



### The Collect

Merciful Lord, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist Saint John may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### The Epistle - 1 St. John 1.1-end

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all un-righteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

### The Gospel - St. John 21.19-end

Jesus said unto Peter, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, That that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose, that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

TODAY, within the season of Christmas, we celebrate the feast of St John the Apostle and Evangelist. As our gospel reading this morning shows St John must have lived to a great old age and whilst reports went about that he would not die but go on living until Christ returned.

This gospel passage makes it clear what St John's God given role was, as indeed earlier this chapter had made clear what that other great apostle, St Peter's, God given role was for him when Jesus had asked St Peter three times did he love him and thus assigned to him the role of shepherd.

So given St John's length of life into old age, where he lived in Ephesus, the early church must have pondered what had been his divine given role ?. St Peter was the great shepherd, St Paul was the great pioneer and St John was to be that great witness to Jesus. St John was the apostle of whom it could be said 'This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things and we know that his testimony is true'.

Our epistle reading this morning from St John also reinforces this great witness when it states of Jesus 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life'.

Like St John the Christian is one who knows and believes that these things about Jesus are true. St John's great role was to be appointed witness to Christ and to live to a great old age in doing that. However, that role of his does not make him any greater or lesser than the other apostles, such as St Paul and St Peter, in their God given roles,

for they were all servants of Christ. That is the very essence of their roles.

We are all called to serve Christ, however we be and wherever we are. We all have a calling to bear witness to Christ by how we live. To live in the present moment where God has placed us and to serve Him is our calling. As we heard Jesus replying to Peter, in our gospel reading today 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ?, follow thou me'.

We live in a time when comparisons with one another, especially on social media, abound yet that is what Christ says to each one of us – do not be concerned with what someone is doing or what their role is, but instead look to what you can do where you are now to serve and follow me in whatever way I have given to each one of you. So that is our calling and challenge as we draw on this wonderful season of Christmas.

God has come to reveal Himself to us in Jesus Christ born at Bethlehem. Emmanuel- God with us. As our epistle reading today stated 'This then is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all'. That, you will recall, is similarly how St John the apostle and evangelist opens his gospel, which we heard on Christmas Day, when he says of Jesus 'In Him was life and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not'.

St John the apostle and evangelist bore witness to the Christ Messiah, born at Bethlehem which we celebrate this Christmas. May we bear witness to Christ, that light to the world, in our lives too.

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