

Our Mission:
*To share Christ with
the world and grow
disciples for Jesus*

Peace Lutheran Church

Praxis (Practical Application of Theory)

Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

This is a deliberate effort on John's part to echo Genesis 1. In John's prologue, he speaks of Jesus being the WORD. For the Greeks, 'Word' is indicative of the reason behind the spoken word. The 'Word' provides order to God's creation. For the Jews, 'Word' is the means by which God creates all that exists as well as the means by which God governs humanity through the giving of the Law. For the Jews, 'Word' is the means by which God fulfills God's purposes. (Indeed the rabbis would speak of the Law as 'light' and 'life' for the sake of the world, and that it was God's firstborn through which God created the heavens and the earth.)

Theology Connection:

We see in this prologue several themes that will become common in John's Gospel. It begins with the sense of a 'Cosmic Christ.' John provides a portrait of the Christ as completely self-aware and fully in control at all times. A second theme is the contrast between light and dark. Even greater than the lights that shine down from the heavens, Jesus is the true light whose existence stretches beyond creation itself. Another is that Jesus' mission is to bring life to the world. Salvation is not something that we simply anticipate, but a daily celebration of life as God has always intended.

Application:

How do we talk about Jesus? Is he our best friend? Is he our judge? Is he one that has to forgive us when no one else will, or is he the one who challenges us to do better? John wants us to hold in tension the divine and human expression of God. John wants us to understand that Jesus knew the hearts of humanity and nonetheless entered into this mission for our sake. John wants us to appreciate the love that is behind God's action. How do we talk about Jesus—what is our Gospel?

The TEXT: John 1:1-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

ADULT

Prayer: Dear God, please open my heart to hear and understand your word of love and salvation. Let my response be praise and joyful service. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Recently, I've started using Biblehub.com to help me understand the Greek or Hebrew meaning of the words we are focusing on in the Narrative Lectionary in the Praxis Page. I am always astounded at what I learn and it deepens my understanding of scripture.

For example, the word "life" in this passage is "zoe". It means both physical life in the present **and** spiritual life particularly future. The word "light" is "phos" meaning a "source of light" or "radiance". The word "darkness" is "skotia" meaning "spiritual darkness". The word "overcame" is "katelaben" meaning "to take eagerly", "seize" or "possess". This brings us back to Pastor Al's question, "How do we talk about Jesus?"

1. Where does John state that "zoe" or life come from?
2. How do we respond to the author of physical and spiritual life?

Pastor Al states that another theme in the Gospel of John "...is the contrast between light and dark."

1. According to John, who brought the "phos" or light to the world and all mankind?
2. What did the "skotia" or darkness try to do to the light?
3. How do we respond to the light of the world?
4. What provides more "phos" or light in our personal lives, the lives of our friends, families, co-workers, our community, state, nation, and world? What role can we play in making the world a little more "phos" or light?

YOUTH

Let's read John 1:1-18.

John is trying to explain to us that Jesus is God in Verses 1 and 2. He was in the beginning with God. He makes the point that the Father is distinct from the Son, and the Son distinct from the Father. They are equally God, yet they are separate persons. They have differing roles, yet they are the same. Jesus existed from the beginning, he was with God in the beginning, and he was God.

Verse 14 tells us: He became a man—he did not just appear as a man. He was one of us. He is 100% God and 100% man.

So how do you recognize Jesus today?

How do we receive Jesus?

Let us pray:

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus your only son to save us and thank you for your grace. Please help us recognize Jesus in our daily lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

CHILDREN

READ & SUMMARIZE:

God has always, and will always be with us. He was here long before we ever were! We would have nothing if it weren't for God creating the earth and all of its amazing things, including you! God sent a man named John, to tell everyone about all that God has done. John was not Jesus, but he still came to create followers of Christ. He wanted to tell everyone about what was to come. Jesus was already living, but the people of the world didn't know about him yet. Jesus Christ was born of God, not of man. Jesus lives among us, and we will get to see how glorious he is. He will show us all of God's grace and truth. No one has ever seen God, except those who have seen Jesus, because Jesus is God!

THINK:

- What did we learn about loving our neighbors from this story?
- What does this lesson teach us about who God is?
- How do you know when God is calling you to do something?
- How does God protect us?
- How can we tell people about Jesus?
- What are some things we can do to show God how much we love him?

REMEMBER:

God is the Creator of all things, without him, there would be nothing! When we follow Jesus, he will lead us on the right path. He will walk beside us and give us the strength that we need!

PRAY:

Dear Jesus, thank you for a new day. Please go before me and light the way. Thank you for protecting me. Thank you for guiding me, and thank you for loving me. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen!