

**Sunday, May 27, 2018 – Trinity Sunday**  
**“Intimate, Infinite God”**

John 3: 1-17

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Story Framed

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

It's Trinity Sunday – that day when we saw the really long Athanasian Creed – quick plug – come to adult Bible study this week, we'll look at it a little more in depth. That day when we talk a lot about one God and three persons and get a headache contemplating this mystery, this conundrum that we can't figure out and it drives us crazy because we want to be able to know, what to be able to understand – and eventually we're left with this thought, maybe a little unsettling – God is really different from us. God is really big. God is really incomprehensible. I can't wrap my head around His nature, or how it all works, or how He could be everywhere, or eternal, or... and we could go on and on through every attribute of God and each of His characteristics would draw you into contemplation of how much holier and bigger and... just plain infinite He is. It's enough to leave you feeling very, very small, very uncertain of how you can know who He is, where He is, when He speaks, what is true.

Yes, this is pretty much what Nicodemus is wrestling with in John 3. He's a Pharisee, part of the Jewish ruling council, in fact. It's significant that John says he came “in the night.” John's Gospel is full of interplay between opposites like light and darkness, the night reference is not an accident – Nicodemus is stumbling in the dark with his questions wanting to know the things of God through Jesus. And so too, he comes by night because what great Teacher of Israel, a Pharisee of the ruling council, wants to be seen talking to this upstart nobody about deep spiritual questions?

Nicodemus sees a sign that Jesus is something special. He's looking for signs – the miracles Jesus is performing convince him God is with this Jesus and that He is worth talking with... so far, John has recounted only the first sign at the wedding at Cana—the miracle of the water turned to wine—but the evangelist admits at the end (20:30–31) that he has left out much: “Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life his name.” So Nicodemus saw many signs, but the faith that

leads to life remained elusive. Indeed, seeing is not the foundational category for the kingdom of God – seeing is something you can wrap your head around. Believing means sitting in the discomfort of something much holier, bigger... infinite. The wind is unseen, and yet its breezes still refresh. So it is with the Spirit of God.

No, if Nicodemus wants to talk about signs, then Jesus will direct him to a better one. He sends this “teacher of Israel” back to the Scriptures to consider the sign of the bronze serpent. Do you remember the story? Moses was leading the people of Israel through the wilderness. They were dying of poisonous snakebites in the desert – so God commanded that a serpent made of bronze be put up on a pole and lifted above the encampment – anyone who looked at the serpent and trusted God to heal would be healed. Jesus said: “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.” Here Jesus’s words echo the OT text from Numbers 21, “Whoever bitten, seeing it, will live.” The sign to look for is the Son of Man lifted up – look to Jesus on the cross to live, just like the Israelites in the wilderness and the bronze serpent. Snakebit by your sins, look at Jesus for healing.

Nicodemus, you want a sign? Then look at the cross! Jesus crucified is the greatest sign of all—the miracle of the cross. It is the grand finale of all the signs that Jesus performed, the greatest demonstration of God’s power and glory and kingdom.

Nicodemus would eventually see this sign. He would see Jesus lifted up on the cross. John even tells us that he would gently bring him down and bury him. It is a grisly sign, a scandal and offense to the eyes. It’s incomprehensible that infinity could be contained in a body, a very human one at that. That the sin of the whole world could be judged in that one human wastebin, that receptacle for all the nastiness and horribleness that humans have ever visited upon each other, all in one guy hanging on one cross one Friday afternoon. I can’t wrap my head around it all – how it works, and it could all leave you feeling very, very small – except then I see Jesus’ words for what this sign means and why this sign is given to us. God, the totally mysterious, incomprehensible, maddening conundrum, shrinks infinity down to Jesus because He loves you. Who are you, against the vast cosmos? Who are you, against an eternal, all-powerful and all-knowing God? You’re nobody – nobody except that God so loved you that even

if you were the only person alive, God will still do the same thing – He would give His only Son so that whoever believes in Him wouldn't die but have eternal life. Jesus is the sign. Jesus is the access to the infinite, mysterious, incomprehensible God. Jesus is the way to know the One who is unknowable. Jesus is the place where infinity crosses with intimacy, a deeply vulnerable connection and communion between the God who so loved the world, His Son whom he gave for us, the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith and you and me!

In Jesus' name, Amen.