

Revelation

John 1:29-42

January 20, 2008

Gospel Lesson

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ³¹I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” ³²And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. ³⁶And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, **“What do you seek?”** They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?” ³⁹He said to them, **“Come and see.”** They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). ⁴²And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, **“You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas”** (which is translated, A Stone or Peter).(1)

This is the Word of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ.

When John the Baptist sees his cousin, Jesus, he is excited and wants to share with everyone that Jesus is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” John didn’t feel he should baptize Jesus, but to fulfill the prophecy he agreed to do the baptism. Then, after he baptized Jesus, the dove or Holy Spirit ascended to Jesus, and God declared that this was His beloved Son. Max Lucado describes this moment as the Holy Trinity all actively present.

John knew the prophecies and spent his life telling others that a Messiah was to come and save them all from the sins of the world. Seeing the dove ascend on Jesus, he realized that he was witnessing Jesus being revealed as the “Lamb of God.” He also realized that Jesus was to be the final sacrifice for sin. John was baptizing with water, but the baptisms from then on would be with the Holy Spirit. When we baptize today we use the water and say the words, “baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” At our baptism we have received a blessing and the inclusion into the kingdom of Heaven. We only have to accept this gift and all of our sins are washed away.

1*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

The baptism of Jesus is when God reveals to everyone that the light of the world has come. The story is written in the Bible and passed on through stories by the people so that all generations will hear the story and be saved. When we share the message of the Bible today, we are still bringing our lives to God, just as the first people who met Jesus did. His light was revealed then but still shines just as bright for us today. His word is revealed to us in the scripture that is read and the songs that we sing each Sunday. Each of us plays a part in spreading the Good News here in our worship service and when we share what we have learned with others.

Linda Ozirney wrote this story about eagles; it is a good lesson for us on how important it is to learn our lessons from God and to trust in His timing. It's based on the scripture reading from Isaiah 40:28-31.

Eagles

The eagle is a symbol used many times in Scripture. In fact, it is mentioned 38 times throughout the Bible. We can learn some important lessons from this majestic creation of God. Eagles have a wingspan of two meters and are around 90 centimeters tall. The eagle mates for life and use the same nest for life. This nest is built in a safe place, often on the ledge of a sharp cliff. It is built to last, and the largest nest reported is 9 ½ feet wide and 20 feet deep.

When the babies are born, both parents assume responsibility for their care. They are gentle parents, sitting on the eggs for one month. The parents bring food to the nest and feed them small pieces of meat. Within 45 days they can weigh nearly 40 times their birth weight. At three months they get special feathers for flying and a new learning experience begins. The mother eagle flies into the nest and begins to thrash around causing a great commotion. Eventually one of the babies will fall out of the nest and begin heading for the earth below. Never having used his wings before, he's not really sure what to do, but does do lots of flapping while heading straight down! Just before the baby hits the ground, the mother eagle flies underneath in order to "catch" the baby on her powerful wings, and she flies him safely back to the nest. This continues day after day until all the babies learn to fly.

There are two verses in scripture that actually mention this routine of the eagle. In Deuteronomy 32:10-11 Moses reminds the children of Israel how God cared for them and guarded them just "like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions." Again in Exodus 19:4 God says "He will carry the children of Israel on eagles' wings."

We can get very comfortable in our "nest." Perhaps that could be our way of doing things, our way of thinking, our opinions, and our way of living life. Then, when God comes and "stirs up our nest," we get upset. We don't always identify this as a growing experience. Sometimes if we were really honest, we really don't want to grow. We get very complacent and satisfied with where we are, and any interruptions are viewed as negative. But God wants us to fly - to become all that He intends us to become. He never stirs up our nest without good reason!

An eagle can see a rabbit two miles away. It can soar up to two miles above the ground and can fly at speeds of up to 100 miles per hour. It has a separate eyelid, which slides across the eye sideways in order to keep the eye clean and free from dust as it flies. Its bones are hollow and, therefore, light of frame. Its frame has cross ribs like steel bars in skyscrapers. An eagle has 7000 feathers, and the back feathers are as long as the head feathers. Its beak is black until age of 3 years and then turns golden.

When eagles are about 30 years old, they go through a renewal process. They find a secret place high in the mountains and begin to claw at their face and tear out the feathers that have been damaged over the years. As a result, it bleeds badly. But this is necessary for the eagle in order to renew its strength. If it did not do this, it would not be able to live to its normal 60 years of age.

Psalms 103:5 says, "who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles." A time of renewal is necessary for every child of God. A time when we get rid of what is weighing us down, holding us back, aging us spiritually. A time to give up sinful habits, to give-in to the Holy Spirit in whatever way He is convicting us. We need to do this even to the point of renewal with pain! Some things we hold on to so tightly that to let go actually causes us pain. But in order to have the long, powerful, useful spiritual life that God plans for us, we need to do that. It will renew our spiritual youthfulness.

When the eagle is free to soar in God's creation, it is the cleanest of birds. It was created to be free and to soar to great heights. It was not meant to remain close to the earth in the lowlands. It was created to soar. When an eagle is held in captivity, it becomes one of the dirtiest birds.

God has created us to remain pure and holy and conformed to his image. Don't allow the freedom we are to experience in Him, to be compromised by spending too much time in worldly thinking, activities, and mindsets. Remain clean!

Eagles do not fly like other birds; they don't flap their wings but rather, they soar. Flapping their wings would use incredible amounts of their own strength and endurance, which would require so much more food as fuel. Instead, they sit on a high ledge and wait for the right wind currents to come. When the time is right, they take off and soar upward, effortlessly, because they have waited for the right time. There is a special "up going" wind that they ride as it circles higher and higher toward the sky.

What a lesson for God's children to learn. How often do we waste strength by jumping out too soon and "flapping our wings" instead of waiting for God's timing? Waiting is not a popular concept in these days of instant everything! But when we wait on the Lord - wait for His timing - wait for His answers - wait for His direction, then we can soar to new heights and fly to new places.

"Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.

In Jesus ministry He taught us to call God Abba or Father. This helps us to personalize our relationship with God and to be more open to His direction and guidance. Most of us can visualize a relationship with a father figure, so we can look at Him as our heavenly Father. We can close our eyes in prayer and imagine sitting on His lap and resting in His arms, then tell Him our concerns or joys. When we can go to Him in prayer with everything, we will be closer to Him and will want to serve and follow Him. We will also be excited about what we have and will want to share that with others.

Shortly after His baptism Jesus began to call His disciples. As He walked along they were drawn to Him and stopped what they were doing to follow Him and learn from Him. Jesus questioned them as to why they were following Him. He wanted to make sure that they were not just following Him for their own satisfaction, but that they wanted to learn from Him how to spread the Good News that the messiah had come and was here for all people.

When the disciples ask Jesus where He is going, He tells them to “Come and see.” Instead of taking the disciples and putting them through a rigorous training schedule, making them go through various hoops and learn specific ways to run a church, Jesus tells them to “Come and see.” He wants them to get to know Him and learn first hand from Him how to reach out to help and serve the people around them.

We too learn better from first hand experience. Reading the Bible is great, but we learn more when we use it in a Bible study. As part of our worship service we read the Bible and say our confessions and sing our songs that are all based on what we find in the Bible. We can learn even more and come even closer to God when we go away on a retreat. While on a retreat we can shut out all of the distractions from the world and focus on God and His message for us. Many times we come away from a retreat feeling like we have been to the mountaintop.

We have met God up close and personal and have learned what His message is for us. The trick is to keep that message when we go back to the real world and put it to use in our daily lives. We need to share that message with our family, friends and the people we come in contact with. We are each charged with the job of sharing the “Light of the World” to those who haven’t yet received the message. We have to make sure that when we do share this wonderful news that we keep the focus on Jesus not on ourselves.

How do you feel after participating in our worship services? I hope you feel closer to God and want to share what you are learning here with others. If you do, ask them to “Come and see” what you have received here in our worship. Bring your family and friends with you next week and help them to receive insight to the revelation of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen.