

Title: BORN AGAIN FROM WITHIN, JOHN 3:1-8
(Chatham, NJ; 06/03/12, AM) [Pt, E – Topical]

Theme: Being born again into the Kingdom of God begins the process of change within us that eventually changes the world and makes a difference in the world.

Purpose: To demonstrate how changing ourselves changes the world, and to encourage us to walk by the Spirit whom we are given when we are born again.

Introduction:

1. Jesus talks with Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel.
2. Jesus teaches him that we must be born of water and the spirit in order to enter the Kingdom of God; Nicodemus cannot fathom “born again.”
3. Nicodemus seems to be an honest inquirer, see Jn 7:51-52. (In the movie, *Get Low*, Robert Duval plays a recluse who tells one of the truly honest men he meets, “I forgot that there were people like you.”)
4. Becoming a “good” man begins with being born of God (1:13)

I. Change yourself first

- A. Many people want to “make a difference” (lots of athletes doing this to help kids)
 1. The best way to do that is to change your self.
 2. “Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”
 3. Save millions of starfish or save at least one.
 4. Proverbs 16:32 – how hard it is to gain mastery over your impulses
 5. Born again by the Spirit of God makes it possible
- B. Repent as a positive move
 1. Many people consider repentance as a negative thing
 2. Changing others, institutions, or situations usually come before admitting that I need to change
 3. “50 Things You Can Control Right Now” (read some)
 4. You are in control of you, and you can make the choice to be “born again.”
 5. The first step in changing the world begins both with you and also within you

II. Jesus Came to Save, not Condemn, 16-17

- A. We are already lost in sin
 1. Jesus’ mission assumes the presence of sin: mankind condemned
 2. 1 Peter 1:9 reminds us that the “outcome of your faith” is the “salvation of your souls.”
 3. The mission is singular and focused
 4. It took some time for the disciples to grasp this, Luke 9:51-56.
 5. We must not be too eager to condemn others though the fact of sin remains
- B. Writing the story of our lives
 1. Stories are about the problems of life and overcoming obstacles
 2. Our life is a compilation of numerous stories: “Did you hear the one about...?” or “Remember that time...!”
 3. How will you write your story?
 4. Will it follow the narrative of redemption?
 5. Will you write the story of your life with the colors, events, and characters of God’s narrative?
 6. Jesus came to save. Get in on the story!
 7. Become part of the plan, Eph. 1:10, to unite all things in Christ.

III. Choosing the Life of the Spirit, Romans 8:12 – 17

A. Choice is always a part of the picture

1. We walk by the spirit not by the flesh: we decide to do this daily (Luke 9:23 – take up your cross daily)
2. By the spirit we are to put to death the misdeeds of the body, 13
3. We choose to be lead by the Spirit, 14
4. We become heirs and children of God for the spirit strengthens us, 15-17
5. We eventually are glorified with him, 17

B. Enabled by the Spirit

1. We live with a constant awareness of transcendent power and presence of God
2. We are “born of the water and the Spirit”
3. The intersection of the transcendent and the physical is the cross of Christ.

Conclusions:

1. The Gospel calls us to experience the new life by being born again.
2. We do this through faith, by confessing our sins, and by being baptized for the remission of those sins.
3. When we do this, we change our status before God (we become his children) and we begin the process of changing the world by changing ourselves.
4. It is a choice we can make and the one thing we can change.
5. Change your life; change the world; be born again by water and the spirit!