

The Gospels: John

John

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – August 2nd, 2020

9th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: John 1:1-18, 3:16-18, 5:15-18, 8:2-11, 18:33-38, 19:14-16,25-30, 20:1-18,30-31, 21:20-25

Reflection: Psalm 67

Greeting: May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you on this day! I pray that as we join together in worship, in whatever way we join together, that we be united by one Spirit, serving the Father, in the truth of the Son. Let us celebrate the love of Christ that brings us together in God's care. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: O Lord our God, help us this day. Help us live a life more and more like the example set for us in Christ Jesus. Help us to see with new eyes so that we may strive to be more and more like our Risen Savior. Guide us in all that we are and all that we do, that we may serve you, Lord, that all be for you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 67

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

(Psalm 67 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 67 and we hear calls for God to let his power be known to all. That all may know God and praise God. We hear that the nations should be glad and sing and that we are blessed. How have you experienced God's blessings? How do you show the joy that God gives you? How do you share that joy with others? How do you rejoice with others? How can we all share in God's blessings and continue to revere the Lord wherever we go?

Prayer: God, our guide and guardian. Help us to remember your blessings. Help us to lift you up in our hearts always. Show us the path that leads us into your love that we may show the path to all. Let us always call up the Father who guides us. Help us to always seek the Holy Spirit that leads us. And let us always celebrate the salvation of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. May praise always be on our tongues and love in our hearts. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. All of our readings come from the Gospel of John today. We begin with chapter 1, verses 1 through 18.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being. What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light. The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world. The light was in the world, and the world came into being through the light, but the world didn't recognize the light. The light came to his own people, and his own people didn't welcome him. But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children, born not from blood nor from human desire or passion, but born from God.

The Word became flesh and made his home among us. We have seen his glory, glory like that of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John testified about him, crying out, "This is the one of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is greater than me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace; as the Law was given through Moses, so grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made God known.

(John 1:1-18 CEB+)

Next, we turn to chapter 3, verses 16 through 18.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him isn't judged; whoever doesn't believe in him is already judged, because they don't believe in the name of God's only Son.

(John 3:16-18 CEB+)

And now, chapter 5, verses 15 through 18.

The man went and proclaimed to the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the man who had made him well. As a result, the Jewish leaders were harassing Jesus, since he had done these things on the Sabbath. Jesus replied, "My Father is still working, and I am working too." For this reason the Jewish leaders wanted even more to kill him—not only because he was doing away with the Sabbath but also because he called God his own Father, thereby making himself equal with God. (John 5:15-18 CEB+)

Then, chapter 8, verses 2 through 11.

Early in the morning he returned to the temple. All the people gathered around him, and he sat down and taught them. The legal experts and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. Placing her in the center of the group, they said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone women like this. What do you say?" They said this to test him, because they wanted a reason to bring an accusation against him. Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger. They continued to question him, so he stood up and replied, "Whoever hasn't sinned should throw the first stone." Bending down again, he wrote on the ground. Those who heard him went away, one by one, beginning with the elders. Finally, only Jesus and the woman were left in the middle of the crowd. Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Is there no one to condemn you?" She said, "No one, sir." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, don't sin anymore." (John 8:2-11 CEB+)

We continue with, chapter 18, verses 33 through 38.

Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?" Pilate responded, "I'm not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus replied, "My kingdom doesn't originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn't have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn't from here." "So you are a king?" Pilate said. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. After Pilate said this, he returned to the Jewish leaders and said, "I find no grounds for any charge against him." (John 18:33-38 CEB+)

And now, chapter 19, verses 14 through 16 and 25 through 30.

It was about noon on the Preparation Day for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, "Here's your king." The Jewish leaders cried out, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate responded, "What? Do you want me to crucify your king?" "We have no king except the emperor," the chief priests answered. Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. The soldiers took Jesus prisoner.

Jesus' mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near the cross. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

After this, knowing that everything was already completed, in order to fulfill the scripture, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was nearby, so the soldiers soaked a sponge in it, placed it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, "It is completed." Bowing his head, he gave up his life.

(John 19:14-16,16-25 CEB+)

We continue with, chapter 20, verses 1 through 18, and 30-31.

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him." Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn't go in. Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head. It wasn't with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. They didn't yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. The angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him." As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabbouni" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, 'I'm going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." Then she told them what he said to her.

Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

(John 20:1-18,30-31 CEB+)

And finally, chapter 21, verses 20 through 25.

Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them. This was the one who had leaned against Jesus at the meal and asked him, "Lord, who is going to betray you?" When Peter saw this disciple, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"

Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain until I come, what difference does that make to you? You must follow me." Therefore, the word spread among the brothers and sisters that this disciple wouldn't die. However, Jesus didn't say he wouldn't die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I

come, what difference does that make to you?" This is the disciple who testifies concerning these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If all of them were recorded, I imagine the world itself wouldn't have enough room for the scrolls that would be written.

(John 21:20-25 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

The final installment in our series about the Gospels is John. This one was tricky. When you line up Mark, Matthew, and Luke you get fairly similar accounts and it is easy to point out the differences when there is a lot of shared material. When it comes to John, it is like throwing everything out the windows and getting a completely different story. That isn't to say they aren't similar at all, but John has a completely different timeline and a lot of unique content. In picking the scriptures I did for today, I tried to highlight a few that would show some of John's themes and that would help demonstrate the main thrust of John's Gospel account.

When we look at John, there isn't a lot we know about the author. John is often attributed to the "disciple Jesus loved" in John's Gospel account. But we don't actually know, and the account seems to have been compiled later. Some people might have been confused last week when I said Luke was the only author that seems certain to have written more than one book in the Bible. The name "John" gets tied to the Gospel, the letters, and Revelation. The problem is, we don't know if they are the same John. The letters seem to be from the same school of thought, but scholars now aren't even sure that the same author wrote all the letters with John's name, and it seems likely a different John wrote Revelation. Which can lead to some confusion. The Gospel itself appears to be compiled in stages, adding to some authorship complications.

Comparing John to the other Gospels, Mark was the straightforward account, Matthew the more Jewish telling, Luke for the Gentiles. John is the spiritual Gospel, focusing mainly on the divinity of Christ. The opening of John lays out the main theology of John right up front. There isn't a birth narrative, but John gets into something deep. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being." The opening continues to highlight the divine nature of Jesus and informs us of everything that we are going to hear in the Gospel. It is nothing like the birth narratives in the other accounts but that the Word became flesh and made his home among us. John looks very much at the duality of Christ being fully human and fully divine. John really highlights the divinity and the performing of signs.

Some of the difficulty with picking parts of John is that John has so much unique content that is told in a different way. The other three all seem to be over the course of a year with Jesus in Jerusalem at the end of his ministry. In John, we have three years with Jesus in and out of Jerusalem for festivals. John has a lot of famous accounts, like changing water into wine, walking on water, and raising Lazarus. These accounts are used to testify to Jesus divinity. There's also a lot of dialogues like the Samaritan woman at the well. Another that we did touch

on today is Christ's discourse with the Pharisee Nicodemus. In it, it contains what may be the most well-known verse in the Bible. John 3:16 "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life." This verse itself lays out much of the thrust of all Christianity in one line. This is a long in-depth conversation with Nicodemus that is only found in John.

There are also longer stories about Jesus teaching in the temple as well as healings that take place. Our reading from chapter 5 can help us explore a difficult part of reading John and comes on the heels of one of those healings. A man tells the Jewish leaders that Jesus is the one who healed him on the Sabbath, and after Jesus rebukes them they begin plotting to kill him. Now, there is a plot to kill Jesus in all the accounts, but in John there are many attempts. They send people to arrest him and they are instead turned by his teaching. At other times they pick up stones and prepare to stone him to death. There is a difficult tension that comes from John's situation. Unlike some of the other Gospels, where Jesus is still considered Jewish, John has a lot of language where Jesus is in conflict with "the Jews." One reason for this is likely that in John's time, the Christian community is breaking away from the Jewish community. It is no longer a discussion about what kind of Jewish believer you are, but if you are a Christian or a Jew. There's language in John about being expelled from the synagogues. It would seem that Christians are breaking away by choice or by force into a brand-new faith community, and the division that arises is reflected in John's writing. This has sometimes contributed to antisemitic problems in the church. But it is important to understand that this is more to reflect the conflict between faith communities that were happening to those around John rather than a negative portrayal, as Jesus and all of his followers were considered to be Jewish and Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.

John also challenges us with some difficult teachings. It isn't so much that they don't make sense, but they take things sometimes to the extreme. We see this in chapter 8. A woman caught in adultery is brought before Jesus. The punishment is death by stoning. Jesus' response is that if you haven't sinned, go ahead and throw the first stone. Jesus then turns his attention away and waits. Everyone walks away. The interesting thing is that Jesus doesn't deny that the punishment is supposed be stoning her, but he frames it in a way that causes us to reflect on our own lives. We are forced to ask if we are able to hold ourselves to the same standard we are holding others to. We reach a deep spiritual truth in this. How can you judge others and bring death to them knowing what punishment you deserve? In many ways, this speaks to the Gospel truth of Christ. That even when we deserve punishment, Christ offers us salvation. Offers us life.

John also has a unique account of the trial and the crucifixion. Pilate is trying hard to not put Jesus to death. Pilate seems to be more worried in John than any other Gospel and for the first time has a back and forth with Jesus. In the other three Jesus basically goes silent. John instead has a discourse where Jesus declares his kingdom is not of this world. That he came into the world to testify to the truth. Pilate then asks the eternal question "What is truth?" It is hard to say if this is sarcastic or if this is a very real question about the objectiveness of truth. But it does present a very interesting portrayal of Jesus. In the end, Pilate gives in. He asks if

they would crucify their king, and the leaders declare they have no king but Caesar, the emperor. Which would itself seem to deny the idea of God as ruler of Israel.

The crucifixion is also very different from other accounts. John's timing is different. Jesus is put to death at the same time they would be slaughtering the Passover lambs. In the other Gospels, the Passover meal has already taken place. We also get a difference in what Jesus says and who is there. In our reading for today, we see Jesus' mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one we often associate with John, standing before the cross. He looks to them and says "Woman, here is your son" and "here is your mother" putting his mother into the care of his disciple. When everything that has needed to take place has taken place, Jesus says, "It is completed" or "It is finished" and bows his head and dies. There is a huge emphasis that Jesus knows everything is completed and his final act is to fulfill the scripture. And with that act, he completes his mission.

John's resurrection is also different. The first thing you may notice is that there are no angels at first. Mary Magdalene goes alone and sees the stone rolled away, so she runs to tell the others. Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved run to the tomb and Peter enters. But they don't understand, and they go on their way. Mary remains, and it is when she looks inside that she sees two angels. But they only ask why she's crying. Then Jesus appears, but she doesn't know it is him. He asks the same question. When he says her name, she turns and recognizes him. And she's told not to hold on to him, but to go and tell the others. There are then a series of events including the doubt of Thomas and the miraculous haul of fish. We get what might be the original ending of John, that Jesus did many other signs but that this was written so you will believe and continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son. But we continue to the end of chapter 21, the final verses of John. The disciple whom Jesus loved is identified as the one who testifies about these things and wrote them down. This doesn't mean he is the author, but he is the one attributed to the tradition being passed down in the Gospel. The last line "We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If all of them were recorded, I imagine the world itself wouldn't have enough room for the scrolls that would be written." And that ends John's Gospel.

John has a lot of heated moments and back and forth dialogue. There is a lot more division in John. John is mainly focused on displaying that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the divine one brought into the world to save us. That divinity takes center stage throughout the story. When we read John as a book by itself and just look at the Gospel, we get a story about three years of ministry. Three years to convince people in different places and in different situations. Jesus speaks to people with authority that nobody can challenge. He speaks to different groups, including people society says he shouldn't. Jesus evades capture and death. And it isn't until his mission is complete that he is handed over, and even declares his mission complete on the cross. He is seemingly in charge and in control of everything. He's much more confident and in authority than the other accounts. John doesn't include the birth because it doesn't matter to him. What matters is who Jesus is. His birthright doesn't matter because he's the Word become flesh. That is all that matters. So I encourage you to read John as the unique story that it is. John includes a lot of things that aren't in the other account, and

paints a picture of the divine Christ, Savior of mankind. John speaks to us in his own voice, telling a story uniquely his. That we read the Gospel of John as a book unto itself, telling a unique story. And we see how the Gospels can be opened when you take each one and let the author speak to their own experience with Jesus Christ with their own voice standing alone. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: Lord, forgive us we pray. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we say and do. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we do not say and what we do not do. It is in our doings and our failings that we seek your grace and your mercy. We haven't loved you how we should. We haven't loved each other how we should. We are a people who are sorry, who humbly seek your forgiveness. Help us to live with one another in your mercy and your grace. Let us always remember the sacrifice made by our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, that we may understand your deep love for us. May we honor that love by sharing it with one another, loving as you love and caring as you care. Help us to be of one body redeemed by one blood, serving one God. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now that we may be ministers of the good news wherever we go. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Aaron Carrell	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew	Nancy Hoke
Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Pat Nebel	Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe	Brenda Hurt
Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Robert Fryman	Ken Bushur	
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Family of Novella Claiborn	Leo Smith		
Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley		

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

Rev Camron D St. Michael

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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8/2/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

We are continuing in both online and in person worship at this time. I am thankful for all of the work that everyone has done to make this possible. As we return to in person worship, please contact me for details or see prior weekly updates for all of the current safety precautions.

A note, I will be taking a week off in August, so there will not be online or printed materials from me on August 23rd.

There are copies of the Upper Room available in Greenup in the box and at Cottonwood. You can also find the current issue online. The new Sunday school quarterly is also in the box for whoever is interested.

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! A printed copy of the service including the weekly sermon will be available online and in print. The sermon audio will be uploaded weekly as well. If you'd like to be updated when it is available, it is on Spotify, Google Play, and iTunes. I will also post updates to the church Facebook pages every week. If anyone you know is not getting a copy and would like one mailed, please let me know. I am trying to get them mailed out weekly.

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

cdstmichael@outlook.com

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL 61920