

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 43 –March 27-April 2

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalm 123-125

Luke 5-8

Readings in Class:

Jeremiah 37-52

Introduction to John

The first thing you notice about John's Gospel is that it reads a lot different than the other three Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often referred to as the Synoptic Gospels (seeing together). They are similar in style and refer to many of the same events. John's Gospel departs from them, though his purpose in writing is the same: that his readers may come to faith in Jesus (see the end of chapter 20). This Gospel is more theological and focuses more on Jesus' teachings and sermons and less on events.

There are several stories that show up in John that are not in the other Gospels (such as the raising of Lazarus) and also some notable omissions (the institution of the Lord's Supper). It is generally believed that John wrote his Gospel as late as the 90s AD, which would make it the last book of the Bible to be written. John, the last of the disciples, and the only one to die a natural death, most likely wrote this towards the end of his life. This may be why it departs from the other three Gospels, which would have been in circulation for decades already, and probably familiar to his readers. He didn't need to repeat the same stories and teachings, but may have wanted to share some of the ones that weren't already known. The Church at this time probably had very few eyewitnesses anymore. John may have also been responding in part to specific heresies that were popping up (such as the attack on Jesus' incarnation).

A brief summary of John

- Prologue: The Word of God (1:1-18)
- John & First Disciples (1:19-1:51)
- Early Ministry (2:1-4:54)
- Healings & Opposition to Jesus (5:1-10:42)

- Raising Lazarus (11:1-57)
- Ministry in Jerusalem (12:1-50)
- Jesus bids his disciples farewell (13:1-16:33)
- Jesus prays for his disciples (17:1-26)
- Jesus' Trial and Passion (18:1-19:42)
- The Resurrection of Jesus (20:1-31)
- Epilogue (21:1-25)

I AM

There are seven "I AM" statements in this Gospel. ('Bread of Life,' 'Light of the World,' 'Door,' 'Good Shepherd,' 'Resurrections and the Life,' 'The Way, the Truth, and the Life,' 'True Vine'). Jesus also says 'I AM' twice more in John 8:58 and John 18. Both of these elicit strong reactions. In chapter 8 the Jews try to stone him, in chapter 18 the men who had come to arrest Jesus fell to the ground. I AM is the what God tells Moses to say when the people ask who has sent Moses (Exodus 3). Jesus is claiming to be God. The seven "I am" statements also mimic the seven "I am the Lord" from Isaiah's servant song.

The Blood and the Water

The Sacraments show up quite a bit. When Jesus teaches Nicodemus he says that in order to enter the kingdom of God you must be born of water and the spirit. In chapter 8 Jesus says that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood abides in him. And then at the Crucifixion, when the spear is thrust into Jesus side, blood and water pour out. All these bring to mind Baptism and Holy Communion.

It is quite clear throughout the Gospel that what the people need is the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus promises to pour out on his people and what is ultimately given after His resurrection and continues to be given through the Sacraments and preaching of the Word.

The Word Made Flesh

The opening chapter of John brings to mind Genesis 1. In the beginning... John is going all the way back to creation and by doing so, is saying that Jesus is God, the creator. He always has been and always will be. It is only through Jesus, the Word made flesh, that God is made known. The Word has become flesh. It is from here that we get the idea that anytime in the Old Testament when "The Word of the Lord" came to someone, that it's Jesus. God is revealed to us through Jesus.