

Journeying with John the Evangelist

Dear Friends

I left school in an age before the term 'gap year' was established, though there was notion of taking a 'year-off'. It sounded good to me so I did! I spent nine months gaining different work experiences in a variety of roles including as a waiter, shop assistant, bar tender and office worker, then nine weeks using my earnings on a trip to and around Kenya.

The work experience informed me about what I may or may not enjoy in life – I discovered I was not cut out for sales or working with figures - but did enjoy working with people. The travel also left many impressions, a new continent with stunning scenery and awesome wildlife etched in my mind and encounters with non-western culture including the relative material poverty but richness of spirit of so many Kenyans. My year was a journey to a place and to new experiences.

Our church year involves a number of journeys. In advent we travel with prophets in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, at Christmas we celebrate God's journey to earth in the person of Jesus and continue into the season of Epiphany as facets of Jesus are revealed. The longest journey in the church is the season of Pentecost, in which we travel with both with the fledgling church and with Jesus in and around Galilee. The most poignant and heart-rending journey is through Lent as we follow Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and the cross. This year Lent and Easter St Andrew's will follow in the footsteps of Jesus through the eyes of John the Evangelist, the author/compiler of John's Gospel.

John's gospel is presented in dramatic form. Chapter one is a 'Prologue' that sets the scene, portraying Jesus as being one with God from the very beginning and introduces key themes through the gospel including light, life and God's glory. It also introduces Jesus, John the Baptist and the disciples as the key players.

There then follow two main acts. First chapters 2-12 which through a series of signs reveal Jesus as the Word of God in the world. The second act runs from chapter 13 – 20 telling of the passion of Jesus' journey to the cross and his rising. Finally, there is an epilogue, which includes a seventh sign – the great catch- and the re-commissioning of Peter to go out into the world in Christ's name.

For me, the wonder of John's gospel is the way that he takes the reader on a number of journeys simultaneously, through time from the baptism of Jesus to his ascension, through place as he travels around the holy land, with people as he interacts with disciples and encounters a range of ordinary folk and significantly a journey in understanding, such that towards the end of the drama the reader may find themselves echoing the faith confession of Thomas "my Lord and my God".

Finally John's gospel concludes with an epilogue which points to the story of the Word in the World continuing on through time and place.

At St Andrew's we'll hear readings from John's gospel through Lent and in Holy Week at 7 pm on Monday 29th, Tuesday 30th and Wednesday 31st March there will be a dramatic reading of John's Gospel, from the 'prologue' to the burial of Jesus in the tomb. The story will then conclude with the dramatic reading continuing on Easter Day and the three successive Sundays.

I hope that you might be able to join in the journey, and more importantly in doing so find that as with the best of journeys your life is enriched and you may sense the light of Christ shining on your life and illuminating your path in the world.

Travel well,

David