

## JOHN 1:1 In The Beginning was the Word

The Gospel reading this morning is known as the prologue to John's Gospel. It's deep! We could meditate on it and ponder over it for weeks or months, and still not come close to plumbing its depths.

Both Augustine and Chrysostom were reported to have said, "It is beyond the power of man to speak as John does in his prologue." In other words, it is God-breathed. SO God-breathed!

John Calvin, writing about the the prologue, said, "Rather should we be satisfied with this heavenly oracle, knowing that it says much more than our minds can take in."

A more recent commentator, Roger Fredrikson, said this: "John has caught the sweep and wonder of the history of salvation and shared it in the form of a hymn. All through the prologue he is setting forth the career of the Incarnate Word in simple, powerful phrases—**"the light shining in the darkness," "became flesh and dwelt among us," "full of grace and truth," "declaring the Father," some "did not receive Him," but others were "born of God."** The prologue is far more than an introduction to the Gospel. It is really a dramatic summary, a revelation, of all that will take place throughout the earthly ministry of our Lord."

John begins his prologue with the disarmingly simple words, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."**

I'd like us to just take a nibble this morning, and reflect on this one verse.

When we think of words, we usually think of them as a means to communicate. They can be spoken, written, signed. They can be trivial and almost meaningless, or then again, they can be very powerful indeed! Words have the power to build us up, and they have the power to tear us down.

I have an early memory of when I was in 1st class at school. The teacher had set us a task to paste little strips of coloured paper on a drawing of a chicken that she'd given each child. It took a long time! (I suspect she had some work to do at her desk...) When we finished, we were to take them to her desk for her to check. She looked at my chicken, looked at me, smiled, and said, "That is SUCH a lovely chicken." Well! My little heart swelled with pride. I felt so special. I went back to my seat glowing inside. Such is the power of words...

And of course we know that words can be as destructive as they can be affirming. Hurtful, damaging words cannot be unsaid. We need to be so careful of the things we say in anger.

However, when John uses this term, he means so much more than what we understand by words. The English language consists of more than a million words. I'm convinced that some people use every one of them....

The Hebrew language of John's day had only 10,000 or so. This actually put a different light on the use of words. It might be hard for us to understand, but to a Hebrew, speech carried far more weight than just description, or the expression of needs or feelings, or trivial comments about the weather.

To quote Fredrikson again, he says: 'The Semitic root for "word," *dabar*, also meant "thing," "affair," "event," or "action." A word spoken was a happening. Once it had been uttered, it could not be torn from the event that it evoked. Thus, when Isaac had blessed Jacob and then later discovered that Jacob had cleverly stolen his twin brother Esau's birthright, he could not recall his words of blessing, even though Esau pleaded with his aged father to do this. The words had gone forth and the blessing stood ([Gen 27:32-38](#)).

A little light went on for me when I read this. Think about the creation story. The amazing, incredible, creative force of God came forth through God speaking, through his word. "God said, 'Let there

be light' and there was light.” Such creative power and beauty came into being through God’s spoken word!

Throughout the Old Testament, the Word of God was intertwined with Hebrew history. God spoke and things happened. His words were never trivial. At God’s word, Abraham left his people to become the father of the Hebrew. The Plagues of Egypt came forth at God’s word. God revealed his mind to the prophets, and as they spoke his word, the nation was called back to God, or consigned to judgement.

So when John wrote these opening words in his Gospel, it would have evoked a consciousness of God’s involvement in their history. Before Jesus came the Jews were parched with thirst. They longed to drink from the Word of God; that word from their Creator which brought about their connectedness and intimacy with him.

There is yet another layer of meaning in this first verse of John’s prologue. The Gospel was written in Greek, not Aramaic, and so the Greek term used for the Word is *logos*.

In Greek thought, *logos* meant the reason of God (their concept of God) - which controlled the constant change in the world, and the mind of God which was the eternal principle of order in the universe. For the Greeks, it was *logos* which brought order out of chaos. Not so far removed from Jewish thought, really.

So when John said, “In the beginning was the *logos* and the *logos* was God, and the *logos* was with God” -he captured the imagination of both Hebrew and Greek.

We could keep digging and peeling off layer after layer of meaning in this verse. But let’s stop here for a moment , and see where these thoughts might feed us in our own walk with God.

In the reading - *logos* is Jesus. Jesus is God’s revelation, or God’s communication to us.

If we skip to v.18 we read this: **No one has ever seen God, the one and only Son, who is himself God, has made him known.**

**1. So, one very important thing that affects our own Christian walk is knowing that Jesus speaks to us of the Father - and reveals him to us.**

Every now and then, I'll speak to someone who will tell me that they believe in God, but that they don't really see the relevance of Jesus. Spirituality without Jesus is a very 'thin' spirituality. It is attempting to relate to a God who has no substance. He is simply a concept or a belief. Once we embrace the reality of Jesus, and he becomes part of our lives, God also becomes very real, and very personal.

As we read the Gospels and come to know Jesus, we are coming to know God. We see in Jesus' earthly ministry, as he interacts with people, the heart and the compassion of God; we see the wisdom of God; we see the power of God; we see the love of God. It's all there in Jesus.

Which reminds me of a story...

Once upon a time, in a little village in Spain, a mother with 6 children gave birth to identical twins. The family was poor, and she could not feed them, so though it broke her heart, she gave them up for adoption. One was called Juan, the other Amal. Many years later, when the children were grown, the parents had the opportunity to meet their boys. However, only Juan made it, Amal missed his plane. The mother was so sad. The father comforted her. "There, there," he said. "Look at it this way. If you've seen Juan, you've seen Amal."

If we know Jesus - we know God. As we're told in the book of Hebrews, **"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."**

**2. A second thing that we can take with us into our lives from this verse is that Jesus is still God's word to us today. He speaks to us today. Jesus is the same 'yesterday, today & forever'**

God's words to us are life giving, and often life changing! Have you ever heard God speak to you? If not, know that it is something we can all learn to do. It takes focus, and a little practice.

I was cooking dinner the other night, and Jay called out something from the other room. The range hood was going, and the chicken was sizzling in the wok. I knew he was speaking to me, but the other noises around me were so loud, I couldn't make out what he was saying.

To hear God's voice, it really helps to remove distractions - particularly if it's not something we are used to doing. It's hard to hear God's voice if there is a lot going on around us, vying for our attention.

We also need to realise that God rarely speaks audibly, nor are his words 'in our face' so to speak. God's words to us more often than not, come to us through the medium of our own thoughts. We need to be aware of that little thought that settles in our heart, that little nudge within that may be suggesting we do something godly.

Of course God also speaks through the Bible, and through sermons, and through Christian friends - but he will also speak within if we are alert to his voice.

I find it helps at times to write down what I *think* God might be saying to me, and then I can analyse it later. God will never contradict what he has revealed to us in the Scriptures.

To hear God speak, we need a quiet place. We need time. We need to be still. Jesus often said to his disciples - draw aside with me and rest awhile. He says that to us also. If we will listen, we will hear God speak.

As Christians, we are in a unique position. The Word, the *logos* of God - Jesus - actually lives within us. As we interact with him, he reveals more and more to us about the Father.

When he speaks, things happen. Things change. WE change. As he speaks, we are invited into a closer and more intimate friendship with him.

One verse - and it has so much more to say!

As we move into 2016, if we make no other New Year's resolution, let's at least determine to give more time and space to hearing God speak to us. That's certainly one of mine this year.

Let's pray.