

Thought for the Day

Thought for the day is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.

For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>

Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)

Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.

Sunday 27th December

St John the Evangelist

1 John 1

There are many moving words in scripture and you probably have your favourites. Some of mine are in the books attributed to John Apostle and Evangelist, whose feast we celebrate today. When I hear the opening words of John's gospel proclaimed on Christmas Eve, I know that Christmas has begun. They are spine tinglingly moving.

And today as we read the first chapter of his epistle, again there is a sense that these words, simple as they seem on the surface, reveal mysteries too great for our minds to encompass. Depths too profound for us to grasp in a lifetime. It is extraordinary that this passage expressed in words which a child can understand, yet conveys such meaning. Light, darkness. Hearing, seeing, touching. Joy. Truth. Life.

John is saying: we know what we are talking about. We have experienced it ourselves. This is no theory. No intellectual exercise. This is no fantasy. It's real. It may be more real than anything else in the world. It is certainly more important than anything else.

And what is the heart of the message, according to John here?

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

That is it, in a nutshell. And from that flows everything else. How can we know God? By walking, living, in the light, not in darkness. And how do we do that, when we humans are in such a mess, whether you think of global issues, or individual ones. John tells us the simple road to follow: if we confess our sin – acknowledge the darkness within and around us, take responsibility, for our share in it all, grieve that it is so, long to change ourselves first of all and then for that change to ripple out beyond us, all this is encompassed in the word 'repent'. If we do this, then God can act within us, giving that inner cleansing, that new start, shining the light into the dark corners, but if we do not – if we resist that sense of responsibility, if we refuse to confess our part in human misery, then we are holding onto the darkness, we are kidding ourselves, we are choosing unreality, we are deceiving ourselves and hiding from truth, light and life. Why would we do that? Whatever for? We cannot find God while we choose the darkness. There is no darkness in God. The logic of this is just so blinding, so powerful.

How did John know all this? Because of that hearing, seeing, touching; because of living with Jesus, following him daily, watching, copying, learning. Seeing the image of God in him, seeing him live out the very nature of Godself. The light shone in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

Thank God in these depths of the winter, thank God for light. For the short hours of sunlight as it begins to return, for the beauty of candles, for firelight. May God bring light into your life and into our world as we approach a new year and as we pray for an end to the pandemic. May we all learn to turn our backs on the darkness and to live in the light of Christ.

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort,
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*