

When I first came to Connecticut Valley as your Pastor I made the decision to preach from the Gospel of John. In fact, I spent the my first year preaching, almost entirely, from John's gospel. There was a lot of material that I did not use at the time, but would like to use some of it today. So let us go to John 1:1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Those of you who have been studying the Bible for a while probably recognize that John is beginning his gospel by imitating or echoing the beginning of the book of Genesis. How does Genesis begin? Genesis 1:1 —

IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

Genesis begins by stating "In the beginning", and then we learn of the creative activity of God. And the first thing He introduces into the creation is "light" to separate the darkness.

John begins his gospel in similar fashion. John too starts out with the phrase, "In the beginning. . ." Then John tells us about the creativity of the Word. And the very next thing mentioned is the introduction of "light". Jesus is the Light of the World seeking to separate mankind from their Spiritual darkness.

This may be enough evidence for you to demonstrate that John is imitating or echoing the book of Genesis in his gospel. But let us look at a little more information.

We know from the Book of Genesis that God goes on to act for seven consecutive days to bring about the creation of the earth. We might say there were seven individual miracles where God spoke — and there was. It existed!

John does a very similar thing in his gospel. In the Gospel of John, John tells us that Jesus preformed seven individual signs or miracles during the course of His ministry. We know that Jesus did more than seven — John admits as much — but John chose to tell us only about seven miracles.

1. Water into wine — John 2:1 ff
2. Synagogue Official's Son in Capernaum — John 4:46 ff
3. Healing of man at Bethesda — John 5:1 ff
4. Feed the Five Thousand — John 6:1 ff
5. Born blind man given sight — John 9:1 ff

6. Resurrection of Lazarus — John 11:38 ff
7. Net catching 153 fish — John 21:1 ff

In these seven individual signs there is a connecting thread — let me ask you this question — When did the water turned to wine? The water turned into wine when the servants listened and by faith obeyed the “Word” of Jesus. How was the synagogue official’s son healed? When by faith the official believed the word of Jesus, and his son was healed 12 miles away from Jesus. How was the lame man healed at the pool of Bethesda? When he heard, believed, and by faith got up and walked at the command of Jesus. How were the 5000 people fed from five barley loaves and two fish? The people simply obeyed Him when He told them to distribute the loaves and fish. How was the blind man healed? Jesus spread mud on the man’s eyes. But the man did not see until he listened to the word of Jesus and went and washed some 500 feet away from Jesus in the pool of Siloam. How was Lazarus resurrected? Did Jesus go and shake him? Did He pour cold water on his face. No. Lazarus came forth to life when he heard the words of Jesus in his ears. And the same is true of the 153 fish caught by the disciples in John 21. Jesus was on the shore. They caught the fish when they by faith obeyed the words of Jesus and dropped their net over the side of the boat. Then there was a great catch.

In the seven individual miracles by Jesus in John’s gospel, John is very keen to present the story that Jesus is indeed the “Word of God”. The same word which brought seven days into creation is the same “word” which brings people into re-creation. The same Word of God which filled the earth with goodness at the Creation is the same “Word” who has again filled the earth with goodness for those who have faith.

John at the end of his gospel states the reason he wrote his gospel. He states —

30 Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;  
31 but these [that is, these seven which we have just gone through] have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

The purpose of the seven signs — the seven miracles — is that the believer may have life. What happened in Genesis? Mankind was given life. But at the end of John’s gospel mankind is offered “spiritual life”. John’s gospel offers us a “spiritual Genesis”.

There is one other parallel between the book of Genesis and the Gospel of John I want us to look at this morning. Let us read our Scripture lesson again. Genesis 2:1-3:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that He had done in creation.

We are given this declaration about the Sabbath — that with the creation of the first Sabbath the work of creation was finished. In fact, the idea of being finished is mentioned twice so that we get the point.

With the addition of the Sabbath to the first week of creation, the project, was complete and

whole. There was not one more thing which God could add or have left out. All that mankind needed for life was complete and to be found within the seven days of creation.

Now let us return to the gospel of John — or should we say John the author of the “Spiritual Genesis.” Let us read what he has to say in John 19:28-30.

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I am thirsty.”

29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a *branch of hyssop*, and brought it up to His mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, **“It is finished!”** And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

Of all four Gospel writers John is the only one to give us the detail that His last words upon the cross were — “It is finished!”.

This fact should not surprise us — John, who begins his gospel with “In the beginning . . .” John who tells us first about the “Light” which came into the world. John who tells us seven miracles of Jesus which happened as the people believed and obeyed the spoken words of Jesus. John who says the purpose of his gospel was to give life. It should not surprise us that John is the one gospel writer to record that Jesus as He breathed His last upon the cross, said, “It is finished!”

With His death on the cross the project of providing mankind with the sacrifice for eternal life was complete. As to providing a meritorious offering by which all sinful humanity could be justified before God there was nothing more to do. The innocent Lamb of God had met His unjust end so that He may justify the ungodly. In short, the work of our sacrifice was complete.

Notice with me the details of how John tells this story. Just prior to saying “It is finished” Jesus said “I am thirsty.” We are too quick to read into those words that Jesus is thirsty because of the physical torture of the cross. We cannot forget the events which led up to the cross. Remember, Jesus had been in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there He spoke of the cup which He did not want to drink. The cup which Jesus spoke of was the cup mentioned in the prophets.

For example, in Jeremiah 25 the cup of God’s wrath is spoken of. The cup of God’s wrath was to be the bitter drink of the sinners and enemies of God’s people. The cup of God’s wrath was the just drink for those who did not love God.

Jesus knew that He who knew no sin was to be made into sin. Jesus, in the Garden was keenly aware that what was being offered to Him was the cup of God’s wrath. He was to drink the bitter poison of the enemies of God. Jesus was to take upon Himself the punished for having lived a life outside of a relationship with God. Jesus was to die without mercy. Jesus was to die the death that you and I deserve.

When Jesus was on the cross and said, “I thirst” surely He thirst from the physical torture of the cross, but His claim to thirst was also His acceptance of the cup. Jesus had made the fateful choice to drink the cup of God’s wrath. Up until that time Jesus could have allowed His divinity to be superimposed upon His humanity. He could have come down

from the cross. But when He said, “I thirst” He made the final decision to take our just punishment for sin.

The next word we get is — “It is finished!” The deed was complete.

In Genesis the Sabbath comes — God says, “It is finished”. In the Gospel of John — God on the cross says, “It is finished”. There must be some connection. Let us read the Sabbath command found in Deuteronomy 5:12-15

12 ‘Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

13 ‘Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

15 ‘You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Many of you are aware of the Sabbath command as found in Exodus 20. When people memorize the Sabbath command they usually memorize the passage found starting in Exodus 20:8. But have you noticed a difference?

In the Exodus command the reason, or the motivation for Remembering the Sabbath is that God is the Creator. And we often talk about honoring the Sabbath because in keeping the Sabbath we take stock of our place in the creation as a creature. We make God the Lord of our life as our Creator.

But when Moses reminded the children of Israel to observe the Sabbath in the story told in Deuteronomy 5 the motivation and the reason for Sabbath keeping is different. God said — “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.”

The motivation for keeping the Sabbath is salvation. God had redeemed His children out of the land of sin. With the blood of the lamb on their doorposts God had provided the mercy and the grace for them to escape out of Egypt. God says that to remember this great event of salvation — observe the Sabbath.

Let us try to tie it together now. In Genesis 2 with the God the creator making the Sabbath He says “It is finished”. In John’s Spiritual Gospel Jesus is on the cross He says — “It is finished”. In Exodus 20 God tells us to remember the Sabbath because He is our Creator. In Deuteronomy 5 God tells us to observe the Sabbath because He is our Savior.

The Sabbath is to have a two-fold meaning in our experience with God. Do we need to recognize God as our Creator? Absolutely. I would never down-play this issue. The whole idea and experience of worship is wrapped up in the recognition of God as our Creator.

But I suspect there will be those who will die in the lake of fire who believed God to be their Creator but never knew Him as a Savior. The Sabbath is a day to recognize Jesus as our Savior — to recognize and love Him as our Re-creator.

We know on the Sabbath that we are to rest from our work. But to honor Jesus as our re-creator we are to rest from those works we do which we think may save us. Paul the apostle tells us in Ephesians 2:8, 9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;  
9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Friends in Christ, each week we all go through routines as we approach the Sabbath. Each week we make decisions as to what we will do this Sabbath. I ask that we approach the Sabbath not with the question “What shall we do . . .?” But with the attitude of thankfulness. We are given a day to rest from the physical and mental work of the week. But we are also given a day to rest from the idea that somehow we can do enough good things to please God and make Him want to save us. The Sabbath is to remind us that it was by grace we have been saved. The Sabbath is a day to take the posture that we have no works of eternal merit before God. There is only the love of God on a cross. There is only the love of Jesus who thirsted to take drink the bitter cup of wrath so that we do not have to. There are only the words of a dying Savior who said, “It is finished!” Jesus has provided for our escape. Trust Him. Love Him. Obey Him.

Now I am finished.