

# The Gospel According to JOHN

If you are reading John for the first time, you will find familiar verses and stories such as John 3:16, or Jesus as the Good Shepherd. In congregations using the common lectionary, most of John is read at Sunday worship over the course of three years. John is the Gospel for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

If you have read John many times and are reading it again, you will find something to draw you deeper into the mysteries and glory of God.

John has detailed stories and deep theological reflection. The Holy Spirit and your personality will lead you to focus on the narrative or on the spiritual meaning. I encourage you to read at the level which engages you.

## The Beginning

The Gospel begins with the beginning of all that exists and quickly moves to reveal that Jesus is the Word of God which created all things. In the first 18 verses, the evangelist goes from Creation to Christmas, and introduces the themes of light in the darkness, belief, and rejection.

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things came into being with Him. John 1: 1,3*

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14*

## Who is the writer?

Within the Gospel, the author identifies himself (or herself?) as the witness or disciple who testifies. The Gospel writer is "the evangelist," which means one who communicates good news. There is also an unnamed "beloved disciple." The traditional conclusion is that it is the same person, the apostle John. The evangelist is careful not to name the author or the beloved disciple.

## Revelation & Belief

*Jesus said: "If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." John 14:7*

Each event, each character, each explanation is there to help us believe. Turning water into wine, conversations with Nicodemus at night or the woman at the well, healing, feeding, showing Thomas his wounds after the resurrection are all

ways that the evangelist shows us who Jesus is and the journey of believing and receiving life in Jesus' name.

As you read, look for:

Signs

I AM statements

How many are they? What are they?

## Rejection

When Jesus feeds a large crowd with the five loaves and two fish, people want to be with Jesus. When Jesus says I AM the bread of life that you need, many turn away because his words were hard to accept. Jewish leaders recognize the claim to be God, the I AM. Those who remain say: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. John 6: 68*

The Gospel was likely written around 100 A.D. The Romans had destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Although many Jews did believe and follow, by 100 A.D. the distinction between Judaism and Christianity had widened. The pain of rejection and fear of rejection in families and communities can be felt in this Gospel.

Often when John uses the term, "the Jews", he means the leaders. In later centuries this way of referring to leaders was wrongly used as a reason to mistreat Jews.

Reflecting on the individuals who believe or reject Jesus can help us understand our own journey of faith.