

20 March 2011, Lent 2

## **THERE ARE OTHER WORLDS TO SING IN**

### **John 3:3**

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." [NLT]*

His name was Paul. He lived in a small town in the Pacific Northwest some years ago. He was just a little boy when his family became the proud owners of one of the first telephones in the neighbourhood. It was one of those wooden boxes attached to the wall with the shiny receiver hanging on the side of the box... and the mouthpiece attached to the front. Young Paul listened with fascination as his mom and dad used the phone... and he discovered that somewhere inside the wonderful device called a telephone lived an amazing person.



Her name was “Information Please”... and there was nothing she did not know. Information Please could supply anybody’s number... and the correct time!

Paul’s first personal experience with “Information Please” came one day when he was home alone and he whacked his finger with a hammer. The pain was terrible and he didn’t know what to do... and then he thought of the telephone. Quickly, he pulled a footstool up to the phone, climbed up, unhooked the receiver, held it to his ear and said: “Information Please” into the mouthpiece.

There was a click or two and then a small clear voice spoke: “Information.”

“I hurt my finger,” Paul wailed into the phone.

“Isn’t your mother home?”

“Nobody’s home but me,” Paul cried.

“Are you bleeding?”

“No,” Paul said. “I hit my finger with the hammer and it hurts.”

“Can you open your ice-box?”

“Yes.”

“Then go get some ice and hold it to your finger.”

Paul did and it helped a lot.

After that Paul called “Information Please for everything. She helped him with his geography and his maths. She taught him how to spell the word “fix.” She told him what to feed his pet chipmunk.

And then when Paul’s pet canary died, she listened to his grief tenderly and then said: “Paul, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in.” Somehow that helped and Paul felt better.

When Paul was nine years old, he moved with his family to Boston... and as the years passed he missed “Information Please” very much.

Some years later as Paul was on his way out west to go to college, his plane landed in Seattle. He dialled his hometown operator and said, “Information Please.”

Miraculously, he heard that same small clear voice that he knew so well, “Information.”

Paul hadn’t planned this, but suddenly he blurted out: “Could you please tell me how to spell the word “fix?”

There was a long pause. Then came the soft answer: “I guess your finger must be all healed by now.”

Paul laughed. “So it’s really still you. Do you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time when I was a little boy?”

“I wonder,” she said, “if you know how much your calls meant to me! I never had any children and I used to look forward to your calls so much.”

Paul told her how much he had missed her over the years and asked her if he could call her again when he was back in the area. “Please do,” she said, “just ask for Sally.”

Three months later, Paul was back in Seattle. This time a different voice answered. He asked for Sally. “Are you a friend?” the operator asked.

“Yes, a very old friend.” Paul answered.

“Well, I’m sorry to have to tell you this,” she said. “Sally had been working part time the last few years because she was sick. She died 5 weeks ago.”

Before he could hang up, the operator said: “Wait a minute. Did you say your name was Paul?”

“Yes.”

“Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down in case you called. Let me read it to you. It says: ‘When Paul calls, tell him that I still say: there are other worlds to sing in.’ He will know what I mean.”

Paul thanked her and hung up and he did know what Sally meant.

“There are other worlds to sing in.”

This is what Jesus was teaching Nicodemus.

But he was also teaching that entering this other world was through Jesus himself. To be born again means to believe in Jesus, and to be baptised into him.

In a way, Jesus came onto earth to be our “Information Please” with God.

Can’t spell ‘help’ in a prayer? Jesus knows and understands, and so God’s knows and understands.

Hurting? Jesus knows and understands, and so God knows and understands.

Grieving? Jesus knows and understands. But even better, has promised us another world to sing in.

Let me put the whole though another way.

Here’s a familiar Bible verse – John 3:16-17 – spread out in a special way:

**For God so loved the  
world that he gave his  
one and only Son, that  
whoever believes in him  
shall not perish  
but have eternal life.**

**For God did not send  
his Son into  
the world to condemn the world, but  
to save the world through him.**

*[HINT: there is only one column of letters that goes all the way through. It is this column that spells out the ‘hidden’ message in the message.]*

A lot of people look for hidden messages in the Bible. There’s a book called “The Bible Code” in which the author, Michael Drosnin, claims to have found a hidden pattern of letters that spells out secret messages, some of which predict future events.

There’s no hidden message in the Bible. And the above is the most

amount of 'bible code' we could ever need.

The message is plain to see in the plain words of the Bible, if one has eyes to see it or ears to hear it.

To be more accurate, the message is 'hidden' – a mystery revealed in people's hearts by the Holy Spirit [1 Corinthians 2:6-16].

This was what Jesus was teaching Nicodemus; which is, if you want to know what God's message is, just look at Jesus.

He is our 'Information Please'.

Amen.