

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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BOLDNESS. Please read John 3:1-17. Other than the 23rd Psalm and the Lord's Prayer, Christians can readily recite John 3:16. It was the German Reformer Martin Luther who identified verse 16 as the "*gospel in miniature.*" The so-called evangelistic "*Jesus Saves*" messaging movement within the Christian Faith today uses the words as a sledgehammer of condemnation on those they identify as sinners, forgetting that in verse 17, God in Jesus was not condemnation but saving grace. John's Gospel was written about 50 years after Jesus' death and Christians should remember the context in which it was written. The Roman Empire was persecuting the Christians, forcing that faith community to exist underground and be secretive. Jesus' message connected them to be a community of love, resurrection, and transformation. The Christian message was meant to bring about change (salvation) to the world to know *BOLDLY* the ways of God's grace and affirmation as made known through Jesus Christ.

Surprisingly, a Pharisee named Nicodemus met Jesus at nighttime, a time of secrecy when others could not watch him. The Pharisees identified Jesus as a heretic. Jesus was a threat to Pharisees' "*honored*" places in society. They had become so entrenched in using the law as a weapon to keep their exalted positions in the religious and social communities. Yet, Nicodemus was attracted to Jesus, "*for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.*" (vs. 2). In calling His disciples, Jesus did not call Rabbis, Pharisees, Scribes, Priests, or other Jewish religious leaders. He called fishermen, uneducated, outcastes, and a tax collector (a despised community person). Jesus called these outcastes because they were open to His message and were willing to make changes in their lives.

It was Jesus' response to Nicodemus that is a reminder about creation, birth, experiences in life, and the eternalness of God's saving message. The Realm of God is known by change of heart and experiencing God's love in *BOLDNESS* and transformation. Jesus message was a sign that God was in control of life for all time—past, present, and future. It is God's *BOLD* action that is the saving grace for all people. In Jesus is found God's love that makes all the difference in the world. With *BOLDNESS*, we are blessed by God's love to bless one another. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS.*