

Fourth Saturday of Lent ~ 3/24

Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?' They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."

You may remember that this Nicodemus who tries to speak rationally to his community of religious leaders is the same man who came to Jesus at night. Here is "Nic at Night" trying to take a step into daylight courage. He tries to help the folks see the error of their ways and does so by trying to persuade the rest of the Sanhedrin to remember their own laws.

What Nicodemus discovers is that when fear motivates a group of people it is hard to hear words of common sense. The need to follow laws that offer justice for all parties tends to be forgotten when we believe that we are threatened.

In the United States of America we now hold people in jails who we believe are related in some way to terrorist activities. We hold them without trial, without legal representation, and without any recourse. Because we fear what they might do to us, do we lose touch with our own sense of justice? And has this fear affected more than just the people that we have detained? Has it affected how we look at everyone who does not look or act exactly as we do?

The rest of the Sanhedrin puts Nicodemus in his place rather quickly. They play on his own real fear of becoming suspect himself.

How many people question decisions that we make about homeland security or about other patriot issues, but don't say anything because like Nicodemus they are fearful of the backlash from people around them? They fear that they will be perceived as unpatriotic.

The question that Nicodemus will continue to grapple with for a while longer is what exactly does it mean to be a faithful follower of Yahweh, just as a citizen will have to struggle with the question of what true patriotism is all about.

As we struggle with issues that place us squarely between a rock and a hard place, maybe we might remember that eventually Nicodemus came to anoint the body of the Crucified Jesus. In doing so he openly declared his love. This was no easy journey for him but he made it. We can take courage in this.

Questions for Reflection

- 1. Are there important issues of faith that I am afraid to speak about? What holds me back?*
- 2. How is my journey to true courage coming along?*