

Questions from the Gospel of John

Session 6: ENLIGHTENMENT

Introductory Statement: Enlightenment represents the 4th stage in the movement of the believer from conversion, to baptism and Eucharist to an ever deeper mystical union with God in Christ. Jesus say, "I am the light of the world." It's as if the mysterious spiritual side of life had suddenly been illuminated in a way that provide clear vision of the meaning of life.

"I am the Light of the world." (8:12)

Here we are in the 4th and final stage in the development of the Christian life because it challenges us to go beyond the externals and the superficial, beyond the mere observance of rituals and recitation of prayers to a truly personal union with God.

Such enlightenment ONLY occurs when one has experience of conversion, baptism and Eucharist reach a certain depth and maturity.

The externals of our religion are supposed to take us HERE!

"If you 'continue' in my word, you are truly my disciple." (8:31)

This "continuing" in his word is far more than merely persevering in that initial and still tentative kind of faith that they have achieved. This "continuing" is another way of saying, as John has in the past, "to abide," or "to remain." Certainly, one of John's favorite words used to describe this mystical union the believer has with God.

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (8:32)

The freedom that comes from such a personal welcome of Jesus' word is an inner freedom, a deep sense of confidence, and a peace that comes from having found where one truly belongs.

Afraid to truly follow they retreat to the more familiar territory of being a descendent of Abraham.

"He saw a man blind from birth." (9:1)

Obviously, a story about enlightenment. In fact, the cure of this man's physical blindness is only the beginning of his recovery. He must overcome his spiritual blindness. By contrast, the Pharisees who begin with physical sight, end up spiritually blind.

"I am the man." (9:9)

This represents the first stage of faith when we believe because of the witness of some other influential person.

"He is a prophet." (9:17)

This represents a significant advance in his relationship with Jesus. After reflection, he is now prepared to declare his personal conviction that Jesus is a man of God.

“You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.” (9:28)

How sad to see these men appeal to the familiar past in order to escape from the challenge of the present and the future! Didn't we just see this in Chapter 8 where they retreated to familiar territory claiming to be descendants of Abraham. Safety vs risking a new relationship with Jesus.

“Lord, I believe.” (9:38)

He can now see Jesus with more than his physical eyes; he can see in a whole new, spiritual way. He is now truly enlightened. Now, the miracle is complete! It's clear that John wants all Christians to make the same journey. (Page 145.)

“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” (10:3)

Jesus, being the true shepherd, enters the sheepfold by the door. He calls his sheep by name, just as shepherds used a distinctive call or whistle to call their sheep. All human hearts are made to respond to God's call. However, this ability can be lost behind layers a fear and distrust.

“Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany.” (11:1)

A story about “Everyman” since all of us are ill with the incurable disease of sin and mortality. Lazarus represents all of us as we come to Jesus seeking healing and life.

“Martha went and met him.” (11:20)

Martha is impatient. She wants to wrestle with the terrible scandal of death among humans who yearn for immortality. She has a thousand ways of saying “Why!!?”

“Lazarus, come out!” (11:43)

These words of Jesus are an echo of the dramatic words of Moses: Thus says the Lord the God of Israel: “Let my people go!”

“No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God, and is at the Father's side, HE HAS MADE HIM KNOWN! (1:18)

For John the story of Jesus begins long before Bethlehem, in the realm of eternity. It is there that the divine Word experienced the love of God, and it is from there that this Word came to our world to tell us about God's remarkable love for us.”