

### 3.8.20 Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon John 3:1-17

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ Amen.

So, there I was, a recent College graduate with this vague idea that I was going to become a pastor one day but decided I wanted to have a little break from school and get some “real world” experience. But that meant I need another job. So, I start looking and I get a couple of interviews. One that I happened to get was for door to door sales for some cable/internet provider. Now to be completely honest, I in no way, shape, or form, actually wanted this job. It sounds horrible to me. It’s probably great for some people, but not me, at all. But I needed a job to you know pay for rent and food so I went in and had the interview. I think it went fine but only real

question I remember for these 2 guys interviewing me was, "What are you going to do when in the middle of the afternoon you still got hours ahead of you walking under the sun, you've had doors slammed in your face all day, how are you going to keep going and doing your best?"

Now my honest answer of "I'd go home drink some lemonade and probably stay there" probably wasn't going to get me this job. So, I thought for a second until something came to me. I told them well you know I've grown up hunting, and me being the younger of the crowd that I hunt with they always sent me through the cattails to flush out the pheasants or deer or whatever. Now if any of you have done this you know, it's horrible in like a thousand ways. But you have to go all the way through, you can't just get tired and stuck in the middle, you literally have to push your way through. And that's what I told these two guys, I've grown up doing this, I've

learned perseverance, sometimes you gotta put down your head, drop your shoulder and just keep pushing. No one is going to come and get you out of those cattails, no one is going to be able to find you in those cattails. So I know how to deal with what the world throws at me. I don't know if they caught on that I really didn't actually want that job but I didn't get called back.

Luckily for me, I got a better job somewhere else but that story has stuck with me through all these years and I think it's got something to do with today's scripture readings and what God is saying to us today in the world that we are dealing with in our own lives.

We are so often in those places where we are just forced to be in. Like my interview. Places where we don't really have a lot of choices available to us. Sometimes it's our jobs, our lives, our schools, our family, some of those relationships in our lives that we just can't free ourselves

from. But we are there and we'll try our best. We'll put on the smile and lay down the best baloney we can come up with and keep trying because there are other bigger things to consider. Or we might be stuck out in the middle of those cattails. Shin deep in mud we almost impenetrable walls surrounding us. But even though we are in that place we know there is a light at the end of the tunnel, we know that if we can just put our heads down and push through we'll be ok. If we can just convince ourselves and others, we can get through it.

I am convinced this is the place where Nicodemus was. He has is all yet he is unfulfilled. Nicodemus goes to Jesus looking for a way out of the situation he is stuck in. It doesn't say that in the text but nobody, who's powerful and famous goes to Jesus in the middle of the night unless they've got problems.

And this same thing is what we find ourselves doing so often isn't it. We put this face on to the world during the day where we show our strength and smiles and then that night we are asking Jesus for some help. We want it to look like we have it all together but God knows we don't.

And how does Jesus answer Nicodemus? How are we answered in our struggles that we go through every single day? This mire we are caught in? How does God respond to the fear and panic that we are feeling from the threats of sickness, war, and oppression that seem so imminent right outside our very doors? Turn to God, your God who has come to save you.

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.
- 4 He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The Lord is your keeper;

7 The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.

8 The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and forevermore

Our incredible God is at work right now in our lives and in our world. This is the hope that we know so surely and intimately. This is our hope. Our hope is not in ourselves or what we can do. If that becomes our hope the world we destroy us every single time. Our path forward is not by putting down heads, not by lowering our shoulders and pushing through with our own strength. Our path forward is by looking up and looking around. Our path forward is not by telling ourselves lies but by confessing who we are and what we need to our God. Our path forward is by not getting stuck on weeds that entangle but by focusing on our God, Our God who loves us, and picks us up, and takes care of us. Who walks with us

through the pains and stays with us through it all. Our God who makes us new and gives us new life.

We are not alone on this path. It might be scary. It might seem like its more then we can handle. It might seem like you are alone. But just lift your eyes and see your God walking with you and helping you.