

# CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

2353 Rice Boulevard, Houston, TX 77005-2696 [ctk@ctkelc.org](mailto:ctk@ctkelc.org) [ctkelc.org](http://ctkelc.org)  
713-523-2864 Telephone

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

March 1, 2026

*Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; Saint John 3:1-17*

***In nomine Jesu!***

Beginning last Sunday and continuing through March 22, the Fifth Sunday in Lent, our Sunday readings and Gospels are meant to be catechetical, chosen by the Church in the late 200s or early 300s CE to instruct new Christians who would be baptized and received into the Church at the Easter Vigil. Last Sunday, the problem of evil in the world was discussed from a biblical perspective. This Sunday introduces the theology of baptism. In the following weeks, life lived faithfully, the gift of vision or faithful sight, and the indescribable joy of resurrection – with the only death we must fear already behind us because of our baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection will round out this 1800-year-old faith formation plan.

Today's Gospel also introduces one who I describe as a faith formation "poster child:" a Pharisee and Jewish leader named Nicodemus. Nicodemus is first introduced to us in the beginning of John's Gospel and, by John's conclusion, Nicodemus' growth in faith is presented as a paradigm of what God inspires fearless faith to be. So first let's consider Nicodemus's faith journey and compare it to our own.

Nicodemus, John tells us, is a respected religious leader, recognized as a leader because of his study and daily use of Torah, the way our Jewish forebears and neighbors label the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers. In the New Testament, these books are referred to as "the Law," but they are so much more than a legal code. Our first reading is from Torah, and is the exact opposite of "law;" it is pure unadulterated Promise to a landless, childless old man, Abram, and his equally old and barren wife, Sarai, along with his nephew Lot and his extended family, to believe God's Promise of land and children and move to a new country. God calls them a blessing to "all the families of the earth." Paul the apostle calls him "the ancestor [in the flesh and in the Promise] of us all." Today, they probably would be labeled "undocumented immigrants," but I digress.

My point is that Nicodemus is not a legalist; he is a practitioner of God's covenant. He trusts God and does his best to act accordingly and publicly. But like all too many of us, he is fearful. If he's seen going to Jesus and listening to Jesus words about a God who shows no partiality but "so loves the world," he'll lose everything – his friends, his position, his authority, and maybe even his family. As we sang it last Sunday: "goods, honor, child, and spouse." So, he comes to Jesus "by night," which in John's Gospel means a whole lot more than "after sundown."

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus is strange; about restless winds and being born again; about water and Spirit; all concluding with something Nicodemus could not possibly have made sense of, so long before Jesus' death and resurrection, and that is Jesus' words about "the Son of Man being lifted up." John does not immediately tell us what happened after Nicodemus left Jesus still undercover at night.

But John does tell us later; we'll hear it on Good Friday night. John tells us that, after Jesus' death by crucifixion, Nicodemus *in the daylight* joins another respected Pharisee, Joseph of Arimathea and asks Jesus' crucifer, Pilate, to take Christ's body and bury it. And Nicodemus puts his money where his mouth is and provides the costliest products for Jesus' burial. From clandestine inquirer to public advocate and benefactor. Responding to Jesus' teaching after mulling over its life-changing implications, Nicodemus becomes a fearless, faithful follower who acts because he's certain that "the kingdom's ours forever!" If Abram is the father of our faith, then Nicodemus surely is a fellow companion, an example of fearless faithfulness shown even in the presence of mighty, coercive, authoritarian power.

The early Church, not yet married and submissive to the Roman Empire, began instructing new Christians by introducing them to Nicodemus' story as an example of how trust in God's Promise could be (should be) lived out. Christ's Church today, and the society we live in, also introduces Nicodemus' story to us; but with a difference. We need not wait until the Easter Vigil, as those new Christians did, for God to give us the faith-creating, courage-strengthening gift of the Holy Spirit. Mindful of our fears, knowing all that tests us, today's Church freely uses the water, bread and wine, visible Words, along with the spoken Word spoken to strengthen our faith and encourage fearless living, even before the Pilates of our age. Amen.