

Toetrede

Liturgie van die Lig

Woorddiens

Lesing 1: Johannes 1:43-51 (1953)

⁴³ En hy het hom na Jesus gelei. Toe kyk Jesus hom aan en sê: Jy is Simon, die seun van Jona; jy sal genoem word Céfás, wat vertaal word Petrus.

⁴⁴ Die volgende dag wou Jesus na Galiléa vertrek; en Hy het Filippus gekry en vir hom gesê: Volg My.

⁴⁵ En Filippus was van Betsáida, uit die stad van Andréas en Petrus.

⁴⁶ Filippus het Natánael gekry en vir hom gesê: Ons het Hom gevind van wie Moses in die wet en ook die profete geskrywe het: Jesus, die seun van Josef van Násaret.

⁴⁷ En Natánael sê vir hom: Kan daar uit Násaret iets goeds wees? Filippus antwoord hom: Kom kyk.

⁴⁸ Daarop sien Jesus Natánael na Hom toe kom en sê van hom: Hier is waarlik 'n Israeliet in wie daar geen bedrog is nie.

⁴⁹ Natánael sê vir Hom: Waarvandaan ken U my? Jesus antwoord en sê vir hom: Voordat Filippus jou geroep het toe jy onder die vyeboom was, het Ek jou gesien.

⁵⁰ Natánael antwoord en sê vir Hom: Rabbi, U is die Seun van God, U is die Koning van Israel!

⁵¹ Jesus antwoord en sê vir hom: Glo jy omdat Ek vir jou gesê het: Ek het jou onder die vyeboom gesien? Jy sal groter dinge sien as dit.

Broodjies vir die Pad

In December astronomers reported that they had found the biggest black holes ever in the universe. Black holes are regions at the center of galaxies where gravity is so powerful that not even light can escape. "One of these newly surveyed monsters," writes Dennis Overbye in the *New York Times*, "which weighs as much as 21 billion Suns, is in an egg-shaped swirl of stars known as NGC 4889, the brightest galaxy in a sprawling cloud of thousands of galaxies about 336 million light-years away in the Coma constellation."

Mind-boggling measurements like these once caused the physicist Richard Feynman to remark that "it doesn't seem to me that this fantastically marvelous universe, this tremendous range of time and space and different kinds of animals, and all the different planets, and all these atoms with all their motions, and so on, all this complicated thing can merely be a stage so that God can watch human beings struggle for good and evil — which is the view that religion has. The stage is too big for the drama."

Feynman's dismissal of religion isn't required by science; it's a personal and philosophic extrapolation. But he certainly speaks for many elite scientists who influence society with their (scientific) prestige. And, let's be honest, Feynman also speaks for many ordinary people when they contemplate the scope and scale of time and space. It's enough to make you wonder: am I only a cosmic accident among billions of galaxies?

I'm grateful for the gift of science. But science isn't the only way to know, and the material world isn't the only thing worth knowing. Science is a powerful means to knowledge, but by itself it's a means without any obvious ends. And all too often science becomes a means that refuses or transforms all ends that would constrain it — instead, what's technologically possible can and will be done, period. But science can tell you how to build a bomb, but not whether you should use it. It can help an infertile couple conceive a child, but not how to love that child.

So I thank God for science, but for a more robust view of our lives and the world we need to include poetry. John McDargh of Boston College recommends "the perennial power of poetry as a privileged medium." Poetry, he says, "tunes the 'ears of the heart' to the real way in which human beings most honestly and most deeply talk about their lives when they are speaking from the core of their experience. The reason for this has everything to do with the unique power of metaphor to carry thought forward."

Psalms 139 for this week is a case in point. Yes, God is infinite, but the psalmist also describes God as intimate — "intimately acquainted with all my ways" (NASB). Whether I feel like it or not, whether I believe it or not, I'm always safe in the presence of God's Spirit: "If I go up to the heavens you are there; / if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." Instead of feeling like a demographic accident among seven billion people, every human being can say, "you created my inmost being; / you knit me together in my mother's womb. / When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, / your eyes saw my unformed body." (JwJ)



Life, writes the British poet David Whyte in his poem *The Opening of Eyes*, "is no passing memory of what has been / nor the remaining pages in a great book / waiting to be read. / It is the opening of eyes long closed." It's paying attention to the God who creates, who cares, who calls and who speaks. And it's responding with the little boy Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." (JwJ)



On a historical level, these stories also remind us of the largely hidden connections between the "Baptist movement" associated closely with John the son of Zechariah and the "open table movement"

associated with Jesus of Nazareth. All the sources agree that Jesus was a disciple of John before he went his own way: sometimes said to have happened after the arrest/death of John, at other times while John was still active in his own mission.

The two stories belong together in John. They form a pair of stories that move the narrative from the baptism (without any reference to the testing of Jesus during 40 days in the wilderness) to the scene of Jesus' first miracle (turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana). In John, such an event is called a "sign" (Greek, *semeion*) rather than a "mighty deed" (Greek, *dynamis*). This points to one of the distinctive characteristics of John's account of Jesus: the meaning signified is stressed rather than the historical character of the person, place or event. "What does it mean?" displaces the more basic question, "What did he do?" (FF)



The next day seems to be a stylistic feature of John. It is used to introduce several episodes: 1:29,35,43. Then in John 2:1 we have "on the third day." Like Mark's model day in the life of Jesus (Mark 1:21-39), John seems to be creating a sequence using material that was not originally related. This episode is set in the Galilee rather than in the region further south where John the Baptist was active.

Nathaniel occurs only in John's Gospel. Lists of 12 disciples/apostles appear only in the Synoptic Gospels (John never provides such a list): Mark 3:16-19; Matt 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13. While the number is constant (and also independently attested by Paul in 1 Cor 15:5), there is no agreement on the names. The ideal of 12 apostolic leaders seems to have been stronger than the historical memory, with communities in different areas supplementing a core list of well-known apostles with people known to them.

One of the essential criteria for apostolic status in the primitive church was to have seen the risen Lord. In some circles Paul was regarded as an apostle, although others contested that claim and Paul sometimes defended his rights with strong language (cf. 2 Cor 10-12). In other circles, Mary Magdalene was regarded as an apostle. As a woman she was eventually squeezed from the collective memory of the church.

Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth. The Gospel of John represents a fascinating stance on the human origins of Jesus. No NT writing has a higher Christology than John, for whom Jesus is the "only Son" and the incarnation of the eternal Word (Gk, *logos*). Yet the GJohn has no hesitation in naming Joseph as the father of Jesus (here and in 6:42). Similarly, GJohn seems to challenge the tradition (found in Matthew and Luke) that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (here and in 7:40-44). John's dissenting voice on the human origins of Jesus has been largely ignored in the church.

Jesus' brief conversation with Nathaniel is replete with theological titles: **Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man**. As an actual conversation the episode makes little sense, but it may preserve an

early meditation on Jesus that draws on the biblical story of Jacob's dream (Gen 28:10-17). Raymond E. Brown has suggested that a number of the discourses found in GJohn seem to have originated as extended meditations on a theme. In some cases a tradition known to us from the synoptic tradition may underlie these Johannine discourses.

As an epiphany text, this story invites us to see Jesus as someone whose origins and significance exceed our initial impressions. He is not what we might expect, given his origins. There is more to this person than meets the eye. But those with spiritual knowledge (Greek, *gnosis*) will perceive his true identity.

Brood vir die Pad

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