

Uniform Lesson for July 3, 2022

Scripture passage and lesson focus: John 1:1-14

Invoked in the creation of the world is the Word – Jesus – who is unnamed in our Gospel lesson. That God would enter human history through Jesus, through the frailty of flesh, woman-flesh, to save humanity, is the central belief of the Gospel writer John.

Here, John 1:1 connects with the creation story of Genesis 1:1 by stating at the onset, “In the beginning.” Jewish commentator Rashi informs us the Hebrew word for “beginning” (*reshit*) requires a dependent relation — it is the “beginning of” something. John’s conceptual, grammatical use of the masculine word *Logos* speaks to the preexistent Christ and speaks ontologically beyond gender.

God is not gendered in the Bible but is figuratively imagined in male terms. Yet the canon presents feminine images of God: “Was it I who conceived all this people?” (Numbers 11:12), “You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth” (Deuteronomy 32:18), “How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings...” (Matthew 23:37).

Human language has proven insufficient in fully grasping God and the Word made flesh. To our own detriment, we

tend to situate the Word in a box that placates our infantile neediness to be coddled within manufactured binaries. When we do so, we fail to see the *imago Dei* – the image of God – in the first earth creature, the gender-full creation, as the very work of God’s fingers (Psalm 8:7).

Through the Word, life was created. Life that brings with it light that outshines the bleakness of this world with all of its crime and violence, economic struggles, health threats and declining environment. Life that offers us hope and testifies as a witness to the glory of “the true Light, which enlightens everyone” (John 1:9).

The Word of John’s Gospel calls us to ask ourselves, as partners in a new creation, why do we place gender limitations on God’s creation? What would a world look like if we read the Scriptures through the lens of inclusion and as co-partners with the Word in spreading the good news of the gospel?

In Isaiah 43:18-19b the Lord tells us, “Forget the events of the past, ignore the things of long ago! Look, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth — can’t you see it?” (author’s translation).

Old ways of thinking are cast out. Former ways of doing things are reimagined. The traditions of our ancestors are expanded for greater inclusion of all.

I can only speak of my existence as a woman: a Black woman whose pronouns are she/they, a Black woman who lives in a world that condemns my very being and doesn't recognize the divinity in me, a Black woman who, through the DNA of my ancestors 'the psychological trauma, in the Akan tradition of Sankofa, has remembered and gone back to retrieve all that is good, worthy, and deserving about myself and the divine ancestral lineage from which I was fashioned.

How can someone believe that they are an heir of Christ, a co-partner and agent of creation when the world that chooses to weaponize their gender and views their skin color as a threat?

I live in the assurance of Scripture that "everything came into being through the Word" (v. 3), in the assurance that the Word knew me before there was even a beginning and before placing me in my mother's womb and set me apart (Jeremiah 1:5).

This is my witness. This is my testimony. I am reminded by Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to take ownership of the love of my flesh, to "love it. Love it hard. [Because over] yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it."

God invites us to co-partner in a new creation by loving *all* human flesh, womanly flesh, LGBTQIA+ flesh, cis-hetero flesh, non-binary flesh, that is created from the dust of the humus of the earth, by "loving your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). That is the good news of John's Gospel

and is the embodiment, on earth as it is in heaven, of the Kin-dom Jesus modeled for us.

The Light that dwells within each of us, by the Holy Spirit, shines for all the world to behold, bearing witness to God's greatest creation of *all* humanity. Look, I am doing a new thing!

Often in hindsight, we are able to see God's providence and things we once saw and understood have now become evidence of God's new creation in the world. Do we have eyes to see the divine in every human creation?

How will we open ourselves to the holy "on earth as it is in heaven" though it may not look like what we imagined?

For the Little Ones: Pic or small American Flag Remind the children that tomorrow is the fourth of July and it is also called Independence Day. Way back in 1776, a group of males got together and signed the Declaration of Independence. It was an announcement of FREEDOM. That's what "independence" means __ freedom. This announcement was a piece of paper that said that the American people were free, they were not part of England anymore, and that they had certain rights. This declaration gave us rights so that we could be treated fairly. WE build our who government and our country around the ideas in this Declare also tells us about The Declaration of Independence.

The Bible all tells about our rights as people. We build our lives around the ideas in the Bible. The Bible tells us that as children of God, we are free to live and love more fully than we can imagine.

We celebrate the Fourth of July and remember how lucky we are to live in a country where we have so many rights.