

**New Castle United Methodist Church
510 Delaware Street
New Castle, DE 19720**

**The Message for October 11, 2020
"He Came at Night"
Pastor Ray Eck**

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the ruling council known as the Sanhedrin. He occupies one of 71 seats of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court. Nicodemus is a Holy man and leads Holy men. He is one of the 3 richest men in all of Jerusalem and his name appears on the elite list of Jewish scholars.

Nicodemus witnessed Jesus purging the money changers from Solomon's Porch... the Holy temple... God's House. He witnessed the braded whips, the flying doves, the lying and cheating... and by the time the dust had settled hustling clerics were running a background check on this man, Jesus.

The Pharisees were a group of Jewish religious leaders whom Jesus and John the Baptist often criticized for being hypocrites. Most Pharisees were intensely jealous of Jesus because he undermined their authority and challenged their views... But Nicodemus was searching, and he believed that Jesus had some of the answers to his questions.

So, Nicodemus comes at night. His colleagues can't know of this meeting; they wouldn't understand. As the shadows darken and the city sleeps, he steps out unseen. He slips through the cobblestone streets and comes to a simple house. Jesus and his followers are staying here, he's been told, so Nicodemus knocks 3 times, and Jesus answers... A learned teacher himself, he came to Jesus to be taught. No matter how intelligent and well-educated you are, you must come to Jesus with an open mind and heart so he can teach you the truth about God. Nicodemus came to Jesus personally, although he could have sent one of his assistants, but he wanted to examine Jesus for himself in order to separate fact from rumors. Perhaps Nicodemus was afraid of what some of his colleagues would say about his visit, so he came after dark. Later, when he understood that Jesus truly was the Messiah that everyone had been waiting for, he would stand up boldly for Jesus.

In fact, after Jesus was crucified and all the disciples had fled, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus and laid it in a borrowed tomb after preparing his body for burial. You see, Nicodemus had brought 100 pounds of burial spices that would be used in the burial process. And the tomb, it actually belonged to Joseph, and was to have been *his* tomb, but he gave it to Jesus.

Like Nicodemus, we must examine Jesus for ourselves; no one can do it for us. Then if we believe that He is who He says he is, we will want to speak up for him on our journey throughout this life.

So, what did Nicodemus know about the Kingdom of God? Well, from scripture, he knew that it would be ruled by God. He knew that the kingdom would be restored on earth and that the kingdom would come to the whole world, not just the Jewish elite. What he didn't know was that he would not be a part of it unless he was personally born again. This was a revolutionary concept that Nicodemus found difficult to grasp. Jesus explained to him that the kingdom of God was real and personal and only could only be seen by those who have *truly* repented of their sins and have had a Spiritual Re-birth. Jesus later taught, in Revelations 21:22 that the kingdom has already begun in the hearts of believers, but it will not be fully realized until Jesus comes again to judge the world and abolish evil forever. Jesus explained the importance... no, *the necessity* of a Spiritual Re-birth, saying that we *cannot* enter the kingdom of heaven by living a good life, feeding the poor, or by going to church. You can only enter the kingdom by being re-born *spiritually*. You see we have two births... our natural birth and a second birth, by water and the Spirit.

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN! Jesus said that flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. But Nicodemus still didn't understand. So, he asked, who is this Spirit? Jesus explained that God is three persons, in one God... The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit. God became man in Jesus Christ so that Jesus could come to earth and live among us to teach us about God's perfect love, and that Jesus had to die so that we could be forgiven from our sins and be offered eternal life. Then Jesus rose from the dead to offer Salvation and eternal life to *everyone* who would believe. When Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection, his physical presence left the earth, but He promised to send his Holy Spirit to continue to guide us and help us through *this* life. The Holy Spirit first became available to all believers at Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection; and Pentecost was the Birth of His Church. So how do we get the Holy Spirit of God to live with us?

True believers, still today, receive the Holy Spirit into their heart the moment they believe in the saving power of Jesus Christ. And that's the Good News! We can't control the work of the Holy Spirit. He works in ways we cannot predict or understand. Just as you did not control your physical birth, you cannot control your Spiritual Birth. It is a gift from God to all believers. Accept it or reject it...it's up to you.

Nicodemus was a Jewish teacher of the Law and knew the Old Testament lessons, but he did not understand what it said about the Messiah. You should know the Bible but even more importantly, you must understand the God whom the Bible reveals, and the salvation that God offers. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe, if I speak to you of Spiritual things." No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven, the Son of Man. And even as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert... the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. And then Jesus leads Nicodemus to scripture, John 3:16... The entire Gospel comes to a focus in this one verse – just 26 words, a parade of Hope... beginning with God and ending with Life and urging us to do the same.

"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.
For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world
but to save the world, through Him.
Whoever believes in Him is not condemned,
but whoever does not believe is already condemned,
because he has not believed in the name of God's only Son."

I hope You believe, truly believe! *Are you listening to me?* This is the verdict: The Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light for fear his deeds will become exposed. But whoever lives by truth comes to the light, so that it can be seen plainly, that what he does has been done through God.

In eternal life there is no death, no sickness, no enemy; no evil and no sin. When we don't know Christ, we make choices as though this life is all we have. In reality, this life is just the introduction...to eternity. Receive this new life by faith and you will begin to evaluate all that happens to you from an eternal perspective.

To Believe... is more than knowing that Jesus is God. To Believe... means putting your trust and confidence in Him and knowing that He alone can save you. It is putting Christ in charge of your present plans in this life... and in charge of your eternal destiny. Believing is both trusting His words as reliable... and relying on Him... for the power to change you. He doesn't care what religion you are or what faith you believe. He doesn't care what church you attend. He just wants you to believe in Him, and that is why He came. If you have never trusted Christ... let His promise of everlasting life be yours *today* – and believe it with all your heart. Believe that He was... and that He is... and that He always will be the one that you can place your trust in. Yesterday, today and forever more.

Don't end the reading of this message today, without placing *all* your trust in Jesus! If you believe in Jesus say Amen. If you truly believe in Jesus... say *Amen!*

So be it, Amen!

If you are not currently a member of this church and wish to become a full member, please call me (302-740-3932) and we will have a service for new members as soon as we get back together again. Know that when you walk with Jesus, you will never walk alone.

“There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God;
A place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God

There is a place of comfort sweet, near to the heart of God;
A place where we our Savior meet, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God.

There is a place of full release, near to the heart of God;
A place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God.

Near to the heart of God.”



Music for October 11

-- Bill Mathews, Director of Music Ministries

In the NCUMC calendar, the second Sunday in October is when we traditionally celebrate our church's anniversary – so... HAPPY 200th TO US! It seems appropriate that we celebrate with the hymn that is commonly the first one in a Methodist hymnal – Charles Wesley's' *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*. There is an arrangement in our anthem library that, under Henry Chisholm's direction, was sung each September as the Choir gathered for another year. When we sing it as a congregational hymn, I like to raise the key a half-step each verse, building to its final stanza; and then, that same day, I like to play Frederick Swann's setting as an organ postlude – a version filled with trumpet fanfares from the main organ to the balcony!

But, 200 years ago, while this hymn was probably a favorite of the congregation, it would not have been sung to the tune that we know, but most likely a tune called "Richmond" or a tune called "Lyngham."

"Richmond" was written by Thomas Haweis, who was ordained in the Church of England in 1757, but was removed from his position in Oxford because of his Methodist leanings!

"Lyngham" was composed by Thomas Jarman, a tailor by trade after his father, but one who's trade often interfered with his love of music. It was said that this habit often "kept him poor and soured his temper." Nonetheless, he composed many hymn tunes, and this one is filled with rhythmic vitality!

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing, UMC Hymnal, no. 57dl

sung using the tune, "Richmond," from the album "Charles Wesley – 20 Favourite Tunes"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ia2D0F2nU0o>

sung using the tune, "Lyngham" by the congregation at St. Martin in the Fields, London

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=X-dEfvz6Vms>

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.

He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of thy name.

music continues on the next page

At the close of Pastor's Ray's message, he quotes the hymn, *Near to the Heart of God*. Written in 1903 by Cleland Boyd McAfee, it was a response to a tragic time in his family's life – his two young nieces had just died from diphtheria. His daughter, in a book she later wrote called "Near to the Heart of God," recalled the evening:

"The family and town were stricken with grief. My father often told us how he sat long and late thinking of what could be said in word and song on the coming Sunday... So, he wrote the little song. The choir learned it and afterward they went to my uncle's home and sang it as they stood under the sky outside the darkened, quarantined house. It was sung again on Sunday morning."

"O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
hold us who wait before thee near to the heart of God."

Rev. Carlton R. Young, the editor of our hymnal, suggests that the "stanzas affirm that near to God's heart is a meeting place with the Savior, a place of 'quiet rest,' 'comfort,' 'full release,' and 'joy and peace.'"

Near to the Heart of God, UMC Hymnal no. 472

performed by the Emmanuel Quartet, an a cappella gospel group from Chattanooga, TN
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=x2B1GAVnty8>

Verse 1:

There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God;
a place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
hold us who wait before thee near to the heart of God.

Verse 2:

There is a place of comfort sweet, near to the heart of God;
a place where we our Savior meet, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
hold us who wait before thee near to the heart of God.

Verse 3:

There is place a place of full release, near to the heart of God;
a place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
hold us who wait before thee near to the heart of God.

***Our Prayer Requests, Food Closet needs,
and information regarding our church and the annual Charge Conference
are on the following pages.***



Paul Coffin, Michelle Jordan's godfather
 Hoover & Anita Counterman
 Wilbert Esler, Sharon Kimmel's father
 Richard Hastings
 Rev. Jerrold, Sally, Elizabeth, and
 Jennifer Knotts
 Tammy McAleese
 John & Carol Murray, friends of the
 Pochvatilla family
 Leila Rappaport, childhood friend of the
 Pochvatilla family

Joan Skilton's daughter, Sue, and her family
 Margaret Weyl
 Those diagnosed with the coronavirus and the
 families of those who have lost loved ones
 The staff and the patients of Hockessin Manor
 Care. Pam Whary's son, Jim, is a nurse there.
 All those infected with COVID-19 while
 attending White House ceremony and not
 wearing protective face coverings
 The homeless
 Those who struggle with addiction

If you have someone that you'd like included on our Prayer List,
 please let us know by contacting either
 Doris Poultney, Prayer Chain Coordinator, @ 302-378-1184,
 or Pastor Ray @ 302-740-3932 or snowman3girls@gmail.com



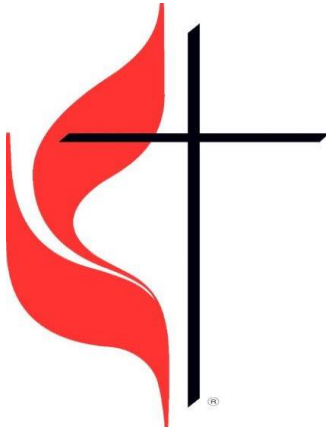
✓ **Food Closet Needs**

- ✓ Instant Potatoes
- ✓ Rice a Roni or 1 lb. bags of rice
- ✓ Dry Unsweetened Cereal...
 Cheerios, Corn Flakes, etc.
- ✓ Peanut Butter & Jelly
- ✓ Canned entrees – stew or chili

*Now that the weather is getting colder,
 here are a few items that will be needed more:*

- ✓ Canned Soup... Chunky or Progresso
- ✓ Instant Oatmeal packets

And remember, store brands are always acceptable.



***Wilmington District
Charge Conference for NCUMC***

WILL BE HELD ON ZOOM THIS YEAR.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14TH @ 7 PM

ALL ARE INVITED

If you have a computer, smartphone, or tablet... click on this link (or copy it into your browser):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88185257187?pwd=TjdjUVhmWmsreDg5M1ZWeUIINEdJZz09>

For those using a regular phone...

the number for the Zoom Communion is (301) 715-8592.

Remember... the phone number is long-distance and you should be sure your phone plan covers it.

Meeting ID: 881 8525 7187

Passcode: 279016

On a computer, then hit "Enter." On a phone, then hit "#".