight out to the field and tried to use it. You notice I said, “He tried.” You see he couldn't get the horse to budge. He put his hands on the plow and couldn't get the horse to do a thing. It just stood there. Farmer Brown was starting to get angry and he said to himself, “This sure is a no work plowing horse. It won't do no work.”

So Farmer Brown went to the salesman and told him that his newfangled “No Work Plow” was just that and that he wanted his money back. The salesman was shocked. He said, “Let me check it out and see what's wrong.” So the two of them went to Farmer Brown's farm and they took the horse and plow out to the field. Farmer Brown stood off at a distance and watched. The salesman checked out the plow and the horse and then positioned it and stepped back. Five seconds later the horse started plowing the field all by itself. It plowed a perfectly straight furrow. Then at the end of the field it turned around and plowed another one parallel to the first.

Then the salesman said to Farmer Brown, “What's the problem? It seems to be doing fine.” Farmer Brown was amazed. “How? What? It never did that for me. Every time I put my hands on the plow that horse just stood there.” The salesman interrupted. “You see there's your problem. This is a ‘No Work Horse and Plow.’ This horse has been scientifically trained to do all the work. If you are controlling the plow, it can't do its job.” “That ain't right,” blurted Farmer Brown, “It ain't right for a horse to plow a field all by itself. That just ain't the way things are done.” The salesman smiled, “But Mr. Brown, if you want to be saved from the drudgery of plowing the field you have to let the horse do all the work.”

In many ways the main character of our lesson from John, Nicodemus, is much like Farmer Brown. Nicodemus wasn't a farmer. He was a Pharisee. He was a religious man who wanted to do God's will. And in his day the most religious group were the Pharisees. They spent all their time studying the Bible and talking about the Bible. And they went to great lengths to try to keep God's laws. They would take one commandment from the Bible and make a whole list of rules to follow to help them keep that commandment in every situation. For instance the Law said not to work on the Sabbath. So they defined what was work and what wasn't. And they said the Sabbath is from the setting of the sun to the setting of the sun. And so on. He was used to being in control of his religion just like Farmer Brown was used to controlling his plow. But Nicodemus knew something was wrong. Perhaps he knew that something was lacking. Perhaps he felt an emptiness in his life. Maybe he realized that what he was trying to do was humanly impossible. We don't know the details; just that he was seeking something.

Well Nicodemus came to Jesus he said, “Teacher, we know that you are a servant of God, how else could you do the wonders that you do.” Jesus knew what Nicodemus wanted before he even asked. He knew that Nicodemus was missing the kingdom, the reign of God in his heart. So Jesus said, “Amen, Amen,” or “Truly, truly, I say to you, if one is not born over, one cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Now you may say, “Hold on preacher, I memorized that

verse in Sunday School and it says, "born again." That is the most popular translation. The original Greek uses a word that means both "from above" and "again." So I translate that word as "over" because it could mean "over" as in over the top of something, above it or "over" again.

So Jesus said, "You must be born over," meaning both again and from God in heaven above. But Nicodemus didn't understand the whole thing. He only heard the over again part. So he said, "Now Jesus, how in the world can I crawl back into my mother's womb and be born again?"

Every once in a while, in Jesus' ministry, there came a point where He was telling someone something very important, but they were too spiritually blind to see. This was one of those times. So Jesus knuckled down to explain it to Nicodemus. He said, "Unless you are born of water and the Spirit you can't see God's Kingdom." Anything that is born of flesh is flesh, but things born from the spirit are spirit.

Look, Nick old pal. You yourself said that I am from God. O.K. If I am from God then I know what I am talking about. You have to start over again from the beginning. Let God wash all your sins away. Let God's holy water cleanse you. Then you can let the Spirit blow into your life, like the wind. But you can't tell the wind where it is supposed to go. It has to go where it wants. If you try to control it, it stops being wind and becomes stagnant air. All these rules you follow. They were written by men; men of flesh who died. If they are your religion, your religion is of flesh. But if you are born from the Spirit of God above, you are Spirit and Spirit is eternal.

You must be born over. If you want to be saved from your sin, you must let God take control. If you want to be part of God's kingdom. You must let God be King.

You know, that's not easy to do. That's not the way we usually do things. Most people are like Farmer Brown; we want to control the direction that the Spirit takes in our lives. Or maybe we are like Nicodemus; we try to create laws and keep them so that we can make ourselves righteous. But we can't do that. Human beings are in a pit of sin and we can't pick ourselves up out of it. Someone else needs to reach down to pull us out. That someone is Jesus.

I hope that everyone here today is saved. But if there are any who are not, all they need to do is trust in Christ. Sometimes people don't give their lives to Christ because they want to be in control. The best example for us to follow is the infant being baptized. He or she doesn't do anything. Everything is done to them. In the same way that an infant is dependant on a parent, let yourself be dependent on God. Ask God to come down from above and take over.

There may be some here who are not sure they are saved. You know people do a lot to try to confuse people about their salvation. They cause people to worry about whether they were baptized right, was their enough water, was there too much water, did the preacher say the right things. And they worry about if they repented well enough, or if they missed some sin that they didn't repent of or were they sincere enough. Like the Pharisees they take something simple and add a lot of laws to it. It doesn't matter whether you did the right things when you gave your life to Christ; what matters is that you gave it. If you have any doubts about it, that is natural. Just ask Jesus to take those doubts away. Take, as your example, the man who came to Jesus to heal his son in Mark 9:24. Jesus asked him if he believed. He said, "Yes, help my unbelief."

Now those of you who know you are saved and trust in Christ. This message is for you too. There are things in your life that need changing. The Father wants to weed your lives of old sins. And then plow the field so it can be sowed by the Son and can grow the fruits of the Spirit. Stop trying to control where the plow is going. The one pulling the plow knows where it needs to go. Trust him, because if you want to see the Kingdom of God growing in your hearts, you must be born over!