

“What are You Doing That Confuses Jesus?”

John 3:1-15

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

Smoke Rise Baptist Church

May 6, 2001

This is not our favorite image of Jesus. In John 3:1-15, Jesus is confused. He is not the only one, though. The other main character in this story, Nicodemus, is confused, too. As a matter of fact, confusion is the golden thread that runs through this entire story.

**Let's begin with Nicodemus.** About what was he confused? He was having a hard time understanding this concept of being "born again." Jesus told him if he wanted to see the Kingdom of God, he needed to be born again.

This tripped Nicodemus because he thought he was already a part of the Kingdom of God. He was a devout Jew who took religion seriously. What did Jesus mean by saying that he must be born again? "How can a man be born again when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born" John 3:4.

This led Jesus to respond by saying, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of the water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh but spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at me saying you must be born again. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. John 3:5-9.

We must not be too hard on Nicodemus. Who among us does not struggle with what it means to be "born again?" I believe it has to do with cultivating a relationship with God based upon confession of sin and repentance. Let's delve into that deeper at another time because I want to examine Jesus' reaction to Nicodemus. For you see, it is his turn now to be confused.

"You are Israel's teacher and do not understand these things?" John 3:10.

**Why is Jesus bewildered?** Evidently, he thought Nicodemus should have understood what he was discussing. After all, Nicodemus was a distinguished teacher and serious student of the Word. Surely Nicodemus had figured out that peace with God did not come through following rules but developing a relationship with God that resulted in obedience to His will. But, Nicodemus had not surmised this and as a result he and Jesus were confused.

Ever since I read this dialogue, I've been thinking. **What do we believe that confuses Jesus?** What are we doing that Jesus does not understand? What are we failing to do that frustrates him? Let me share a list with you that you will no doubt add to.

**I think Jesus wonders:**

Why we think anything or anyone other than God can meet our deepest needs.

How we can live a meaningful and productive life without daily meditation.

How we can face a problem, challenge or decision without praying and searching the Scriptures to tap into God's wisdom, guidance and help.

How we can have so much and be so ungrateful and selfish.

How we can have good jobs and be such poor stewards.

How we can work for another and steal from him or her.

How we can have so much potential to achieve good and not do it.

How we can have so many opportunities to make a difference in this world and let them slide.

How we can live in a democracy and not vote.

How we can go to a grocery store and not think about feeding the hungry.

How we can live in a warm, dry house and not think about improving living conditions for the unfortunate.

How we think we can play with the devil and not get hurt.

How we can make foolish decisions and expect good results.

How we can make bad decisions and expect someone to bail us out.

How we can blame God for the evil that people do.

How we can have children and not make their upbringing our greatest priority.

Why we think there is a better plan for building a home than marriage.

Why we think children can grow up to be good parents after they have been abused or neglected.

Why we think children will become good spouses after watching their parents abuse or neglect one another.

Why we see skin color, economic status or sexual preference when we look at a person rather than someone who needs to be loved.

Why we think we can redeem the worst people in society by killing them.

Why we think we can end violence with violence.

Why we think we can make the world better by spending more money on prisons than schools and weapons than hospitals.

Why we pay professional athletes millions of dollars and social workers little more than minimum wage.

Why we think we can pay people not to work and turn them into productive citizens.

Why we can pollute our movies, televisions, radios, Internet and magazines with immoral sex and unspeakable violence and not be adversely affected.

Why our heroes are warmongers and not peacemakers.

Why we think we can neglect or abuse our health and not pay a high price.

How we can see a sunrise or sunset and not stand in awe.

How we can be recipients of God's amazing grace but hold a grudge against another.

How we can have faith but not share it.

How we can say we believe in God but not follow Him.

Why women are not allowed to preach or be leaders in most Baptist churches.

Why some mistakes can prohibit a person from serving through the church but others do not.

Why churches tend to welcome rich prospects more than poor ones.

Why members relocate church buildings from poor districts to wealthier ones.

Why churches in the suburbs feel the need to tell churches in the inner city how to do ministry.

Why people feel the need to explain all the mysteries of life.

How we can have so many churches around us and yet refuse to worship with others.

How we can die with anything but gratitude for the gift of abundant and eternal life.

**What does Jesus do when he is confused about our beliefs or behavior?** What did he do with Nicodemus? He patiently took time to listen to him and talk with him. I find great comfort in that. He could have walked away in disgust but chose to remain with Nicodemus and help clear up his confusion.

I believe he will do the same for us. As a matter of fact, I know he will. Ask Nicodemus.