

SERMON 905

December 28, 2014

First Sunday after Christmas

978th Week as Priest

805th Week at St Dunstan's

70th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee



ANOTHER BEGINNING

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

The Gospel Lesson for this First Sunday after Christmas takes us back to the beginning—in several ways. This passage, which is often called the *Prologue* to John's Gospel, is a beginning unlike any of the other gospels. Mark begins with John the Baptist coming out of the wilderness. Luke starts his

story with the birth of John the Baptist. And Matthew begins with a genealogy of all things! But John the Divine, author of this gospel and three letters and the Revelation, is a poet and a visionary. His prologue takes us back to the beginning of all things, to the creation itself.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

John has us see and understand that Christ was present with God the Father as the Word from before time and before anything was created. The Word is the person of Christ, and John says that he and the Father are One.

It is nothing less than stunning that this writer is able to imagine such a thing. He sees Christ as the creative power behind all that has been made, and nothing can be made without the act of Christ. (I'm reminded of the Letter to the Hebrews ...

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit.

Do you see how brilliant is John the Divine? He is a genius, and his words have power and depth beyond anything else written in the New Testament. But there is more ...

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John understands poetry and metaphor, but he also seems to know science. How otherwise could he have known to say that the first impulse of creation would be light? One explanation is yet another beginning—the beginning of the Old Testament with the Book of Genesis! In fact, Genesis begins with the same words as John’s Prologue:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth ... God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.

So yes, John has taken an idea from Torah, the First Book of Moses, and he has developed the idea further. God creates, says the Genesis writer, by speaking the words—and they come into being. For John, Christ is the Word. The first thing that God creates in Genesis is light, which is scientifically that which is necessary to all life, to time and distance, to oxygen and water. For John, Christ is the Light of the World. Do you see what he is doing?

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John understands that the light is always more powerful than any darkness. Light dispels darkness. Light overcomes

darkness. Light is that which is good, and it comes from God. Now John begins to tell us a story. There was a man who came from God. He is the cousin of Jesus Christ, and he is the forerunner. Here is how John tells it:

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

John the Baptist is a witness, one who will testify to the light. But John is not the true light. That is Jesus, who is the Christ, the Messiah, the Word. John tells us ...

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.

This could be the most important part of all the Prologue. The Word becomes flesh. This is the principle of Incarnation, the divine becomes a human being. Jesus is God made Man. Jesus Christ is God come to earth, and he is not just a spirit walking around and talking like a human being. No, he is a human being, fully, and he is God, fully divine. John shows us ultimate truth in his Prologue. Because God has given us his only and eternal Son, and only because of that, we now are able to see God's glory. John says that this glory is a reflection

of the love that the Father has for the Son. And he says that this love is full of grace and truth.

This, dear friends, is the essential theological message of the entire New Testament. God is love, which John says in his first letter ...

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

So there we have it, all in the first 18 verses of John's Gospel. He ends with these words:

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

But I want you to believe this not just because it is beautiful poetry, or because it is clever, or that it suggests a scientific logic centuries before its time. No, I want you to believe this because it is true—and it is as true for you and me today as it was in the very beginning. AMEN.

999 words