

February 2023

Greetings!

Last Autumn, at a Judson Association event, I had the pleasure of meeting a couple who were lay leaders in the church where I student pastored. They were so welcoming and supportive during that stressful period that I was delighted to see them again. They are the same wise elders, we are keeping in touch, and I am blessed with ongoing questions and suggestions about my ministry.

Their last letter queried why pastors don't preach anymore about being "born again." (Not in most churches in this area, at least.) I pondered the question and the relevant Scripture (John 3:1-8) carefully before responding.

One standard answer is that Jesus made this statement to only one person. It was personal advice to Nicodemus, a good man yearning to be better. In other words, this spiritual seeker had already mastered the basics of faithful living. Unlike Jesus' multiple audiences who needed to be reminded that the highest call is to love one's neighbour.

A second rationale for avoiding the topic of being "born again" is that it has been misused to the point of abuse. People who have slowly come to faith, or who loved God from childhood, have found themselves accused of being "non-believers" if they couldn't identify the exact time and place they "accepted Christ as their Saviour." Such sudden conversions DO happen, but they are not the only path to faith. We should not judge how a person falls in love with God; or the speed with which he or she commits their lives to Jesus' Way.

On the other hand, Jesus did have a good point when he spoke with Nicodemus! WE ALL NEED FRESH STARTS now and again. In times of confusion or struggle, we might need daily start-overs – or hourly! But even the most serene and saintly grow weary along their spiritual journey. Everyone can fall into a religious rut. If your relationship with God hasn't grown of late (or ever), you need a revamp. Think of it as a new, spiritual birthing, or a religious reboot, or a spa day with the Holy. Whatever images speak the most, Jesus' message holds true: **Freshen Up Your Faith!**

And Lent is the perfect time to do that. Let the 40 days that lead up to Easter be a time for you to replenish your soul and revive your relationship with God. You'll both be glad you did!

Wishing you a blessed and refreshing Lent.

*Brenda*