

October 23

John 1-4

Hey there everyone, Klint Bitter here with your Project 4:4 daily accelerator for October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Today our reading has us in the book of John. Wow, is this chunk of Scripture packed?! There is so much depth and richness in these few pages; we won't be able to even scratch the surface in our time here. So, I'll focus on what I think will be most beneficial as you read throughout the rest of the gospel accounts and the NT.

You may have noticed that John's writing style is a little different than what we've seen so far from Matthew and Luke – where the bulk of our NT reading has been so far. Like I've noted, Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels because they present different views on almost identical events. John's gospel is different. There are a few key events that we'll find in each of the four gospels, but the bulk of John's gospel is unique. John, it seems, is writing as an apologist. The way he starts his gospel and weaves thematic content makes it plain that he's working with the facts of the gospel but is committed to making sense to the philosophically trained mind of the Greek.

Many scholars believe that John was the last to write his gospel, suggesting that he used the earlier works as a chronological and eventual frame. The idea is that he would have read the other gospel accounts and brought his unique contribution mentioning things that hadn't been brought up before and providing a different perspective from the synoptics. I should note that, while that's the traditionally held view, there has been a lot of discussion about that date of origin. Some argue that it's earlier in origin as opposed to later. All of that is fine, but the bottom line is that John's gospel is a remarkable piece of the inspired Word of God.

In addition to its inclusion of events only recorded here, John's gospel has a notably different feel. For example, John records some long conversations Jesus had. Conversations like the ones with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman at the well from today's reading. Another thing you'll notice – though it's harder to pick out chronologically – is that John doesn't record any of Jesus' parables.

All of that is very interesting. But I really love the way John clearly states the purpose for his writing. It's so well summed up at the end of his book when he says, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name." – John 20:30-31. That really IS the point, isn't it?

Well, there are two portions of our reading that I want to touch on today. First is Jesus' very first recorded miracle: turning water into wine. It's such an interesting exchange, if you have time, go back and study it again. Jesus would perform many miracles – which John calls signs in his book – throughout his ministry. This one

seems a little unusual in that, Jesus kind of backs into it under pressure from his mom. The water to wine miracle as always stood out as an unusual one to include.

What sticks out to me after a little bit of study is one way that this miracle really is representative of Jesus' mission. It's all about conversion. Water being changed into wine is certainly easier than a sinner being changed into a saint. But that's exactly what the life, death and resurrection of Jesus would accomplish.

The other thing you'll want to notice about that passage is the impact it had on the disciples. The Scripture says that, "he revealed his glory and the disciples placed their faith in him." You'll see this common thread with all the miracles Jesus performs. The purpose of miracles is to prove Jesus' identity and to help people put their faith in him.

The other portion of our reading we simply have to point to is John chapter 3. This is one of the great chapters of the Bible. In it, we find perhaps the most succinct summation of the Gospel message in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

There is so much we can unpack in this one, powerful sentence. We get God's motivation for the incarnation: love. We understand much about God's character, right here as we learn God is full of love and generous. We see that God is willing to pay a high price so that people can live, united with him in everlasting life. We see that, contrary to the man-made religions of the world, works – our merits – are not the key to heaven. Belief is. This is the good news. It was revolutionary good news then and it's revolutionary good news now. The target reveals another powerful theme highlighted in the book of John. If you take a close look at the words "the world" and "whoever", we begin to understand that this Kingdom is of a different sort. John will champion this idea throughout his book.

But, don't be mistaken. In this chapter we get the good news, but the good news is so good because there's also bad news. And that is the cost of not believing is eternal condemnation – that anyone who has not believed in Christ is already under the sentence of that condemnation. This is alarming; humanity is going the wrong direction, hopelessly lost and wandering ever farther away from her Creator. Without a re-orientation, a new road to travel, that outcome won't change. John 3:16 is a powerful expression of the love of God and in the following verses; we're reminded that you can't separate God's love from his other attributes – namely His justice and holiness.

This is the gospel. This is the very good news. That God entered into our hopeless estate and offers us life. Later John will record Jesus saying, "...I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." It's good news for our lives here and now and for our lives in eternity to come.

We'll stop here today. This is Klint Bitter encouraging you to rest in the good news today.