2026. 0301. **Genesis 12:1-4**. **John 3:1:17**

Last week, we began Lent by accompanying Jesus into the wilderness, where we witnessed his struggle to clarify his priorities and purpose as his heart and mind were tested. This week, we may find ourselves challenged in how we see—or fail to see—the world around us.

In Genesis, Abraham's family faced uncertain beginnings and stood at the threshold of a new chapter.

This passage begins with God's command to Abraham to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's household and go to the land that God would show him. This divine command is not just about geographical change; it means leaving everything familiar—moving from the known to the unknown, from all that was comfortable to all that was strange—and facing an uncertain future. As he journeyed into the unknown, Abraham chose to live with confidence in God's promise to bless him in a new and foreign land.
God's call on Abraham's life is to move beyond all kinds of fear: fear of the unknown, fear of those who are different, and fear of powerlessness in the face of impossibilities.

Yet God promised Abraham that he would protect him wherever he went, blessing those who treated him well and cursing those who did not.
Through Abraham and Sarah, all the families of the earth would be blessed. Their lives would ultimately touch people everywhere.

This passage speaks a powerful word to us when we are called to leave behind all that is familiar, to surrender our comforts and securities, and to follow God with our whole heart. The journey may be long—often much longer than we expect. It is a path of many ups and downs, of both joy and sorrow. Yet it is also filled with countless promises, the greatest of which is God's presence, guiding us along the way.

What does it mean to leave everything familiar behind in order to follow God's way?
The Gospel of John might answer this question.

Pontius Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas ruled Jerusalem, and together they showed a cruel disregard for human suffering, an elitist mentality, a readiness to inflict far greater suffering and displacement to secure their own vision of order, and a driving greed.
Just as Pilate despised faith in favour of brute force, he took pleasure in cruelty and shifting blame onto others, providing the muscle Herod and Caiaphas needed to remain in power.

In this situation, Nicodemus was a good and honourable man. He had been working in government for years, always hoping that things would improve—that people would rally around the core values of Judaism and preserve the nation's culture and way of life.
During this time, he kept hearing rumours about a man named Jesus—rumours filled with a kind of hope he had not heard from any of his contacts in years.
In their nighttime conversation, Jesus told him that the Kin-dom of God required a different kind of life orientation. No one can see anything clearly about God and

God's Kin-dom without being born from above. To see the Kin-dom of God, Nicodemus would have to start again from the beginning.
Jesus told Nicodemus that his way of seeing things was so different that it was as though one had to be born again—of the Spirit as well as of water. To be born again is to enter into the mind and heart of Jesus, to learn to see and think as he does.
Jesus emphasized the radical change of heart, values, worldview, and orientation required of those who want to see the Divine Realm.
For Nicodemus, understanding Jesus must have been difficult because of the power, prestige, and privilege he held. This encounter, then, became an invitation to know Jesus through compassion, humility, and love.

Later, Nicodemus transformed his life by defending Jesus in a debate before the Jerusalem council. After Jesus' death, he publicly helped anoint his body and lay it to rest. His belief in Jesus' teachings was now clear for all to see.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, his own disciples were often surprised by how he saw things. Jesus did not enter the world as people might have expected; his incarnation was radical. His entire worldview—expressed largely through parables and stories—differed greatly from that of the religious leaders of his time.

We, too, often find Jesus' teachings difficult to accept, because we tend to focus more on believing in him than on listening to what he actually taught.
Our tendency may be to fear the other, to marginalize what is unfamiliar, and to dismiss anything that differs from what and whom we know.

The challenge of being born again is to follow the One who saw the world differently and now changes how we see everything. The process will likely disrupt and disturb us, but it will ultimately liberate us and make us free to love.
As we navigate change and transition as a church, Nicodemus' story reminds us that the Holy Spirit doesn't tighten our grip, but opens our minds and hearts so that we can breathe, move, and be renewed.

We may resist mystery because it feels unknown, even as we long for a faith that breathes, moves, surprises, and renews us.
We may not find the way forward by knowing more, but by trusting more deeply in God, who loves the world enough to draw us out, to unbind us from uncertainty and fear, as Nicodemus was called out of the shadows and into new birth.

The Lenten journey may bring us heaviness and struggle, yet we are reminded that we can emerge on Easter dawn with the newly risen Lord, alive in a new life. This is the great cycle that we continually experience. Whenever we pass through death and rebirth, we are reminded that our spirits grow, becoming more ready to see, meet, and live in God's kingdom.
We are invited to enter this life-giving cycle that Jesus has opened to us, allowing the layers of our old selves to be peeled away. Let us make room within us for the Spirit of God to work in us, among us, and around us.

O God of the day and of the night, come to us with the power of your Holy Spirit. Give us new life by water and the Spirit. Remake, reshape, and renew us through your sacrificial love in Christ Jesus. Amen.