

## **The Teacher of Israel**

John 3:1-17

The Holy Trinity, May 31, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Unless you are born again, you are not able to see the Kingdom of God.

That means that the Kingdom of God is something visible. It is something that you see. It is something that is good because it is the Kingdom of God. You will not see what is good. You will not see God unless you see the Kingdom of God. You will not see the Kingdom of God unless you are born again.

What does it mean to be born again? It means to be born of water and of the Spirit. If you are born of water and of the Spirit, you are born again. If you are not born of water and of the Spirit, you are not born again. Unless you are born of water and of the Spirit, you are not able to enter the Kingdom of God.

Unless you are born again you cannot see the Kingdom of God. Unless you are born of water and of the Spirit you cannot enter the Kingdom of God. You will neither see nor enter the Kingdom of God unless you are born again and born of water and of the Spirit.

What does it mean to be born of water and of the Spirit? It means that no one knows where you came from and no one knows where you are going. That is what it means to be born of water and of the Spirit. People who are born of water and of the Spirit are like the wind.

You hear the sound of the wind, but you do not see where it comes from or where it is going. While we are fond of saying that is the way that the Spirit is and I suppose that is the way that the Spirit is, the real Teacher of Israel, teaches us that the way of the wind is the way of those who are born of the Spirit. So when our Lord talks about the wind He takes it for granted that you know that the Spirit is like the wind. What He is teaching you is that those who are born of the Spirit are like the wind.

That only makes sense. After all, those who are born of the flesh are flesh and those who are born of the Spirit are Spirit. If no one knows where the Spirit comes from or where it is going, then no one will know where those who are born of the Spirit came from or where they are going.

The flesh is not that way. Everyone knows where the person who is born of the flesh came from. All one has to do is find the mother and father of the person who is born of the flesh and everyone will know where the person born of the flesh came from. The person who is born of the flesh came from the womb of their mother.

Everyone also knows where the people who are born according to the flesh are going. Those who are born according to the flesh are headed toward a hole in the ground. There are a few exceptions. There are those who die in fires and those who die at sea. It is slightly more difficult to tell where those wound up. But even with fire and sea a person can go to the place where the fire occurred and see the place where the person who was born according to the flesh wound up. If a person died at sea, one can go to the place where they died at sea and see where the person born according to the flesh wound up. People go to the Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor all of the time. But for most people in our nation there is a hole in the ground. That is where the people who are born according to the flesh wind up. And anybody can figure out where they wound up. Cremation does not help it. It might mean that you are interred in a different manner than a hole in the ground, but even if the pagans scatter their ashes across a field or have them sprinkled in a creek or in the sea, the rest of us can go to that creek or to that sea or to that field and see the place where the people who are born according to the flesh wound up.

Neither of these things are so with people who are born according to the Spirit. First of all, people cannot see where the people born according to the Spirit came from. People who are born according to the Spirit are not born according to blood. People who are born according to the flesh are born according to blood. We mark that blood by names and family lines. People who are born according to the Spirit are not that way. They are not born according to bloodlines. They become brothers and sisters with each other even if they have no other fleshly relationship whatsoever. So it is with those who are born of the Spirit.

Those who are born of the Spirit are not born according to the will of the flesh. In other words the flesh cannot give birth to the people of the Spirit. No matter how many children we have and no matter how good of an education we provide for them all of them are children of the flesh unless they are born again. Our Lord demonstrates this in His own conception and birth. He was not born according to the flesh. He was born according to the Spirit. Thus without an earthly Father no one knew where He came from and when He ascended into heaven no one who is of the flesh knew where He was going. The children of the Spirit are not this way.

The children of the Spirit are not born according to the will of man. They are not born according to the will of another man. They are not born according to their own will. People who are born of the Spirit did not and could not decide to be born of the Spirit. To do so would be to be born by the will of a man. In this case the person who is born of the Spirit would be born of themselves if they are born again by their own decision. A person is not born again by their own decision because they are born again according to their own will. They are not born again according to the will of a man and that includes themselves.

They are also not born again of the will of another person. They are not born again of the will of another man. They are not born again of their own will. They are not born again of another person's will. There is no one on this earth or of this earth except the One who came down from heaven who can give the birth that is of the Spirit. No one can give the new birth to another.

Well, that raises an interesting question. If no one can give the new birth of water and of the Spirit to another how then is it that Coen's parents brought him to be baptized this day. It is because Coen's parents have a calling from God. It is a holy calling. It is a sacred calling. It is calling that supersedes most other callings. Eric and Sarah have received from Almighty God through His Holy Spirit the holy calling to be father and mother. Therefore when they act in Coen's behalf, God is acting on Coen's behalf through them. When they feed Coen and raise Coen, God is answering the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," for Coen through his parents. God has commanded Eric to raise his children in the fear and instruction of the Lord. That calling has come directly from the Lord and so Eric is doing the Lord's bidding by abiding the promise that baptism is for himself and for his children. Therefore Coen is not merely born of Eric and Sarah that would be a birth according to the flesh and birth that all of us can see where he came from. Coen is also born according to the will of the Spirit for the Spirit has called Eric and Sarah to do what they are doing this day. And he will call them for the rest of their lives to care for Coen and Pierce and to instruct them in the ways of the Lord and to give their children His gifts. In the end then Eric and Sarah are raising Coen on God's behalf and therefore God is raising Coen and therefore Coen is born of God and so are all of the rest of you.

The people who are born again are born of God. The people who are born of water and of the Spirit are born of God. The people who will see and enter the Kingdom of God are born of God. The life with God is such that it is a new life. It is a new life of water and of the Spirit. It is a new life just as surely as coming out of the womb is a new life. It is a new life more surely than coming out of the womb is because the new life of the Spirit that God gives is life out of your tombs.

Do you not understand all of this? If you don't, then why don't you? Aren't you instructors of yourselves? Don't you presume to know all there is to know about God? Don't you presume that you are right even when what you believe is contrary to what the Word of God says? Don't you presume to go your own way insisting on your own understanding in spite of what people have shown to you in the word of God to the contrary? And if you do, does that not make you an instructor of yourself? You are an instructor of yourself in the things of God. You presume yourself to be an expert. You will accept what other people say about God as long as it agrees with what you already believe about God.

If you are experts on God, then nothing I have said should have surprised you because it is what God says.

The Son of God has testified to what He has seen. He testifies to the things that He has seen together with the Father. What I have just told you are the things that the Father and the Son have seen. None of us have seen these things. We are people of reason. We have not descended from heaven. We have not ascended into heaven. We are not aware of these things even though they are around us. We are not aware of these things by our reason even though they have happened to us. You have been born again of water and of the Spirit, but even though it has happened to you, you would not have known it had it not been for the testimony of the Father and of the Son. Anyone who does not receive their testimony refuses their new birth and will not see nor enter the Kingdom of God.

The testimony of the Father and of the Son is the testimony of two different witnesses. They are experts in their field. The Father is in heaven. The Son has descended from heaven and been to earth and then ascended into heaven again. The Father and the Son are experts on the Kingdom of God. They are witnesses to what they have seen. They are witnesses to the new birth of water and of the spirit. Even though no one else can see where those who are born of the Spirit have come from and where they are going, the Father and the Son can and do. Even though those who are themselves born of water and of the Spirit do not know where they themselves came from or where they are going the Father and the Son know both where you came from and where you are going. They bear witness so that you may know as well.

The testimony that they have born are of earthly things.

The new birth of water and of the Spirit happens on earth. Because it happens on earth it is an earthly thing. Even though it happens on earth it cannot be seen. No one can see where those who are born of water and the Spirit came from nor can anyone see where they are going. But in spite of that fact the new birth of water and of the Spirit does not happen in heaven. It happens on earth. It is an earthly thing.

The Father and the Son testify to this earthly reality.

What if the Son spoke to you about heavenly things? If the Son spoke to you about heavenly things He would talk about His own crucifixion. The crucifixion of the Son is a heavenly thing. The new birth of water and the Spirit is an earthly thing.

Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so the Son of Man must be lifted up. The serpent in the wilderness was lifted up on a pole. The Son therefore must be lifted up on a pole. When the Son is lifted up on a pole anyone who looks to Him has eternal life. Anyone who believes in Him has eternal life. When you receive eternal life it is because you are looking at the Son of God who was lifted up on a pole. You are looking to the crucified one. This crucifixion was a heavenly thing. It is a heavenly thing because the One who descended from heaven is the one who hung suspended between heaven and earth in order to reconcile the two.

The Son did not come into the world in order to condemn the world The Son entered into the world in order to save the world. In other words the Son did not descend from heaven for the purpose of condemning the world to hell for its sins. The Son entered into the world in order to save the world from its sins. Therefore the Son descended from heaven in order to be lifted up on a pole. Since the Son of Man descended out of heaven in order to do this it is a heavenly thing when He does it. The man from heaven is hung on a pole.

The new birth of water and the Spirit which enables you to see and enter into the Kingdom of the One who is hung upon the pole is an earthly thing. It is an earthly thing in order that the people on earth who have not ascended into heaven may receive it. Is an earthly thing so that the people on earth may see and enter the Kingdom of God.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.