

The Gospel of John

October 8, 2023

Opening Prayer

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (Collect for Proper 28, BCP 236)

Bible Study Basics

The world behind the text, the world of the text, and the world in front of the text.

Behind the Text in John – Historical Context

(Most Bible scholars think ...)

- While tradition suggests that John, the son of Zebedee, was the author of the fourth gospel, modern scholarship suggests that the gospel was written and edited over time by members of a community.
- The Gospel of John was the last of gospels to be written, around 90 to 100 CE.
- The author(s) of John was a Jewish Christian writing for Jewish Christians in conflict with synagogue authorities.
- Written so that “you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).
- Possible cities/communities of origin include **Ephesus** and Antioch.

Of the Text – Literary Markers

- John’s gospel is the most theological.
- Incarnation. Jesus is divine. Jesus provides access to God. Jesus shares God’s character and identity. John has the highest Christology of the gospels. Jesus doesn’t simply speak God’s word, Jesus **is** God’s Word.
- The use of “my Father” and/or “the Father who sent me.” Jesus has an intimate relationship with God the Father and refers to God in personal terms.
- Love. Love is the ultimate descriptor of how we are to be in relationship with each other, how Jesus is in relationship with God, and how we participate in the divine relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit. Since John is concerned about the incarnation in the person of Jesus, John also communicates how the real presence of God continues in the community after Jesus is gone.
- John focused on who Jesus **was**.

In Front of the Text – Our own context and experience

- We might feel like we have a “better handle” on Matthew, Mark, or Luke
- John does not get its own lectionary year; it is interspersed in all three years.
- John gets prominence on special days: 1st Sunday after Christmas, Good Friday, Easter (at least 5 out of 7 Sundays each year), the Day of Pentecost

Working with the Text – The Baptism of Jesus (John 1:29-34, 51)

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

John 1:51 And he (Jesus) said to him (Nathanael), “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Behind the Text

- **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.
- “Lamb of God” Isaiah 53:4-12 (sacrifice for the sin of the world) Passover Lamb (symbol of deliverance)

Of the Text

- Names for Jesus: Lamb of God, Son of God, Son of Man (and in the verses we skipped, Rabbi, Messiah, King of Israel)
- Focus on John’s testimony – role of John as witness, apologist
- Differentiation between the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus
- The activity of the Spirit is not related to what Jesus does, says, or feels. It is a reflection on who Jesus is.

In front of the Text

- How does this text bring to light, challenge, broaden, or reinforce our working theological convictions? (Where is God? What does this text say about God?)
- How does this passage challenge and nurture the spiritual life? What spiritual practices are explicitly or implicitly suggested by the text?
- How does this text relate to contemporary social and political realities and ideologies?