

Sermon: 2020/12/27 (Feast Day of St. John, Year B) - *Isaiah* 61:10-62:3; *Psalms* 147:13-21; I *John* 1:1-9; & *John* 1:1-5_BTR

The Feast of Saint John

[Four candy canes: 3 x normal (white and red) + one very colourful "JellyBelly" variety.]

Ok: I've got four (Christmas) candy-canes here (in my hand), but they don't all look alike!

Can someone help me put them into *groups*?

Can someone help me *divide* them into two *types*?

(But you have to explain your reasoning. It can't be random.)

Go on, do I have a volunteer?

[Wait for a child to come forward.]

It was easy, wasn't it?

One of the candy-canes looked *very* different to the rest; it was *obviously* different.

Like John's gospel(!), which we heard from just a moment ago.

It's clearly meant as a biography about his friend Jesus - it contains very precise information about geography and so on; but, again and again, *John* either neglects to mention the same events that *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke* share in common, *or* includes material that *they* seem to know nothing about:

The gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke* - called "the Synoptics" - seem to really revel in recording the various and many miracles of Jesus. (What the Savior *did*.) *John*, on the other hand appears to prefer what Jesus *said* - His conversations, His lectures and prophecies.

So, (I ask), why *is* John's version of events so different?

And how he chose to handle the "Christmas" event is "Exhibit A," isn't it?

(A prime example of *John's*... distinctiveness.)

- *no* mention *whatsoever* of pregnant virgins, Roman censuses, crowded inns, or bewildered shepherds, or strange stars (in the night-sky)...

It's almost reason to be suspicious.

And certainly *some* do find it "fishy."

A cause for conspiracy theories and idle speculation.

But to those people I'd say that there is a single, *simple* reason that more than adequately explains why it is that *John* seems to stand apart:

'The simple truth is that John wrote his [g]ospel about 20 years *after* Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote theirs. [And, f]or that reason, John chose to skim and skip over much of the ground that had already been covered in the Synoptic [g]ospels.' [n.1]

After all, why repeat it?

(That "ground.")

Not when he could *build* on the "foundation" (of familiarity) that they'd "laid." - The Synoptics, John could (already) see, do an excellent job of presenting us with various discrete "bits" and "pieces" of "data" as to whom Jesus is; "bits" and "pieces" of "data" as to His singular significance; as to His *divinity*.

- just consider how they describe the story of Jesus' unusual birth:

again and again "breadcrumbs" of evidence are scattered before us (in the other three (earlier) accounts) *all* pointing to the fact that the baby in the manger was not *just* a man; but also something *more* - after all, angels don't normally appear in the sky singing to announce each of the deliveries down at the local maternity ward;

strange, uninvited astronomers don't normally show up at every crib-side having travelled *hundreds* of miles, babbling about unusual celestial activity and ancient prophecies.

These "breadcrumbs" - these *evidences* - demand a verdict.

But, speaking bluntly, they remain somewhat ambiguous.

Do the breadcrumbs come together to form a cake?

Or a cookie?

Or a cracker?

Whatever it is its tasty!

But what *exactly*?

This is John's agenda.

Not to point *again* at the evidence - that would be redundant - you have it all, but to help us understand it;

to "assemble" the breadcrumbs so that we can appreciate how they form an *enormous*, delicious "Messiah-loaf."

Hence the many "I Am" sayings found in *John*, overlooked by the other evangelists.

"I *am* the 'Bread of Life!'" [Jn. 6:35]

"I *am* the light of the world." [Jn. 8:12]

"I *am* from above." [Jn. 8:23]

And so on.

It's like this - let me use another analogy:

What the Synoptic gospels do is to *point* in the direction of the truth; the "breadcrumbs" of evidence are the many, many amazing things that those three books record about Christ, which *John* chooses to not to repeat.

As such, they - *Matthew, Mark and Luke*, are like road-signs:
God incarnate this way! (They say.)
And what *John* does is add the "Welcome, 'please drive carefully', sign."
Yup, you made it: this is the destination;
this is the truth:
God is *literally* with us, "O Come, and adore Him."

Footnotes:

1. See: <https://www.learnreligions.com/comparing-john-and-the-synoptic-gospels-363395> (My italics.)