

**I WALKED WITH JESUS**  
**New Testament Stories of Faith & Healing**  
**from the Least of These**  
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**EXCERPT**

**Have you ever considered yourself as one of the least of these?**

**The Rabbi**

John 3

Since the first time he'd spoken with the Rabbi of Galilee, Nicodemus' heart had burned. There was something about the man called Jesus of Nazareth that made him want to change his heart, maybe even his life.

His home was large with many rooms, but he'd chosen to visit with the Rabbi outdoors, near the great well where places for sitting in the cooler evening air were appreciated. Jesus must come at night, when peering eyes slept, and when his leadership duties were not so pressing. If his neighbors saw his visitor, he could merely remind them that it was the law to study at night – besides, it was expected. He need not worry about his place in the social and political arena.

Still, as Jesus entered, Nicodemus' heart skipped more than one beat. He was curious to know the truth, but he was also deeply afraid of what he would hear. Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not a prophet.

Or was he?

Because it was dark the torches had been lit. The dripping of water within the well where they spoke reminded Nicodemus of the cleansing of his soul – what he feared the most.

The sound of Jesus' sandals padded toward him. He stopped and sat. Nicodemus followed.

"A drink?" he asked.

The Rabbi shook his head.

"Well, then, I will begin," he offered.

The wind was blowing softly and easily, and Nicodemus was glad he'd chosen the location he had. But where should he start? He'd gone over the conversation a million times, and now that Jesus of Nazareth was here, he was at a loss.

The man was looking intently at him, so Nicodemus began:

“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

Jesus smiled. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

*Born... again?* Nicodemus thought. “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” he asked.

Even in the dim light, he could see that Jesus’ eyes were blue, the color of the sea of Galilee where he sometimes walked to clear his head.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Children were born of the water from their mother’s womb. And there was a spirit that dwelt inside every man.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

“How can these things be?” Nicodemus asked, taking a sip of the wine he had poured for himself. “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”

For a moment Nicodemus thought of the wind in the trees, but the thought forming in his head escaped him as Jesus continued:

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Nicodemus knew of Moses and the serpent he raised up. He knew the law of Moses and had lived it since he was young. But who would come down from heaven and be lifted up? Was Jesus speaking of himself?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

A trickling of warmth found his soul.

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Did he believe? Was this truly the Son of God?

“And this is the condemnation,” the teacher continued, “that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Was Jesus saying his deeds were evil?

“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

Suddenly, Nicodemus was thinking of his sins. He had many, but so did others in his position. In his duties as a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin, he must set an example of strength.

“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

Nicodemus took another sip of wine, but he could not meet the eyes of the teacher. Both were silent, and as Nicodemus listened to the wind through the trees, and the dripping sound of the water in his well, he was anxious to go inside to his family.

Jesus stood.

“Follow me,” he said.

They were at the front of his house before Jesus spoke again. “Follow me. Learn of me.”

The wind brushing against Nicodemus’ face, and the rustle of leaves above his head seemed to speak words of comfort. Could he do it? Could he leave his home, his profession? He had felt something warm prick at his chest. Could he deny now what he thought to be true?

Tears glistened. “I believe thy words are true,” he said.

“Then, come, follow me.”

The repeated entreaty was followed by a smile and a touch of a hand to his shoulder.

“When?”

“Tomorrow. We leave tomorrow.”

Nicodemus breathed in slowly and as his breath escaped his lips, he looked into Jesus’ eyes. They were still looking at him, watching him lovingly. He had never before seen such eyes.

“I don’t... know,” he stumbled. “You say you are leaving tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow. Will you be there?”

With all of his heart, Nicodemus wanted to say yes, but the words he wanted to say stuck in his throat. “I don’t know...” he began.

“Think about it?” Jesus offered.

“I will,” he answered.

A sob escaped Nicodemus’ lips. “Master?” he asked. “If I don’t come, will you yet love me?”

Of all the things he could have said, these words were the hardest. He knew that tomorrow he would not come. He would eat, he would go about his duties, he would walk the grounds of his beautiful home and the synagogue, but Jesus would travel without him.

Still, watching the man who some believed was God, there was no question in those heavenly eyes about his answer.