



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 1 MARCH 2026 – Second Sunday of Lent

COLLECT

Almighty God,
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
that they may return to the way of righteousness:
grant to all those who are admitted
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
that they may reject those things
that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 121.

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills; ♦
from where is my help to come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord, ♦
the maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not suffer your foot to stumble; ♦
he who watches over you will not sleep.
- 4 Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel ♦
shall neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The Lord himself watches over you; ♦
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
- 6 So that the sun shall not strike you by day, ♦
neither the moon by night.
- 7 The Lord shall keep you from all evil; ♦
it is he who shall keep your soul.
- 8 The Lord shall keep watch over your going out
and your coming in, ♦
from this time forth for evermore.

A reading from the letter to the Romans, chapter 4, verses 1-5, 13-17.

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and it is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is John, chapter 3, verses 1-17.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

And then at the end:

I am the light of the world, says the Lord,
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

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

'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. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

'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.

'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.

A Reflection from Dave

Picture the scene: there are 2 men, hunched over a chess board. There is little action, as they sit, trying to figure out the other player, their moves and their plans. And yet there remains great tension, with the push and pull between them, each seeking the upper hand. This tension, or something like it, seems to be present in the meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus from our Gospel reading.

On the one side is Nicodemus, a respected religious leader with both religious and political power. But it is unclear why he comes to Jesus at night. Is he curious for knowledge, but afraid that openly seeking Jesus might lose him his powerful position amongst his doubting peers? Or does he come representing religious power, seeking to test Jesus privately away from the crowds, to bring him into line? Many of us approach Jesus with all kinds of intentions, some honest, some cynical, many hidden, even from ourselves. Yet Jesus accepts Nicodemus, whatever his intentions, because what becomes clear is that Nicodemus himself is “in the dark”.

He begins by flattering Jesus, but encounters a counterplay when Jesus speaks “truly” of Nicodemus’ deeper need, to enter God’s kingdom by being born from above. Nicodemus reacts with a false move, questioning how to be born again physically. But Jesus interrupts, redirecting him back to what he should know of Jesus from the Old Testament - that he is the Son of Man predicted in Daniel, and the one who will mirror the story of Moses by being lifted upon the cross to save his people. Like a master chess player, Jesus knows Nicodemus, takes him where he wants him to go by looking forward to the same Easter events that we look towards in Lent.

In all the push and pull of this verbal chess, Jesus always has the upper hand, and is never “in the dark”. Instead, he is the light - the light who reveals our intentions, uncovers our actions, and exposes our hearts. Jesus came to move us into his light, but so often we pull back into the protection of darkness, whatever darkness that is for us today. However, like Nicodemus, Jesus still willingly meets us, even there.

And sitting with Jesus, even in the dark, has an effect. Later in John’s gospel Nicodemus’ faith becomes active as he defends Jesus against accusations, and also devotional as he anoints Jesus after his death with hugely expensive spices. From the first, Jesus knew Nicodemus, and drew him into the light, just as seeks to do with each of us. However “in the dark” we feel, try sitting with Jesus, and see how he works even there, to shape our actions and devotion this Lent.