

Holy Trinity Sunday, Gospel, Year B

THAT WIND: THE CHOOSING, THE BLOWING, THE SOUND

John 3:1-17

The Holy Trinity

Analysis by Marcus Felde

1Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2He 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." 3Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." 4Nicodemus 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?" 5Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' 8The 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." 9Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

11Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. 12If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16For 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.

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

DIAGNOSIS: Winded

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Astounded

Nicodemus was dumbfounded. On the one hand, “we know that you are a teacher who has come from God”; on the other hand, on the other hand . . . he sputtered out. (Kind of like Mary Magdalene in the split confession of a Jesus Christ Superstar: “He’s just a man! He’s just a man!”) Paralyzed by his analysis, and by the ridiculousness of what Jesus was saying to him, his plea trailed off into silence. Stupor. How can these things be? This sort of thing is what makes saying, “God!,” a mere expression of exasperation.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Conflicted

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. Not when he might be seen by people whose opinion of Nicodemus might be ruined if he were seen as a student of the Confusing One—the One who acted too much like he was from God for a commoner. Coming to Jesus at night revealed his divided heart: owning the wonder that was Jesus, but unwilling to let go of another priority—pleasing God, as Pharisees do.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Don’t bring up those serpents!

It was the “not knowing” of Nico that was so perilous. When Jesus hinted that Nicodemus did not understand (v. 10) what he needed to understand, and could not see (v. 3) what he needed to see, it implied that he might not be able to enter (v. 5) what

he wanted to enter. Jesus mentioned serpents; Nicodemus went all Indiana Jones: "Why did it have to be snakes?" Life and eternity felt a distant prospect; perishing seemed more likely.

PROGNOSIS: Rewind

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Zephyr, Sweet Zephyr

But the wind Jesus represented meant not destruction but life. The Holy Trinity doing salvation: The choosing behind the blowing was the Father who sent the Son; the blowing was the Word from God; and the Sound of it the Spirit evidenced (you hear it) in miracles and teachings and the "being lifted up" of Jesus himself. The evidence was complicated, but Jesus said it needn't confuse. Born again in this choosing, and blowing, and sounding, the kingdom of God appears before you.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Advanced Solution): That Whoever Believes

The prospectus was put on the table before Nicodemus, in the dying twilight: I "have told you about heavenly things." Will you believe? Will you accept? Will you buy in? Will you live?" The story is interrupted. We don't know if Nicodemus had one for the road, whether he got over his consternation that night. All we finally know, tantalizingly, is the weight of the mixture of myrrh and aloes he brought (one hundred pounds) to wrap the body of the one who had puzzled him so badly (John 19:39). I infer that meant he had lifted his eyes to the cross and seen the one who had been lifted up to "draw all people" to himself. Yes, Nicodemus saw and believed and did not perish but had eternal life.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): We Speak of What We Know (v. 11)

Jesus said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I

send you" (John 20:21). The self-same wind Jesus had and was, blown by the Father from eternity, is in his followers, whom he sends out in the same direction: peace. (Imagine that weather vane!) "We speak of what we know" (v. 11), Jesus says in the royal plural (including us); therefore, we go into all the world and share that no one needs to perish, God intends all to be saved. For God so loves the world.