

“Into the Darkness, Finding the Light”
“The Gift of Uncertainty: Dark Doubt”

We have begun the forty day journey Christians call Lent. The titles of my sermons during this Lenten season will be based on the chapter titles of a book called *Gifts of the Dark Wood*, by Eric Elnes. Lent is a dark time, it invites us into confession and looking at those parts of ourselves that do not reflect the glory and light and love of God. The darkness does not define our faith or life. The darkness challenges us to find the light of God and know new life in Christ.

---Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **“The Gift of Uncertainty: Dark Doubt”**

Prayer for the Week

I bind to myself today God's Power to guide me, God's Might to uphold me, God's Wisdom to teach me, God's Eye to watch over me, God's Ear to hear me, God's Word to give me speech, God's Hand to guide me, Christ, be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise, Christ in the heart of every one who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of every one who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me. St. Patrick's Breastplate, adapted

This week's sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 03/13/17 John 3: 1-4

Nicodemus, a teacher, a Pharisee comes to Jesus by night, under the cover of darkness. We know by his first words that he sees God's Spirit dwelling in Jesus and in Jesus' teaching. Jesus takes his greeting and says an odd thing, "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Was Jesus acknowledging that Nicodemus had seen God in him? Nicodemus is confused by Jesus' greeting. He gets stumped by the phrase "born from above." Different biblical scholars translate Jesus' words as "born from above, born anew or born again." The latter is the most familiar, but not necessarily the most accurate. Jesus invites Nicodemus to a new experience of God. It's unsettling and difficult to understand. We can follow the rules, do what we are told, and still be hungry for something more. How do you understand being born anew or from above? How do you experience incarnation at work in you because of God's Spirit?

Tuesday, 03/14/17 John 3: 5-8

Human beings are made of flesh and spirit. These are not separate parts, they are embodied in each person. In the Orthodox tradition it speaks of the image and likeness of God (going back to Genesis). All have the likeness of God and the Spirit guides us into the image of God so that our words, our actions, our behavior imitates Christ and Christ is seen in us. The transformation of a human life takes time. Each day is a gift to grow into the image in which each person has been created. How will you allow the image of God to be made real in your life today? How will the spirit make you "anew" so that the light, the love and the life of Christ is shown?

Wednesday, 03/15/17 John 3: 9-15

Here Jesus is challenging Nicodemus as a teacher and a religious leader. "We speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen," but seeing and knowing does not speak to all things. Perhaps the difference sometimes has to do with "book" learning as opposed to "wisdom." Knowing God and growing spiritually is not something that can be proven. It can be seen in words and actions, but it doesn't prove God. Faith is more than "understanding," it is believing. How do you find ways to believe in the midst of your questions and your seeking knowledge?

Thursday, 03/16/17 John 3: 16-17

God loves the world, God sends Christ to save not condemn. Christians understand incarnation first in Jesus. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." God in skin is a simplistic understanding of how in Jesus we become like God." Athanasius, an old Christian saint, wrote, "Christ became like us that we might become like God." We participate with Christ in sharing God's love for the world and for every human being. Through being born from above, we practice being Christ's hands, feet and body in the world as a witness to our being "born again." Today take time to see the world as God does with love and grace.

Friday, 03/17/17 Psalm 121

Today is Saint Patrick's Day. This is a religious holiday in many countries, but in the United States it tends to be a holiday that is driven by a menu (corned beef and cabbage) and green beer. Patrick had an interesting life and difficult life. He was kidnapped and enslaved in Ireland. He ran away and had an experience of God and went home to England only to be sent back to Ireland. He embraced faith and then shared it. Today's psalm seems a good meditation for this saint's day. St. Patrick had to find his help in God in his deep darkness. God was there for him and God is there for us. Today, say a prayer of thanks for the St. Patrick's who are willing to return to the hard places of their lives and offer grace.