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Sermon NOTES 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent

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"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. It's a beloved and familiar story, I think. And you know one of the things with beloved stories is that we can become so accustomed to what we've understood about the story previously that we lose track of hearing it with fresh ears, with a new-born understanding. We might even lose our curiosity about what these words of Jesus mean. We might be tempted to say to ourselves, "Been there. Done that." As if the changes in our own lives, the changes in our world have no impact on or connection to our relationship to the Word of God. No impact on our understanding. As if we were already enlightened - you know - *we're* not in need of any 'new thing'!

Only of course, we're all like Nicodemus in at least some ways!

**Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, came blinking and timid into the light, and found that what had been light for him before must now be considered darkness. Don't wait till *you* know the source of the wind before you let it refresh you, or its destination before you spread sail to it. It offers what you need; trust yourself to it.**

-William Temple 1881-1944

Or how about these words from Rabindranath Tagore:

**The winds of grace are blowing, but it is *you* who must raise your sails.**

Do you see a connection with our living habitually? Living as we always have? Not questioning our direction or our outcomes? This is what some call "living an unexamined life". What I've learned is this - if we're serious about our relationship to and with our Creator, the Holy of Holies, the one who loves us beyond all imagining... If we're serious about wanting to be in relationship with GOD... then we have to be continually examining our own lives. Continually asking ourselves questions. Questions like: what does God really want of me in this situation? What gives my life meaning today? (as opposed to what gave it meaning yesterday). Where is my growing edge in this sacred relationship? Where does it feel too hard, too complicated, too confusing so that I want to turn back to what's familiar. Even if what's familiar no longer works. And isn't that the continual temptation? To coast along with what's worked in the past. Even though our present is so unlike our past. Even though the world we live in is no longer the world we used to live in. Even though how we lived previously doesn't really serve us, our loved ones, our world...

So tempting to let go of the urgencies of today and reclaim the familiar and comforting ways we've viewed the world, and operated in the world. Before. Before now.

When I arrived in Lloydminster, I would ask people what they treasured most about their church. Not what I expected! What did I expect - well you know. Fresh from seminary so I'm thinking maybe the readings as we all listen together. Maybe receiving

Eucharist. Or perhaps the music - hearing the instrumental pieces at the beginning and end, singing the hymns together, especially the Sundays when we sing a favourite... But no. I was so wrong! What was it? Relationships. The bedrock of any congregation.

A challenge for you over the coming months - make some new friendships in our congregation. Build some new relationships. Did you know we have ??? new people in our church? Do you know who they are? Reach out to someone you don't yet know - invite them to go for coffee. A walk on the beach. Come over for tea. As Spring arrives - maybe share your garden or a visit to one of the nurseries... Share your stories with each other. Learn what really matters to each other.

Explore the mystery of each other, the mystery of God awake and alive in this congregation. Recognize that in some ways we are all stumbling along in the dark. And so it becomes super important to remember how - as the great spiritual teacher, Ram Dass, put it - we are all just walking each other home. So to close offer you this poem, this invitation to ponder your spiritual journey in a new way, to be like Nicodemus - curious. Willing. Open-hearted.

#### To Live With the Spirit

To live with the Spirit of God is to be a listener.

It is to keep the vigil of mystery,  
earthless and still.

One leans to catch the stirring of the Spirit,  
strange as the wind's will.

The soul that walks where the wind of the Spirit blows  
turns like a wandering weather-vane toward love.

It may lament like Job or Jeremiah,  
echo the wounded hart, the mateless dove.

It may rejoice in spaciousness of meadow  
that emulates the freedom of the sky.

Always it walks in waylessness, unknowing;  
it has cast down forever from its hand  
the compass of the whither and the why.

To live with the Spirit of God is to be a lover.

It is becoming love, and like to Him  
toward Whom we strain with metaphors of creatures:  
fire-sweep and water-rush and the wind's whim.

The soul is all activity, all silence;  
and though it surges Godward to its goal,  
it holds, as moving earth holds sleeping noonday,  
the peace that is the listening of the soul.

-Jessica Powers 1905-1988

Amen.