

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 43

Gospel of John 16-20

This week's reflections were written by
Lynne Bandy.

She is the pastor of the Rockwood-
Stone Pastoral Charge.

*See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
Isaac Watts 1707*

General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter
and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God
(including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn
more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your
prayer today.

Monday

John 16

Are you losing some traction or focus
in this disciplined reading of the *New
Testament in A Year*? Well, it's hard
work. Maybe you can empathize with
the disciples as Jesus' long farewell
speech continues, in this most
unusual - and beautiful (in my
opinion) of the gospels.

John doesn't make it easy for us. His
language is precise and weighty, but,
even in our confusion and weariness,
we still lean forward at the Upper
Room table to hear the conversation.

"I will see you again," says Jesus
(vs.22). Jesus tells them that he is
leaving but will send the parakletos
(counselor, helper, advocate,
comforter), the Holy Spirit. I've
always liked the image of "comforter,"
for soon the ugly events of Holy
Week will shake the disciples like
winter's cold wind, and they will need
comfort, solace, strength, guidance.

*The Holy Spirit is coming. Are you
thinking of William P. Young's book
"The Shack"?*

Tuesday

John 17

Some have said that this passage
should be called the Lord's Prayer
and the other prayer (Our Father...)
should be called the Disciples'
Prayer.

Listen to Jesus as he prays for
himself, for his followers and for the
church. It's a remarkably intimate
conversation, peppered with John's
familiar theme of 'glory' and 'the hour'
and 'unity' among believers. This
unity is a reflection of the oneness
Jesus shares with God. He also
prays for protection for them because
he knows the future and its risk.

We recognize our own United Church
motto here in vs.21, 'that they may all
be one' - there's that unity theme
again. The prayer gives us a unique
picture of the community Jesus died
for - one which is very realistic ('the
world has hated them' vs.14) and
also very otherworldly too (vs. 24 -
'with me to see my glory.')

Does this describe your church?

Wednesday

John 18

From the deep intimacies of prayer, we turn to the high drama of the events of Holy Week, beginning with the betrayal and arrest of Jesus and his trial before Pilate.

Don't worry if you can't follow the intricacies of the various courts. But do appreciate and note John's deft narrative skill with its layers and levels of meaning. Peter denies Jesus while Jesus is being interrogated. Lamplight flickers, weapons flash, a slave named Malchus (only John gives us this name, an interesting detail) is wounded, the shadows lengthen, a rooster crows.

Jesus stands alone, as John knows he must. Jesus - the bread, the light, the gate, the good shepherd, the resurrection, the life, the way, the truth and the vine - is the only standard against which all belief and unbelief are measured.

Thursday

John 19

We all know how this ends. John says that Jesus comes to this chosen hour of glorification with his eyes open.

He chooses sacrificial death like the lamb slain for the Passover meal. Jesus dies on the day of preparation when the Passover is made ready.

The blood and water which flow from his pierced side parallel the 'mingled blood' caught by the priest at Passover.

His legs are not broken after death so that, like the lamb, he would be intact.

This whole chapter, like so much of John's gospel is dense with Old Testament reference and allusion. It's so that all might realize how all of scripture foreshadows that moment at the Place of the Skull.

Jesus is killed with the mocking title 'The King of the Jews' written in the three languages of the culture so that everyone gets the joke. We wonder about what kind of King Jesus is? John says "This is the man" (vs. 5).

Friday

John 20

From beginning to end, the gospel of John is urging the reader to come and see Jesus and believe. It's also true that Jesus' death and resurrection explains Jesus' life: only as they look back, and remember scripture, do the disciples understand what Jesus meant in his stories and actions. It's as though, after the resurrection, some of the disciples say "Ahh now I get it!"

I'm always fascinated by the laundry details that John includes - they take me back to the transfiguration in Mark 9: 2. Details matter. On Easter morning, Jesus shrugs off the grave clothes, the fabric wound around him; and takes the face covering off and leaves. Surely this is nothing less than God at work.

The disciples seem baffled, but to be fair, never once (in John's gospel) does he speak of rising from death. From Mary and Thomas we discover the various ways that faith is quickened.