

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

January 3, 2020
Second Sunday after Christmas, Year B

The readings this week:

- Jeremiah 31:7-14
- Psalm 147:12-20
- Ephesians 1:3-14
- John 1:(1-9), 10-18

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Hidden in Plain Sight



He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

~ John 1:10

Have you ever looked for something, turning everything inside out and upside down to find that one thing you seek to no avail? That one thing eludes your grasp and frantic search only to materialize when you stop your feverish hunt. You realize somewhat

chastened that it was there all along, hidden in plain sight and completely accessible. I find this happens to me more than I like to admit. Usually, such frantic searches occur when I am in a hurry, have waited until the last possible minute, or have pushed aside a need, figuring that I have everything under control. The “one thing” is often keys, my calendar or cell phone, or even my glasses.

Occasionally it will be a check that should be deposited or a bill that needs to be paid NOW. Once I even managed to mislay a set of essays for a composition class I was teaching. And here's a kicker: I lost my sunglasses this past summer only to find them perched snugly on top of my own head.

The lessons for this Sunday remind me of searching for something that is right there all along. We look for God in all kinds of places when the Divine Presence is all around us all of the time. I am particularly fond of the opening passage from John's gospel because of its almost lyrical unfolding of how God chooses to be in relationship with creation. The images of “Word” and “light” are infused with meaning, and both are quite necessary for navigating life yet are also quite often overlooked and taken for granted. Jesus, as Word and light, has always been, but because we needed more to see him, God took on physical form, flesh and bone, so that we could have a better chance of seeing what is hidden in plain sight all along.

Through the life, witness, and saving grace of Jesus, we can experience and know the God we cannot see.

John tells us that even though Jesus came among God's beloved people, not all of them accepted him. Not much has changed. Even though we have the witness of 2000-plus years of faithful disciples and also the recorded account of scripture, not all of humankind sees Jesus today. He is truly hidden in plain sight, often inside the carefully preserved and treasured edifices in which God's people gather for worship, even more often in the poor, the lonely, the imprisoned, the widowed and orphaned, and the hungry among us. We see Jesus hidden in plain sight in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and we hear Jesus in the word proclaimed when the Body of Christ gathers for worship.

We need those among us who, like John, can point to the light of Christ and help us see and experience the grace and mercy so freely given. We need to let go of our quest for black-and-white, easy-peasy, and cookie cutter answers that ultimately fail to satisfy and do not illumine the truth of God's love for all of creation. We need the beloved community and the relationships that come from connection within the Body of Christ to help us see Jesus among us and in this world.

Yes, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Creative, creating, redeeming, and loving always and forever, Immanuel draws the world into eternal and right relationship. The Word made flesh seeks to turn our mourning into joy, to comfort us, to give us gladness instead of sorrow, to join the dance of the cosmos. And we, dear friends, like John before us are called to point to this Jesus, this savior of the nations who is hidden in plain sight and who will one day make this world right.



~ Sharron R. Blezard, [Stewardship of Life](#)

Reflecting on the Word



___ 1st Reading: [Jeremiah 31:7-14](#)

Why does our passage refer to Jacob (Israel) as the “chief of nations?” Why is Israel encouraged to proclaim in joy, “Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel?” Why doesn’t God just save them? The passage makes specific mention of the blind, lame and pregnant woman making the journey back to Israel. Why is this important? What are some of the ways we experience our own exile today? What does that say to us about how God might bring us back from our own exiles? In what way might you need help allowing God to be your father? How do we as the church participate in God’s work of gathering people? How does joy become an ongoing reality in the life of the church? [A Plain Account](#)

___ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 147:12-20](#)

For what reasons does the Psalmist say we should praise God? For what reason should we praise God in light of God’s attention to all creation and not just the powerful or revered? How should we find God’s power in creation and in humanity? To whom or to what should our praise be lifted? What “things” does this Psalm remind us that our praise for them is only in God? How does this passage reaffirm the greatness of God’s chosen people even in the midst of the dark parts of our life? How is this psalm a reminder to us to offer praise to God? How are we invited praise Him? What does that look like in your life? [St. John’s Episcopal](#)



Praying Toward Sunday

Holy God,
We are caught in the tension of
light and shadow, death and resurrection.

You spoke the world into being,
you illuminated the universe by your very speech,
then filled the void with life.
Indeed, you have filled the void
of darkness and death,
the empty promises of the abyss,
with new life and new creation.

We look to you in the space between the world and
the Kingdom,
longing for the fulfillment of your word
in the work of the Holy Spirit
and the reign of Christ, our Creator and King.
Amen

~ Thomas Turner, [everyday liturgy](#)

In the beginning a silent soundscape,
a procession of absolute stillness,
unfolding spheres of mystery
from veiled unknowable
to startling specific,
the Word descends
embeds,
gestates,
unfurls as
grace upon grace,
deep rooted love within love.
And so, heaven and earth unite
in the Word made flesh dwelling
among us. Not then, not now,
not once. But evermore.

~ Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

___ 3rd Reading: [Ephesians 1:3-14](#)

Why do you think it is important to at least understand that Ephesians 1:3-14 is all one sentence that Paul wrote? What do you think was Paul’s intentions in writing this truth with such odd sentence structure? What does it mean to be “in Christ”? What are the blessings that we have from being “in Christ”? Paul says that “in Christ” every spiritual blessing is available to us. How does he explain the participation of the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in those blessings? In verse 6 Paul says that we have been “accepted” or “blessed” by the Father. This word is used only one other time in the Bible which is Luke 1:28. What are the implications of this? How does God’s acceptance of us contrast with the society that we live in? Why is it important to understand that God has blessed us “according” to His riches and not “out” of His riches? How should this impact the way that we live? How does this impact the way we view our “inheritance” in this passage? [Clover Sites](#)

___ 4th Reading: [John 1:\(1-9\), 10-18](#)

What do verses 1, 2 and 14 tell us about the nature of Jesus? What work does verse 3 attribute to Jesus? How is Christ the true light of every man? How/in what ways is Jesus your light? The Jews had been waiting for hundreds of years for the Messiah to come. Why did they not recognize Jesus? Why don’t people recognize Jesus today? What do we see about rejection in verse 12? How does one receive Jesus? What does John mean by “born of God”? How is this unique to Christianity? In what ways do you feel the fullness of God’s blessings in your life this day? Do you see other people as “bearers of divine mystery”? What good news are you waiting to hear, or waiting to see fulfilled? What difference has the light shining on your life made in the life of the world? [Officers Christian Fellowship](#), [Weekly Seeds](#)