

Week of April 15-21

ONCE UPON A TIME

Scripture Reading: Read John chapter 1

“Once upon a time...” Most of us remember childhood stories and fairy tales that started with those four words. It’s not surprising since these words have been used in storytelling in the English language dating back to at least the late 14th century. For young children, the words meant they were about to enter a tale of wonder and mystery, of heroes and heroines, of villains and monsters. Fortunately, the story usually ended well as the evil villain or monster was defeated and the main character(s) “lived happily ever after.”

When we take a look at the first verse of John’s gospel, we don’t quite find “once upon a time,” but we do find something close: “In the beginning.” It’s a familiar phrase for Bible readers, for it’s how Genesis 1:1 opens: *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*

Whereas Mark begins with the baptism of John in his gospel, Luke with the birth of John the Baptist and Matthew with a genealogy tracing Jesus’ ancestry back to Abraham, John takes us back to the beginning, just like Genesis. In other words, John and Genesis begin in the same place...in eternity past.

This parallel with Genesis is intentional by John. According to John’s own words, his purpose for his gospel is to present Jesus as the Son of God. John does so, in part, to combat a growing heresy in the church that viewed Jesus as just a man upon whom the divine Christ came at his baptism and left at his crucifixion. By connecting his gospel to Genesis, John leaves no doubt about the divinity of the Son of God from eternity past: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”* From the very beginning, the divine Word has been present. Lest we miss this point, John emphasizes it again in 1:2, *“He was with God in the beginning.”* John, however, isn’t done. He continues the parallel with Genesis by informing us that it was through the Word all things were made, and that without him nothing was made (1:3). It is this eternal Word, John says, that became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14), or as one contemporary translation puts it, “God moved into the neighborhood.”

John makes it clear that this is no fairy tale, though, no made up story. He is an eyewitness of Jesus, the Son of God, as he goes on to testify, *“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* It is in this eternal and divine Word made flesh that one finds life (1:4). When we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we are given the right to become children of God (1:12). In other words, if we believe in Jesus, we really do live happily ever after.

Action Step: Skim back through the opening 18 verses of John chapter 1. Look for the number of times and ways that John drives home the truth that Jesus is the divine Son of God.

Prayer Focus: Worship Jesus today as the Son of God, the eternal Word made flesh.

Take-away: *Once upon a time, the eternal Word took on human form and offered his life on the cross to save sinners so that they could live happily ever after!*