

## Gospel lesson

This passage contains a classic teaching from Jesus. Just prior to this story, Jesus had been [teaching and performing miracles] in the temple in Jerusalem during the Passover festival.



*picture screencaptured from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qECGNeSz6pk>,  
lightened and reversed*

### John 3:1-17

NRSV

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

<sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

<sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

<sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'

<sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

<sup>11</sup> "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony.

<sup>12</sup> If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

<sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

<sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

<sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> "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.

<sup>17</sup> "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

*The word of God for the people of God*

## Message: Learning to Live Inside Out



picture adapted from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/learning-to-live-inside-out/ash-wednesday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/ash-wednesday-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

God of transformation,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may learn to live with Your holiness inside us, showing Your grace to the world outside. Amen.

“Lent is a bi-directional season. Or at least it should be. That isn't how we usually experience the season, however. Too often, we see the Lenten journey simply as a journey inward.

While that is a great start or an important

component to a powerful Lenten experience, it can't be the whole story. Examining your soul is more than just looking inward; it is also considering the state of your soul as it walks about in the world. Like the great commandment, these two sides of the same coin cannot ultimately be separated.

That is why Lent is about doing both – looking inward and moving outward. We need to learn to live inside out.”

### ***Interactive Lesson***

### ***Galileo***



picture cropped from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Galileo Galilei\\_representacion.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Galileo_Galilei_representacion.jpg);  
credit: [Aleposta](#)

What is Galileo Galilei most famous for?

How did the Roman Catholic (RC) church respond to his claim that the earth goes around the sun? Why?

What does Genesis 1:14-15 actually say?

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.

Does it say which revolves around which?

The original Hebrew called the sun and moon greater and lesser lights, possibly to avoid the names other people used for the sun deity and the moon deity. In

the 1600s when Galileo made his observations, it became instead a question of what was the center of the universe. Why did that matter so much to the RC church?

Should we put humankind at the center, or God at the center of our lives?

I need a volunteers.

OK, stand there. Now, as I go around you, I will point my arm in the direction you are relative to me.

Did everyone see how my pointed arm went around in a circle?

OK, now it is your?

OK, now it is your turn to go around me. As you do, I will point my arm in the direction you are relative to me.

Did everyone see how my pointed arm went around in a circle?

Did it matter if I was the one walking or standing, for whether or not I pointed in a circle?

If we were just floating in space with no ground under us, how could we tell which one of us was moving relative to the other?

So depending on what we are doing and what we are using as a reference, we may have very different thoughts about what is actually happening.

Who did we say again should be the center of our lives, our ultimate reference?



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-017-nicodemus/>

Nicodemus came from the temple, where the priests and Pharisees taught that the people had to follow the law of Moses, that if they lived righteously they would be blessed as the Chosen people of God.

They thought they were making God the center of everything, but they were teaching justification through works - make the right sacrifices and you can buy forgiveness. They were putting rituals and temple maintenance ahead of helping people who needed it.

Instead of putting faith in God, they were worrying about material things from their limited perspective. Jesus completely changed the underlying assumptions of material works for material gains, and Nicodemus found it very hard to understand the concept of being born of the Holy Spirit.

But when you stress relationships as what is important, instead of material works and material gains, it completely changes how you approach the world. Material things are just tools to be used or put aside when working on better relationships.

Sin blinds us to the Spirit, makes us focus on material things as our goal instead of as tools.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/Learning-to-Live-Inside-Out/ash-wednesday-year-a-Lectionary-planning-notes/ash-wednesday-year-a-graphics>

God gave us Jesus to help us see the truth, not to condemn us in our sinful dying but to cleanse our hearts and refocus us on living.

Once we are holy inside, refocused on God as the source of all life, then we have the right reference to live gracefully with those around us, to share God's blessings in ways that benefit all with love.

Knowing that we live in days darkened by sin much like Joel described, we need to seek God's help. This Lent, consider anew God's call on your life: how are you responding? If our primary goal is a better relationship with God, what are you doing to work on that relationship?

Dig into the scriptures, pray, talk with other Christians to learn better what the Holy perspective means for you. If our secondary goal is better relationships with the people around us, what would God have you stop, start, or continue doing? Have you committed to something more holy during this Lent season? If not, you can begin today!

And to give us strength as we learn to live with holiness inside us driving grace-filled, loving acts outside of us, Christ nourishes us.

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