

“Becoming new”
By Rev. Frances Savill
January 05, 2025

Readings:

John 1:1-19, Ephesians 1:1-14

I can think of no better passage for the first Sunday in a new year than this passage from John’s gospel.

“In the beginning...”

I long for a new beginning – to know that things, to know that the world, to know that I can be different – and but not just different, but better.

But even more than that, I long to know that life has meaning and purpose, that everything isn’t just random and meaningless.

So, we turn to God’s Word that is written for our comfort and our instruction – we turn to the truth, and the source of meaning.

And we read:

“In the beginning...”

John, the writer, is hoping you will hear Genesis...

“In the beginning God...

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.”

This is a new beginning, this gospel story that is going to unfold.

But it is like a great masterpiece that picks up all the old melodies and refrains from the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, and now puts them into a symphony.

It is little like an unfinished melody, or different movements of music that were incomplete, and now we find its ending, but more, we find whole new harmonies, and instruments added, completing and filling out the whole piece, bringing it together as one great symphony.

The long awaited Messiah; Jesus brings all the parts together, bringing meaning and colour, harmony and beauty to the whole.

In the beginning...says John.

Jesus was in the beginning with God, and Jesus is God, and all that has been created was given life through Him.

A new day is dawning, with the arrival of Jesus.

The light shines in the darkness.

Light is God's first Word that begins to bring order to the chaos, and life to our world.

Jesus again brings light to this world, which brings life to all.

Quickly on the scene with this new beginning is John the Baptizer.

John looks very much like the prophets of old.

If you looked at your Bible as one epic novel, a unified story, you might notice that in the pages before the gospels begin, we have the prophets.

The prophets called the people to repent and turn towards God, and they announced God's promise of a Messiah, one who would come to save His people.

John stands beside them, in the tradition of the prophets and testifies that Jesus is the one.

God's promises find their fulfillment in this One who is the Messiah of God.

Jesus ranks ahead of John the Baptizer because Jesus was before him.

Jesus came to His own people, and they didn't recognize who He was, but to those who did receive Him, to those who accepted Him and followed Him, Jesus gave the gift of being able to become children of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

What we often would like is light shone on the path ahead.

We want to know what the future holds, and how to avoid the problems.

Jesus as the light, shines little light on that subject.

But the promise is that Jesus lives among us.

He was flesh and blood.

He understands us, he understands life in all its messiness and frustrations.

He lived among us, and He still chooses to dwell with his people.

And what Jesus' light does reveal first is God.

Jesus reveals God the Father to us.

No one has seen God, but in Jesus we see the glory of the Father.

We see the nature, and love of God for us.

We see how we are to live in trust and faith.

Next, Jesus' light reveals ourselves to us.

In the light of Jesus we become transparent to ourselves.

Some people prefer the darkness.

Seeing ourselves in the light of Jesus calls us to repent, to turn, to clean house, to change.

It's not at all that Jesus doesn't love us as we are- it is rather that he loves us so much that he wants us to see the truth about our brokenness and sin. Too often we cling to the values of a broken world. Jesus comes to reveal the truth, to set us free, so that we might live out abundant life.

In my work in the military my commanding officer's priorities include wanting our troops to be more resilient, more able to adapt, or deal with the struggles of life, and military in healthier ways, the answer is Jesus.

Jesus' way leads to life, healthier ways of being human, of being in relationships, of coping with struggles.

The answer to all the deep questions of our lives is Jesus- and learning to live life with him leads us to abundant lives.

Doing life with Jesus changes everything, I see the difference in my life, and I see how I am being changed.

John says; “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.”

Truth seems to be in very short supply in our day. Jesus, says John of the gospel, is full of truth, he is the source of the revealed truth of God. Jesus said of himself that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

But Jesus is not just the source of Truth. He is full of graciousness and Truth. Grace has to do with divine favour. Jesus’ brings God’s truth to the world, but He does it in way that also brings God’s divine graciousness. With the truth of Jesus comes gift after gift -given to God’s people who receive them.

Jesus' doesn't throw lightening bolts at people who don't recognize the truth.

He calls and He allows people to turn away.

He invites, and He allows people to learn to trust, haltingly, in fits and starts, but the invitation is always open.

He gave His life so that we would know that we could *always* turn and come to Him.

We have beheld his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

Glory is substantial, it is heavy, it is the brilliance of light, the weight of God's hand laid solidly on your heart.

It is a force that makes rulers cower on their knees. It leaves you breathless, or maybe taking your first real deep breath.

In the beginning...

This is the beginning of a New Year, a new week, a new day.

John's gospel tells us that Jesus is present with us, walking along side of us as we take our first steps.

And our story, our new day finds meaning and a way to walk in abundant life, as we fix our eyes on Jesus and follow Him.

His Way is gracious Truth.

His Way is revealed in the Scriptures- The Bible.

He is the fulfillment of all the promises of God.

He who is the Creator of all things – who was and is and is to come.

He walks with us.

In Him this day has meaning and purpose.

And in learning to do as Jesus did, in learning to walk closely with him, we are changed.

If you get a chance, ask someone who did

Practicing The Way, or ask others how God has changed them in the last year.

And consider yourself how God has changed and is changing you.

Our gracious, faithful Creator, who is also Emmanuel, God with us, walks with us, changes us, calls us towards life.

Whatever this day, this year holds.

Thanks be to God.

