

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 1 March 2026 - The Second Sunday of Lent

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Genesis 12.1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4.1-5, 13-17; John 3.1-17

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Canon Fiona Brampton, Bishop's Advisor for World Mission and Priest in Charge, North Leightonstone

Imagine the scene – two people sat across from one another, having a conversation. At first, it's possible to see the distance between the two, as one is hesitant, wondering, not sure what is being asked and whether they're willing to give it. The conversation continues, and the two people draw closer, looking, listening, nodding in agreement.

No, this isn't the latest Rom Com (romantic comedy). This is a lesson in how to do mission given to us by Jesus. Great set pieces may have their moment - after all, Jesus also gives us the Sermon on the Mount or the Feeding of the Five Thousand. But this is Jesus' normal way of sharing God's love – the hospitality of welcoming someone into the space and allowing them to encounter the love of God.

Nicodemus came to see Jesus. He was interested enough to make the effort, to step outside his comfort zone. But he didn't want to be seen by those who knew him as a leader of the Jews. He wasn't ready to burn his bridges yet. But he didn't sit down in an echo chamber of voices saying the same thing as he'd always thought. He took steps to come and listen to Jesus. And he came with lots of questions.

Jesus talks about 'being born again.' That's one of those phrases that has all sorts of connotations. You're only born again if you exhibit this trait or do that thing. However, in his paraphrase translation, The Message, Eugene Peterson wipes away all of that. 'You're not listening,' Jesus says to Nicodemus. 'Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation – the 'wind hovering over the water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life, - it's not possible to enter God's kingdom.' What Peterson says Jesus is inviting us into is a life where we are moved and shaped by the love of God that was there in the beginning of creation. We are moved and shaped into a relationship with God. We become who we were created to be in the image of God.

Jesus responds to Nicodemus' questions. 'Haven't you seen it in the law?' Jesus gently asks Nicodemus.

Jesus creates a hospitable space, where Nicodemus can come with his questions and encounter not just the man Jesus but the love of God, and allow himself to be changed. This conversation on love culminates in that most wonderful of verses.

‘For 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.’ Listen to how Peterson puts it in The Message ‘This is how much God loved the world. He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.’

Jesus came to restore us to be the people God created us to be. To be ourselves, fully living in the love of God, fully sharing that love with other people. It’s not about doing wonderful things, or preaching amazing sermons. It’s actually just about sitting with God and letting God shape us.

We don’t know what the rest of Nicodemus’ story is. This is the only part of that encounter that we have. If we read the Genesis reading today, we would have heard the call of Abram by God. Abram responded. Actually, Abram sometimes made some very bad moves in that response, taking him and his wife to some ‘wrong places’ before finding the place where God had called them to be. But Abram did respond, and tried to listen, even when he got it wrong.

So, what might the story of Nicodemus and Jesus be saying to us this Lent.

Sometimes, we are like Nicodemus. We need to listen to the questions inside us, and to be courageous enough to find someone to talk them through, with the love of God held between us. Like Nicodemus, we need to step aside from the voices that sound just like ours, to listen, and to bring our questions before God.

And sometimes we are called to sit in the seat of Jesus – to listen to someone with genuine questions. We’re not called to browbeat or demand a particular answer from them, but to open our hearts to the God who loves us so much that he sent his Son that we might have a whole and lasting life.

And we need to look at Jesus’ model for mission. Most often it was in the one-to-one encounters with other people. If they’d had coffee or tea in Jesus’ time, there would have been a cup there; or a beer or wine. Let’s not be so busy ‘doing’ stuff for God that we fail to notice when we simply need to open our hearts to our neighbour and allow God’s love to flow between us.

Ways to Engage all Generations

Wondering questions

I wonder why Nicodemus thought it was safe to see Jesus at night?

I wonder what Nicodemus thought after this conversation.

I wonder what it feels like to know that God loves you so much he sent Jesus to give you a whole and lasting life.

I wonder what questions you would bring to Jesus

I wonder if there are times you have to sit and listen and hold the space for God.

I wonder what that feels like.

Talk about:

How do we listen? Do we always have our eyes on something else, or our ears engaged in other noises as well.

Encounters that you have had – conversations with someone famous, or someone you met randomly; conversations that warmed your heart and made you feel that God was present.

Suggested intercessions

Loving God,

Your son said 'where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among us'

We pray for our church today

(and the churches in our benefice).

Help us to be a place where we can meet with you,

listen to you, and feel your love and acceptance,

and help us to be places where others feel safe to bring their deepest questions.

We give thanks for Bishop Dagmar's ministry amongst us and pray for her as she prepares to move to Edinburgh

We pray for Bishop Sarah as she moves to Ely.

We pray that they will both be inspired to carry your love in every encounter, and so inspire others.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Loving God,

Your Son said, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.'

We pray for the world that you love so much

We pray for those areas where there are conflicts

We pray for all those people who do not see others as created by you and loved for who they are.

We pray for those who view the planet only as a place to plunder its resources.

We pray that your love may fill all the spaces where people encounter one another, that a change may come, conversation by conversation, encounter by encounter.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Loving God

Your son asked a blind man 'What do you want me to do for you.'

Today, you ask that of so many of your children who are unwell, or sad, or in despair.

Help those who sit alongside others to ask the same question, to listen to the answer,

and to let your love fill that space.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Loving God

Your son promised his disciples that he would come and take them to be with you.

We pray for those who walk through death today,

and those who sit beside them.

Let both know that you are there,

holding their hands.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Loving God

Your Son said 'those who do what is true

come to the light.'

Help us to hear your voice,

to be touched by your love

that we may walk in your love all our days,

and be joined with the great company of saints in your eternal presence.

Merciful God,

accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son

our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Suggested hymns/songs

Be still and know that I am God

Be still, for the presence of the Lord

Be thou my vision

For God so loved the world

Jesus, where'er thy people meet

Jesus, stand among us at the meeting of our lives

Just as I am, without one plea

Let there be love shared among us

Let us build a house where love can dwell (All are welcome)

Rock of ages, cleft for me

The Lord's my Shepherd

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)