

Reflection on Sunday 1st March St Marys Cuddington

By the Vicar

You Must Be Born Again - A New Beginning That Gives Life

In today's Gospel, Jesus says something that is both searching and hopeful:

"Unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God."

Elsewhere, Jesus puts it this way:

"Unless you become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of God."

These two sayings belong together.

To be **born again** is, in a very real sense, to **become childlike** — not childish, but childlike in trust, dependence, and openness to God.

Nicodemus struggles with this. He is faithful, learned, respected, and committed. Yet Jesus gently invites him—not to do more—but to **begin again**, to receive a new life from God.

Children are perceptive and often share their observations with delightful humour.

For example, A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, 5, Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'" Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"

A father was at the beach with his children when the four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore where a seagull lay dead in the sand. "Daddy, what happened to him?" the son asked. "He died and went to Heaven," the Dad replied. The boy thought a moment and then said, "Did God throw him back down?"

1. Born Again Means Becoming Childlike

When Jesus speaks of becoming like a child, he is pointing us toward **dependence**.

A child depends on others for life itself.

A child does not earn food, shelter, or love — these are received as gifts.

This is what **faith alone** means.

Faith alone does not mean "doing nothing."

It means we do not save ourselves by effort, achievement, or moral performance.

Like a child holding a parent's hand while crossing the road, we trust God to lead us.

Many of us understand this deeply through life experience:

- when illness limits our strength,
- when age reminds us of vulnerability,

- when we must accept help we once resisted.

At such moments, faith often becomes simpler and deeper.

We rediscover what brought joy even in earlier struggles — not control, but **relationship**; not certainty, but **trust**.

To be born again is to **return** to that childlike trust in God — again and again.

2. Born Again Means Becoming Like a Seed

Jesus often speaks of seeds because everyone understands them.

A seed is small and unimpressive.

Yet within it is hidden life.

Jesus says:

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

To be born again is to allow **new life to be formed within us**.

A seed must be placed into the soil.

It must let go of its old form.

Only then does it grow.

This is not about loss for its own sake, but about **reorientation**:

- dying to fear,
- dying to pride,
- dying to self-centred living,

so that new life can rise:

- trust,
- freedom,
- fruitfulness.

Faith shapes our priorities, our choices, and our decisions.

When our centre is God, our relationship with ourselves becomes healthier — not driven by anxiety or pressure, but grounded in purpose.

We are called to bear fruit — quietly, faithfully — in the soil where God has placed us.

3. Born Again Means Being Lost and Found

Jesus also speaks of new life through stories of **restoration**.

The shepherd who searches for the lost sheep.

The joy when it is found.

The prodigal son who returns broken — and the faithful elder son who also needs healing.

Being born again means allowing God to **restore what is broken**:

- broken relationships,
- broken hopes,
- broken confidence,
- broken peace within ourselves.

It reminds us that God rejoices not only when the lost return, but when the faithful rediscover grace.

Sometimes this new beginning feels **sudden**.

Paul's conversion is a powerful example. One moment he is travelling in one direction with complete certainty; the next, his life is turned around. Yet that sudden moment is not the end — it is the beginning of a long journey of transformation.

We see the same in everyday life:

- someone chooses forgiveness after years of bitterness,
- someone retires and discovers a new way of serving,
- someone joins a good community and slowly finds new purpose.

Being born again may begin suddenly — but it always grows over time.

Living, Growing, and Bearing Fruit Together

Jesus never speaks of new life without fruit.

A living plant bears fruit.

A living tree gives shade and nourishment.

Faith naturally grows into action — not to earn salvation, but because life produces fruit.

We are **interconnected, interrelated, and interdependent**, like plants sharing the same soil.

Think of the butterfly. For a long time it remains hidden in the cocoon. The waiting is necessary. The change is real. When it emerges, it is not the same as before.

So it is with us.

God continues to shape us — quietly and patiently — until new life shows itself.

Good News for Today

Being born again is not about becoming more religious.

It is about becoming more alive.

It is:

- childlike trust,
- seed-like growth,
- restored relationship.

Not by effort.

Not by fear.

But **by faith alone**.

And that faith, lived simply and authentically, continues to bear fruit — in our homes, our friendships, our church, and our community.

Jesus invites us again:

to trust like children,

to grow like seeds,

to return and be restored.

And to live this new life — for joy, for love, and for the life of the world.

Amen.