



# Sunday Reflection

## Season of Christmas

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 27 December 2020

# St John the Evangelist

# Christmas 1

As we join together in worship, let us remember the gifts we have been given by God. Let us remind ourselves that God is loving and generous and always wants the best from us and for us.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"If all were written down I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written"** *John 21.25*

### An Illustration to set the scene

A parish secretary was working for her boss, the vicar. He had been asked to collect together his best sermons from his years in the parish into a book for church members to buy.

The secretary had the job of choosing the best sermons from the many he had preached.

How to make the choice?

Some of them she chose because they had good jokes or stories in them; others because they were for special occasions in the church's life.

She put in one Christmas and one Easter sermon, and one for Trinity Sunday. And then there were the ones she just liked, because they spoke to her. Probably someone else would have

chosen differently, but the vicar wrote an introduction explaining why he thought it was the right selection, and in the end she was happy with the book she had helped to produce.

## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

At the end of John's gospel, its author tells us how he has had to select the material to go into his book.

There are lots of stories about Jesus, he says - about things Jesus did, what he said, how he healed and exorcised, and taught and lived and died: "if everyone of them were written down, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that could be written".

Like the other gospel writers, the author has had to be selective.

How has he made his choices? He does not tell us the criteria he has used for deciding what to include, and what order to put everything in, what to summarise and what to extend.

We can only guess that from the gospel itself.

Often, it is the introduction to a book that tells you what the author is aiming to achieve. John's introduction is famous; it tells of the Word of God becoming human, of the light shining in the darkness. And that is what the gospel goes on to explain in more detail.

John's gospel shows the Word made flesh bringing God's word to his people. Jesus is portrayed as teaching his followers about his own nature and the nature of his heavenly father, more explicitly than in the other three gospels. There are, as it were, extended sermons in place of the short stories and sayings of the other gospels. It also shows Jesus the light in conflict with the forces of darkness, usually referred to as "the Jews". The conflict is a running thread throughout the gospel, which comes to a head when the darkness appears to win, and Jesus dies on the cross.

But this gospel also includes some of the most moving stories about Jesus; stories which only this gospel tells, stories which ring with truth, which bring us close to the people around Jesus and to Jesus himself, which speak to our hearts and our lives.

Think of the death of Lazarus, Jesus is own friend, of the grief of Mary and Martha, Martha's anger as she confronts Jesus about his failure to save Lazarus, and her astonishing statement of faith in Him nonetheless.

Think of the man, blind all his life, who receives his sight and provides an opportunity for Jesus's opponents to be shown to be the ones who are really blind.

Think of the encounters after the resurrection:

Mary Magdalene and the garden, her name spoken by the Lord who she thought she had lost forever;

Thomas in the upper room, able finally to affirm his faith; Peter by the Lake, given the chance to undo his threefold betrayal.

Was the author of the gospel there, the "beloved disciple"? Or did he have a gift for perceptive imagination?

We shall never know.

We are assured, however, at the end of the gospel, that the testimony is true. The author may have embellished somethings and omitted others, but it is all in the cause of truth.

Throughout his unique telling of the story of Jesus, he conveys the truth of the one who is the eternal Word made flesh, the one who shines in the darkness, whom the darkness can never defeat.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

John's gospel invites us to listen to the word of God in Jesus. It asks us to use our minds to listen carefully to Jesus is

teaching. It also invites us to let our hearts be touched by the stories of personal encounter.

Ultimately, its author has selected his material for one purpose: to change the lives of his readers, if they will let it. Through it we too can become closer followers of the Word made flesh, the light of the world.

**“If all were written down I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written”** *John 21.25*

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**