



Unfinished: Discovering God's Call in the Not Yet Lent 2

Called to Openness

Warm-up Question

*Share about a time when you ate something without knowing what it was.
How did you know if you would like it?*



Photo by [Tyson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

“Near and Now” is a resource provided by the Nourishing Vocation Project through the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College. This edition is written by Juniper Linberry, Luther Seminary graduate awaiting a pastoral call in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

How can these things be?

Read [John 3:1-17](#)

Bible Story Reflection

My four-year-old niece sometimes has trouble trying new foods, but she has a rule that she must try a “no-thank-you bite” before she can reject something from her plate. She has to try one bite, enough to taste the food, before she can say “no thank you.” How can you know that you don’t like something if you’ve never tried it? Of course, this is easier said than practiced, and in the case of a four-year-old often involves some big feelings or at least leads to her negotiating the size of the bite.

In the story today, Nicodemus has taken a no-thank-you bite and he’s coming back for more. He heard about Jesus coming to town and doing some miraculous things, but he couldn’t quite figure out what was going on with this new and different preacher. He was so intrigued and confused he wanted another, bigger taste; but he ends up even more confused. In his confusion, he wonders, “how can this be?” It’s like he’s trying to eat an entire meal in one bite, and he can’t quite figure out how all the pieces fit together. He’s caught between not knowing God at all, and understanding the fullness of God’s power and love. He has had a taste of the amazing message from Jesus, but he is still bound by his own human understanding of the world.

In the same way, we live in an in-between space. We come to worship to experience God’s power and love in a community of believers; we know that God is at work among us; and yet we can’t understand it completely. We only get a taste of God’s love and mercy, we only get a glimpse of what the kingdom of God is really about. Like Nicodemus, we keep searching, asking questions, coming to Jesus when we are perplexed. Even if we can’t see the whole picture, we trust that God will meet us in our confusion and hold our questions as we wrestle with them. God calls us to be open to the new and sometimes incomprehensible things that God is doing in the world, and to know that God is with us, even as we muddle through it all.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel when you are about to try something new? Nervous? Excited? Hesitant? Determined?
2. How do you think Nicodemus felt when he went to see Jesus at night?
3. What sometimes keeps you from being open to something new, from taking a “no-thank-you-bite” when you are faced with something you haven’t experienced before?
4. Share about a time when you took a “no-thank-you-bite” in terms of your faith. Did you go back for more, or was one bite enough?
5. How do you think Nicodemus would tell his story?

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6. When have you found yourself saying to God, “how can this be?”
7. What does it mean to you that God “so loves” the world?
8. What does it mean to you that Jesus does not condemn?
9. What are you being asked to be open to right now?
10. What is your congregation being asked to be open to right now?

Activity Suggestions

Sit quietly and listen for God’s presence and God’s word to you. This could be alone in a quiet space in your home, in a park or other outdoor space, or in a group with others. Ask God, “to what are you calling me to be open?” Share your experience with one other person.

Ask someone you know how they experience God’s presence. Is it through prayer, song, nature, scripture...?

For one week, commit to reflecting at the end of each day what new things you tried. Is there anything you want to try tomorrow?

Vocare Practice

Reflect upon how you are being **called to openness**

- How do I typically respond to invitations or expectations to be open?
- To what was I asked to be open today?
- To what did I say “yes?”
- To what did I say “no?”
- What do I need for tomorrow?

Prayer Concerns

Those with faith questions, those whose struggles are most real in the middle of the night, those who sit with others who question

Closing Prayer

Open my heart, O God, to the mysteries of your saving love. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

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