

AFF: Advent 2022 The Gospel of John

Week #2 Chapters 1-12 The Book of Signs

The Seven Signs

- GK. Semeion = sign (contained in 1st half of Gospel)
- Signs of the Logos parallel the signs performed by Moses during the Exodus that likewise revealed the glory and power of God working through Moses

First Sign: The Wedding at Cana (John 2: 1-11)

- The wedding itself
- Couple not identified
- Mary doesn't want family to be embarrassed, but Jesus sees it as none of his concern
- "My hour has not yet come" presumes that his Hour has something to do with wine
- The Hour
- John reveals 2 dimensions of the Hour: historical and liturgical
- Historical Hour
- The appointed time of Jesus' Passion, the climactic phase of his mission
- Before his Hour comes, all attempts to entrap and arrest Jesus fail
- The historical Hour begins at the start of Passion (Holy) Week.
- In his historical Hour, Jesus will suffer, die on a cross, and be buried
- Liturgical Hour
- Connected to Christian worship
- The liturgy in which worldwide Christians worship and Jesus pours out his blood
- Jesus, like a grain of wheat, will die, be buried in the earth, and will enable all nations to rise into new life. The wheat for us is the Bread of Life in the Eucharist
- Both dimensions of the Hour are part of the One Paschal Mystery
- The Sign at the Wedding
- *Lumen Gentium* (62) the Dogmatic Constitution, principal documents of Vatican II (Pope Paul VI Nov. 21, 1964) declared Mary to be the "Advocate" both during her time on earth and now in heaven. She is humanity's Advocate
- 6 stone jars holding a total of 120 gallons
- Recalls (Ex. 7:19) First Plague = water into blood

Second Sign Jesus heals the Official's Son (John 4: 46-54)

- Official of Herod Antipas
- Healing from a distance (miracle in absentia)
- Jesus says "your son will live" (word is spoken and miracle occurs)
- Miracle within a miracle: the son lives and the father gains faith in Jesus

Third Sign Jesus heals the paralytic in Jerusalem (John 5: 1-9)

- Jewish feast in Jerusalem and Jesus enters the city through the Sheep Gate (NE wall)
- Man has been crippled for 38 years
- He spends his time by the Pool of Bethesda

- Jewish tradition: healing on the Sabbath can only be done in a situation of threat of death
- Man has no faith and he is a “man of excuses”
- Possibility that he may not want to be healed, so Jesus treats his healing differently
- He does not know who Jesus is but after he learns it is Jesus, he identifies him to the Pharisees
- Jesus’ healing of this man makes clear that one does not have to have faith to be healed

Fourth Sign Multiplying of Loaves (John 6: 1-14)

- Miracle serves as a prelude to Bread of Life Discourse
- Barley loaves = food of animals and the poor
- 5 loaves for 5,000 men parallels Elisha with 20 barley loaves and 100 men (II Kings 4: 42-44)
- In his writings, the Venerable Bede makes this connection:
 - 5 loaves of bread = the Torah
 - 2 fish = 2 texts (Prophets and Psalms)
 - Little boy = Jewish people
- Chapter 6 marks the hinge on which John’s gospel turns from a time of acceptance and popularity to the darkest instances of offense and rejection
- Andrew sees and reports the boy’s food basket
- Jesus enacts the miracle by simply giving thanks
- Leftovers gathered up (as was tradition) for the slaves
- Key to understanding is the GK word for basket: kophinos = small wicker pail-size basket. 12 small pails were collected, exactly the right amount for the 12 disciples (serving as slaves)
- Jesus slips away as the people are over-excited and want Jesus to declare himself King

Fifth Sign Jesus walks on water (John 6: 16-21)

- As Jesus walks out to the boat, the disciples become frightened.
- “It is I” recalls the words of Yahweh to Moses
- The divinity inherent in the name “I AM” is manifested in Jesus defying natural law to walk on water
- “do not be afraid” – literal GK text is: “I AM, no fear”
- Indicates Jesus complete divinity
- John omits the action of Peter attempting to walk on the water himself

Sixth Sign Restoration of Blind Man’s Sight (John 9: 1-41)

- Rabbis taught that people could sin even before birth
- Jesus mixes clay and spittle, just as the Sacraments use common materials as the tangible element
- “go and wash” in the Pool of Saloam. Siloam = “sent” Pool reported to have healing powers
- When the blind man leaves Jesus to wash, he has not seen Jesus. So when the Pharisees ask him who healed him, he doesn’t know
- People’s perception of Jesus increases as story moves along
 - Vs. 11 = perceived as a man
 - Vs. 17 = perceived as a prophet
 - Vs. 33 = perceived as from God

- Vs. 38 = called “Lord”
- Pharisees haggle over his sinning on the Sabbath (picks up his mat = work)
- 4: issue for fear of being removed from the synagogue and the Jewish community
- The questioning and haggling goes on far too long....it gets ridiculous and the blind man is sometimes sarcastic and sometimes funny
- Blind man is both healed from his blindness and gains salvation
- Major question in this sign is whether or not sin causes illness
- Is it his sin, his parents’ sin, or does sin not in reality cause illness

Seventh Sign Raising of Lazarus (John 11: 17-44)

- Lazarus of Bethany. 2 sisters: Martha is the one who runs the house and serves. Mary is the one who anointed Jesus with oil and dried his feet with her hair (an event of which Jesus made a great commendation)
- A dark side to this miracle is that it provided more Jewish opposition that will ultimately result in the death of Jesus
- Precedent to this is found with miracles of Elijah and Elisha (II Kings 4: 32-27)
- Jesus does not allow death to be Lazarus’ ultimate fate at this time, but raises him, affording others the opportunity to believe
- Jesus’ delay proves fatal for Lazarus, but this delay is no mistake. The delay is to generate a stronger faith on the part of the disciples
- “fallen asleep” is a euphemism that Jesus uses and is as always misunderstood. Disciples don’t understand.
- When they finally understand, they will “go and die with him” because they are convinced that Jesus will be arrested in Bethany and they will have to run for their lives.
- Jewish burial
 - Length of 4 days was believed to be sufficient for major decay to set in
 - Body wrapped in shroud with strips of cloth around extremities, covered in spices and perfumes
- Allegorically (*Glossa Ordinaria*)
 - 4 days in tomb signifies:
 - 1) original sin
 - 2) violation of natural law
 - 3) violation of written law of Moses
 - 4) despising the gospel of grace
- 11:32 Jesus is troubled (he is angry!) He is angry with the neighbors who have come to weep with Mary and Martha and will be the same people who will betray him and call for his death
- “Jesus wept” translation is not of despair but love and sympathy
 - GK word is edakrysen = tear
 - Mary’s weeping is klaio = outburst of sobbing
- Jesus’ encounter with Martha
 - Martha’s is a black and white world and Jesus didn’t show up on time
 - Martha says more than she truly believes
- Many believed that the sick could be healed, but few believed that the dead could be raised

- Death is only for the glory of God. It has had no power since the Incarnation
- This short narrative points to a deep theological mystery: Jesus is fully human in all but sin and he has the full range of human emotion
- The Logos, in a loud voice, commands Lazarus to “come out”
- When called by the Logos, Lazarus has no choice but to come out
- This is the climactic sign in the gospel, reaching all the way back to the Prologue
- This is the miracle that leads directly to the cross
- John says that Jesus loves Lazarus, but his delay seems to deny that. It is also with us. We beg God for help and he delays....but there is always a reason