

# The Pastor's Pages



Vol. 1 Issue 1

Welcome to the initial printing of a new form of communication here at St. John's. This publication will give me a way of addressing questions and concerns of you the congregation. One of the great advantages of this is it will allow you to ask questions while remaining completely anonymous. Interestingly enough, we often hesitate to ask questions for we are afraid what others might think. However, you would be amazed to know that others may be waiting to ask the same question that you are. So here is a place where we can do it safely without anyone worrying about what others might think. So, I invite you to ask away and take this opportunity to grow while knowing I don't have all the answers, but we worship the God that does.

Blessings,

Pastor Faron

The first question has to do with a phrase that we all have heard repeatedly upon radio and television. We may have been asked this personally a few times. Are you "born again?"

Well, what is sad about this in many ways is that a person should have to ask in the first place. I say this because being born again is directly related to being able to "see" the kingdom of God. So let us look closer at this popular and pervasive phrase.

In the English Standard Version, the phrase "born again" occurs four times, in John 3:3, 3:7, and 1 Peter 1:3, 1:23.

The first two occurrences are from the mouth of Christ in a conversation with Nicodemus. In the third verse Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (Joh 3:3 ESV) The Greek word used here is *ἄνωθεν* (Joh 3:3 BYZ) and is translated both as again and as from above, that is to say "born again" and "born from above." We know this word is used to reflect both meanings for there is a Greek word that means "again" by itself, *πάλιν*.

So without being born from above or born again one cannot see the kingdom of God. Jesus says this right after Nicodemus' confession that he knows Jesus is from God.

Furthermore, this response of Jesus speaks of seeing the kingdom. The Greek word used for “see” is ἰδεῖν. Other ways that this word is translated in the Bible are: notice, witness, appear, to mentally and spiritually see. So Jesus is noting that Nicodemus has recognized something of the kingdom or reign of God in seeing that Christ is from God.

It does not speak of entering the kingdom as in the way of salvation as we might think. Notice the following, verses 5-8, “Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (Joh 3:5-8 ESV) Therefore, one must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom.

The grace of God is something that comes from God and our receiving that grace is understood to be from God as well. We see this in 1 Peter which states, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” (1Pe 1:3 ESV) It is God who as caused us to be born again.

I often think the things that tend to be difficult for us is the language we use to describe what God accomplishes. Whether we believe that grace comes at baptism or at a time when we accept or realize what God has been doing for us all along, it is the language that we stumble upon, for we arrive at the same place, saved by the grace of God.

So in closing we might ask this of ourselves, “How do we see the kingdom or reign of God all around us?” We know that God is certainly here and the evidence of that can be found in all of creation; plants, animals, and also our neighbors both far and near. When we recognize this it serves to help us realize that through the grace of God we have been born again, born from above. Thanks be to God.

If there are further questions you can certainly submit them by leaving them in the slot in my office door.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Faron