

Recognise, Receive, Rights & Relationship

John 1:1-14

Galatians 3:26 -4:7

Today I am to begin a series where between now and Easter we will journey with John as he journey's with Jesus. We will cover the whole Gospel including three final devotionals in Holy Week: but for now we begin in Advent. Preparing for a new beginning is always a good thing.

John is responsible for five documents in our NT (his Gospel, three letters, and Revelation) and should perhaps be given more prominence than he is!

So what makes John's prologue of His gospel so special? Why does it send a spiritual shiver through our whole being? The answer must be, that John has taken a lifetime to reflect on what he believes to be true about Jesus. This gospel was probably not finished/completed to around AD90, 60 years after the time that Jesus walked Planet Earth. The first verse of his first letter: 1 John 1:1 is utterly consistent to the theme running through all his writing about Jesus: ***That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.***

It is the Word of Life, made flesh in Jesus that John calls us to respond to in these weeks of Advent. In two weeks time I will give you a Tour de force of John 1 in its entirety but for today you will recall being encouraged by your parents to excel at the three 'R's (reading, riting & rithmetic!!) well John offers us a challenge to respond to Him with four R's!! The first part of the prologue crescendos to the challenge: ***read v10-13***

Recognise: if Jesus turned up today would you recognise Him? Even with the sheer wonder of creation before people's eyes they did not recognise their creator! When He came to Planet Earth, He came in a way that people did not expect: a vulnerable, dependant Baby, to parents who almost lost Him to genocide and became refugees in Egypt. Would we recognise Him today? Could He come as a homeless person seeking your loose change? (Matthew 8:20 says He, Jesus, had nowhere to lay His head!) Could He come, as a middle-eastern man we might suspect is a terrorist? Could He come as an eastern European migrant whom we resent because of the scarcity of jobs? Could He come as a Syrian asylum seeker seeking a future for his family out of the horror of that countries genocide?

Let me challenge you all to let Him out of the box you have put Him in: or to get yourself out of your own personal box or comfort zone, and behold Him with new eyes this Christmas!! So recognise His coming, His servants & His work (of the Holy Spirit). For that's the place of new beginnings! In January we will be running a course 'Emmaus, journeying towards faith': a course for seekers, a course to help people open their eyes to Jesus and recognise Him!!

Receive: Of course it's one thing to recognise Him; it's another step entirely to receive Him. John says 'His own did not receive Him': those who had wanted Him to come had got so religious that it had blinded them to Him when He came: scary thought! Keep your life centred on Jesus, not on Church, nor on changing the world or how we do stuff as Christians. Keep your eyes on Him, your heart full of love for Him, and radically desire each day to follow Him and do the things He did, as He promised you would!!

So having recognised Him, make the choice to receive Him into your heart by faith. A present recognised yet unopened is of no use: only

when we open it and truly receive it does it become part of us. So receive Him, Jesus, wholeheartedly and completely.

Rights: it's incredible to me that the one who gave up all His rights to come to Planet Earth (Philippians 2:5-11) is the same person who gives us rights to become Children of God! In a world where people demand their rights, here is Jesus giving us rights, which will last for all eternity. John comments: to those who believed in His Name (His Name means: He (God) saves) He gave the right to become children of God. Then he qualifies that statement by making it clear: not of natural descent (white Anglo-Saxon so I must be a Christian, or because of my parents....). We may or may not have had committed Christian parents but that no more makes them a Christian than going to Macdonald's makes me a hamburger. God has no grandchildren! John also says it's not about a human decision alone: in essence we can't get there on our own; the Holy Spirit work is to show us Jesus and draw us to a place of surrender to Him. Nor is it about a husband's will: harking back to the days when the head of the household made decisions for everyone in that household. Put simply John says: we are 'born of God'. It's His work from conception to birth!! Paul adds to this insight about the rights we receive in Galatians. As we recognise and receive Jesus: he says it like being adopted as sons and daughters of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He says we receive a glorious inheritance, full rights, with all the saints: Wow!!

Relationship: so there it is: it's all about having our relationship with God restored as in the beginning of time, and it's all about His initiative to make this possible by letting the Word become flesh and blood, a human being, to be like us and dwell among us. Yes contrary to popular belief, Almighty God who create you and who made possible our recreation in Jesus and through the cross, desires to be as intimately one with you as Adam and Eve were with Father

and as Jesus was with His Father. So contrary to our celeb culture we behold the *Glory of God* in a helpless babe, a rebellious teenager in the temple, a counter-cultural prophet, priest and king striding terra firma in 1st century Palestine, & an utterly forsaken man upon the cruel cross dying for my sin and yours.

Such a person, such a *God*, is one that I want to have dynamic relationship with and I hope you do too!

Pastor David.

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