

Rev. George Arceneaux

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Christmas 2

You know, historically... I haven't been a huge fan of John's gospel. There's something that always felt a little too high and mighty for me. And part of that is because John really leans into Jesus being God. Jesus always seems to know what's happening and doesn't seem to struggle as much as in the other Gospels. Like, if you look at this one miracle that Jesus does in helping a blind man to see, in John, Jesus helps this dude somewhat grossly but also a little beautifully. He spits in the mud and puts it in the guys eyes and tells him to wash them in the pool of Siloam which makes this fella able to see. Great! Well Mark isn't so clean cut. You see, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus once again spits in this dude's eyes, and asks hey hows that? And the guy says well, I can see I think? But why are all those trees walking around? Jesus looks around, notices that those are actually people this guy is looking and at says, "let me give you another once over", spits in his eyes again, and then this man is cured.

In at least Mark, Jesus is a little grungier whereas with John, well Jesus is pretty immediately a huge, huge deal.

And so the way I feel about the synoptic Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke as they relate to John... well about Star Wars and then the prequel trilogy. The first three movies are stone, cold Classics . And I've always thought the prequels

were... there. That's a little bit strong of a take that I'm not saying entirely reflects my feeling on John, but we're in the ballpark.

But you know the funny thing about those prequel movies? People look back on them and younger generations are growing up with them too, and people kinda like those newer Star Wars movies. And as time goes on, I gotta say, I'm liking those new Star Wars movies more and more.

I used to think that John's opening was too apologetic, was too focused on proving that Jesus and the burgeoning Christianity was connected to Judaism. Like in our Gospel today, I felt like it was downright pretentious to rewrite the Genesis story of creation, a story that was already thousands of years old when the author of John's Gospel came around. And it's something I think about because this was totally a thing that early Christian theologians did, Irenaeus being an example . It also doesn't help his case that the passion narrative of John comes off as anti-semitic as it gets as it blames "the Jews" for killing Jesus, seeming to blame the Jewish faith rather than the greater emphasis on the powerful elite executing Christ with the consent of a public crowd. There's a reason we shout "crucify him, crucify him" when we get to the passion narrative in Holy Week.

But, as time has gone on, I've been fortunate to be educated by others on why John is actually really really good. John is the only Gospel that has the raising of Lazarus and that imagery of Jesus weeping, it has the only account of the wedding at Cana, thus evidencing that Jesus was open to partying. John's Gospel gives women

the most voice with the most spoken lines of dialogue from Mary, Martha, Mary Magdalene and more.

And as I've gotten to be more open to this Gospel, this morning's reading seems to represent something that is so important, so integral to at least my understanding of faith. And why I believe in the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather than cynically sit in a perspective of John as simply being a revisionist of history, who paints over the original story of creation with the Jesus brush....

Well John's words remind us that before there was anything, before there was even matter.... Before, there was the earth before there was Life. There was the word. And the light shines in the darkness that has come into the world this past December 25th. And John says that this light is for everyone. And as far as I understand God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit to be, and what they hope for, that Light was the light of love.

John's Gospel reminds us that ahead of anything that we do and prioritize in our lives, ahead of any authority that says we should lead our lives in a particular fashion, be it according to the precepts of a political party, or an institution, like even that of the church, before we sign up for anything, John, reminds us that the first law must check first is Word of love, that preceded everything and which is the truest measure of our actions' worth.

This morning, I urge you to remember in all that you do, and all that you undertake, as I seek to do the same and ask your help in doing, ask if it is motivated by that first Word of love spoken before the beginning of time that came into the world at Christmas.

Remember that before there was anything before, there was all of this, even before there was religion in the church, there was love. So let's do our best individually and as a community to live that first word out. Amen.