

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Gospel, Year B

WHEN CHRIST IS SAID AND DONE

John 3:14-21

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Analysis by Marcus Felde

“And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

16For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

17Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. 20For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 21But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

Author's Note: In my humble opinion, this is the evangelist speaking. It appears to me that the author intended the direct quote to end with either verse 12 or 13 of this passage; after that I believe that the evangelist is holding forth. I find no support in sources, so I may be wrong.

DIAGNOSIS: This Is So Over!

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Hiding Stuff

Want an easy check of our behavior? What don't we want to be seen doing? "This is the judgment" (v.19), not that some able exegete found us guilty, but that (not trusting in forgiveness but in appearances) we preserve appearances at the expense of truth.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Loving Darkness

When we hide from the truth, John implies, it as though we love darkness. We serve darkness. Darkness "saves" us. Darkness (untruth) becomes our God.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): All is SAD and DONE

Nothing is new about the condemnation of sinners. We are condemned already, we "have received [our] reward" (Matthew 6). "Move along, folks; there's nothing to see here." This is old stuff. Why would God send "the Word" into the world to accomplish what was already fully operational?

PROGNOSIS: This Is So Not Over!

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): All is SAID and DONE

But here's a new thing! The Logos (per David Bentley Hart's commendable 2017 NT translation), which does not condemn but saves the world. A Word is "Said" and the world is saved! Just as with Moses, so (in spades) with the Son of Man (v.14).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Advanced Solution): Loving Light

Those who do what is true come to the light because their desire is that people should give glory to the Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16), who is the Father of lights (James 1:17).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Revealing Stuff

See Matthew 5:16 again: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father

in heaven.” Do stuff of which you will not need to be ashamed—not so you can be proud (get glory) but that the God you love may be glorified. No more do you scurry away like roaches at the flicker of a flashlight. No, “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).