

4 Lent B SML 2018  
JN 3:14-21

One thing in the world a lot of people would love to discover is the “missing link.” Every now and then we hear the missing link is discovered, but it’s only temporary, only in terms of time and place. The most annoying feature of the missing link is that it is missing.

This evening’s (morning’s) gospel is taken from John Chapter 3, the conversation between Our Blessed Lord and Master Nicodemus, who was searching for the missing link. When Master Nicodemus came to see the Divine Master, Who had startled the world with His miracles, Our Blessed Lord told him the story of his life. It was a life that began not in Bethlehem, but existed from all eternity in the Trinity. And says the gospel at hand, it was a life that was given so the world might not be condemned, but saved.

Nicodemus was a master, a Pharisee, a wise and holy man. But because Nicodemus lived without the complete truth, and therefore searched for the missing link, Nicodemus lived in darkness. So whenever Nicodemus appeared in John’s gospel, Nicodemus appeared at night:

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus **at night** and said to him, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God.” (JN 3:1-2)

On Holy Thursday **night**, as a member of the Sanhedrin, Master Nicodemus appears in court to testify on Jesus’ behalf.

On Good Friday, after the Crucifixion and **night** [darkness] had covered the land, Master Nicodemus, the one who had first come to Jesus **at night**, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about a hundred pounds (JN 19:39)

It’s also worth noting that when Judas left the Last Supper, John very specifically tells us Judas “took the morsel and left at once. And it was **night**.” For Bible reading Christians then, “Nic at Night” is more than just a television network.

In this conversation between Jesus and “Nic at Night,” much was discussed. However the focus of the conversation was the missing link, salvation.

For the believer seeking salvation, “the missing link” that endures in every time and place is He Who links us to God in every time and place, when the chain has been broken by sin. For the believer, the “missing link” is Our Blessed Lord.

Many of the oh so comfortable images of Our Blessed Lord picture Him at best as:

- ✓ a moral reformer
- ✓ or a teacher of ethics,
- ✓ and at worst as an “I’m OK, you’re OK” non-confrontational kind of guy.

The fact is Our Blessed Lord is primarily none of these. He is first and foremost a Redeemer, a Savior. In that, He breaks with all the reformers and preachers who ever lived: Buddha, Plato, Confucius, Socrates, Muhammed . . . because they came into the world to live, but Our Blessed Lord came into the world to die.

Socrates came into the world to teach. Hence the greatest tragedy of his life was the cup of hemlock. Death ended his teachings about truth. But the Cross was not to Our Blessed Lord what the hemlock was to Socrates. Jesus’ death did not stop His teaching. His death proved His teaching is true.

Buddha came into the world to be a philosopher and only a philosopher. His supreme purpose in life was solely and uniquely to explain defeat, yet his death defeated his preaching on defeat. Death to Christ, on the other hand, did not defeat

His teaching. Death was the end for Buddha, but for Our Blessed Lord, death was only the beginning.

At the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus' presence inspired John the Baptist to cry out, "Behold the Lamb of God," (JN 1:36) a clear reference to the paschal lambs slaughtered at Passover.

Three times to His disciples, Our Blessed Lord predicted His passion, death and resurrection.

To the members of the Sanhedrin who would seek a sign, he foretold his death on the Cross, as recorded in this evening's (morning's) gospel: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life." (JN 3:14-15)

To the Pharisees, who were like sheep without a shepherd, He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."

And to all those who would prefer to forget that Our Blessed Lord came as Our Redeemer and Savior, He spoke the most tender words recorded in scripture, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will no die but will have eternal

life. For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but to save the world through Him.” (JN 3:16-17)

Our Blessed Lord came into the world to die so when He was:

- ✓ crucified,
- ✓ pierced with nails,
- ✓ insulted,
- ✓ spat upon,
- ✓ reproached
- ✓ and reviled,

He showed His power by changing the heart of a thief and drawing to Himself a soul that was once a hardened heart, and promised him, “Amen, I say to you, this day you will be with me in Paradise. (LK 23:43) That promise proved Our Blessed Lord was the missing link.

So today, some broken heart can kneel before the crucifix even for a minute, and discover the missing link – that regardless of how sinful he is, he must be worth something, since Our Blessed Lord died on a cross for love of him.