

## Right Relations

January 5, 2020

John 1:1-18

Well, we've made it: 2020. We've made it through Christmas and asking people what they want gifted to them. Now, we're at the part of a new year where we are still saying "I want" but in a different manner. Before, it was what we want others to give us. Now, it's what we want to give ourselves through New Year's Resolutions. We want to be in better health, and therefore resolve to eat better and/or exercise more. We want better relations with our friends and family, and so we resolve to talk with them more, see them more, etc. As this year goes on, our wants will grow. It's the year of the next Summer Olympic Games, and we want our country to bring home as many gold medals as possible. It's the year of the next presidential election, and we want to get to November as quickly as we can so we don't lose our minds listening to presidential ads 24/7. It's the year of the next census, and we want to be sure everyone fills it out so that our families, our states, our very country can benefit as much as possible. Suffice it to say, we as humans have wants, and many of them to boot.

But what about God? We're in a new year, a new start. What do you think God wants for this New Year? I believe, and the reading today furthers the argument, that God wants to be in a reconciled relationship with us, just as God always has wanted that. God gives us life and command over all the Earth, and we fall away. God picks a single family, Abraham, to be the father of us all, and from him come the tribes of Israel. We are given the Law through Moses that we might be in a better relationship with God and that we might better know what it is God wants for us to do and say. Given there are so many rules to follow, God sends judges and prophets to guide the people and the kings, but eventually we still fall to ruin and stray. Life, the Law, the prophets, all of these were means to a better relationship with God. Now we get to the reading today, where God makes one final move at putting us in a right relationship, and it's probably the most powerful move of all: dwelling among us.

John 1:1-5 gives us this introduction as to who Jesus is. Jesus is the Word, was in the beginning with God, and brought things into being. Through him, light and life were given to all persons. So, we have this establishment of Jesus being wholly divine, being one in the same as the God of Abraham and of Jacob. It stands to reason, then, that this Word cannot be seen. Moses asks God to reveal himself, saying, "Show me your glory," to which God responds, "No one shall see me and live," hence the reason God has communicated with us via prophets, the Law, etc. These means, however, have not succeeded in reconciling that relationship.

So, this word descends, becomes flesh, dwells among us, experiencing all the vulnerabilities and suffering we experience, that all who see, hear, and come to know Jesus might through him see, hear, and come to know God. Jesus gives many sermons and parables to teach us about what God is like, what the kingdom is like, how we are to act towards one another, etc. Jesus performs miracles to not only heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and feed vast multitudes, but through the empty tomb, reveals God's power over Death itself. God reveals himself in this way that all might know him, that all might follow him. However, the choice is still up to us.

God reveals himself through Jesus, but by no means forces us to follow. Now that God has revealed himself, it is up to us to decide whether or not to be in this right relationship with God. Why is this decision important? The obvious answer is salvation. If one does not follow Christ, one does not know salvation. The other part though, according to Jill Duffield, is this: “The world that does not recognize or accept their own Savior may be immune to the importance of relationship, refuse to be children of God and therefore siblings to one another, and choose instead to be rivals, competitors, or even enemies.” In other words, if we cannot be in a relationship with our Savior, one who loves us unconditionally and is perfect in every way, what chance have we of being in a relationship with fellow humans?

The opposite is also true, though. The Bible tells us we are made in God’s image, that the Holy Spirit moves, speaks and acts through all of us. It tells us that our bodies are temples for this God to reside in. If we cannot be in a right relationship with our fellow humans, each one beautifully and wonderfully made, how can we be in a right relationship with the Creator God who made us so perfectly? All of us are beautifully and wonderfully made by God, all of us children of the same Father, and if we cannot love ourselves or one another as God loves us, how can we love the God who made us? This is one of our greatest challenges as Christians: to be in a right relationship not only with God by following the commandments and acting as we’re told to act, but to love our fellow humans and ourselves as we are loved.

That’s why I challenge you all to add another resolution for this year. Each of us is being called to be in an improved relationship with God, but that might mean different things for different people. For some, that might be attending church more or taking on a more-active role in the church. For others, it might be asking “Would Jesus be happy with me doing/saying this?” more often to curb sinful actions, thoughts, and words. For still others, it might be taking up a daily devotional or praying more often. Each person’s situation is unique, and that’s why I challenge you all to resolve to be in a better relationship with God and all God’s children this year. As you go forth today, I invite you to consider: what must you do to be in that right relationship?