

Sermon – Pastor Brutlag  
Sunday, April 19, 2020

John's gospel is like a garden, beautifully landscaped in great detail, drawing ones attention from one stunning section to another, each unique within its own, but having connection to others. The theme of one section can be found in others, suggesting that there's more there than one can get in just one look. Each visit teases out more beauty, and hints that one will never fully catch it all.

And, gazing upon John's landscape, these pointed words stand out: *"...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and that by believing you may have life in His name"* John 20.31

First up, John would have us see Jesus identified as the Creator of the world: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made.*

This picture of Jesus takes us back to the first landscape ever recorded - Genesis 1-3. Here we get the first glimpse of John's fascination with the number seven, for in Genesis 1 we see Jesus, the Creator of the Universe say: "Let there be..." and by the power of His word alone 'there was'...for six days. And lastly, on the sixth day: *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."* The work of Creation was finished...declared "very good"...and *'on the seventh day God rested from all the work He had done.'*

In the landscape of John's gospel one finds several number of sevens, each group of seven scattered among other groups of seven, inviting to be connected in a way that enlightens those who appreciate a scavenger hunt. There are seven feasts – seven I Am sayings – seven witnesses – seven word pictures – seven signs [parables]. John intends all groups of seven to lead us to this truth: *"these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and that by believing you may have life in His name"*

Seven is God's number, the number of completeness and [perfection](#) (both physical and spiritual). It reminds us that God, out of grace, leans toward us to bless us. John tell us that the Creator of the World *'became flesh and dwelt among us'* that He is the *'lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'*, that He was sent *'not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved'*. The authority and power of the Creator's voice says *'my sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand.'* echoing Isaiah 43: *'fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.'* Whoever believes *'that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God may [will] have life in His name.'*

There seems one last group of seven hiding in plain sight, but takes some searching none-the-less. John 12.1 announces *"Six days before the Passover."* The Creator of the World soon comes into Jerusalem. Somewhere in this week is a 'supper' at which Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. The day the Creator of the World dies is called *'the Day of Preparation'*. We know it as Good Friday...the sixth day... On the day the Creator of the World dies. His last word is "It is finished"...that work of redemption accomplished...sin and death are defeated...and on the seventh day the Creator of the Universe rested...in a tomb.

Then, in John 20 John's landscape changes. The day of Resurrection is a new creation. We note there is only one day – the 'first day.' *'Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark.'* The place of the tomb is in a garden. There is even a gardener, and there is a woman. It is not the paradise lost garden of Genesis 3. In this garden, one word 'Mary' opens up the landscape – a garden of grace; of paradise regained. She was told to *'go and tell'* and she went and told.

The first day of the new creation continues: *'And the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the door being locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."* The Creator's voice says "Peace". The word is the gift – wholeness accompanied with quietness and rest. "Overjoyed" is their reaction – they 'delighted in His grace'.

Then, "Peace" again, and life is changed. The Creator of the Universe invites the disciples to join Him on His mission. With the breath of the Holy Spirit [think Genesis 2], the church is born to bring heaven's gifts to a fallen world through disciples redeemed and empowered with these words: *"...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and that by believing you may have life in His name"* John 20.31

So, what does this mean for me?

1. Like the disciples I live in the new creation of the Resurrection. There is only one day, the first day. God new world has been revealed in Jesus Christ and I am called to actively participate in it.
2. Like the disciples I live in a fallen world where fear is projected at me on many levels.
  - Fear – one of six basic emotions.
  - Fear serves an important role in survival...fight or flight [engage or disengage]
  - the Covid-19 induced shut down is exacting an increasingly greater human price.
3. Like the disciples Jesus is in my space and His word to me is Peace – the model that works.
  - the opposite of panic
4. Like the disciples I am overjoyed that Jesus is in my space – I delight in God's grace
5. Like the disciples I am invited to join Jesus on His mission.
  - who do I know who is most at risk for this virus?
  - who do I know for whom the covid-19 cure may be more deadly than the virus?
6. Name, pray for, and contact that one person God puts on your mind. Join Jesus on His mission to that person. As you name that person, pray for that person and even before you contact that person know this: Jesus in acting redemptively in that person that person who will receive your contact to be a voice of hope.
7. How will I reframe my thinking to see worship as a life of service [Romans 12.1]?
8. Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.