

March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Good Friday

Scripture:

Psalm 22

John 1:1-5

John 18 and 19

“The Alpha and the Omega.”

In our Gospel reading this morning we heard that ----

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

That’s how John’s Gospel opens --- chapter 1 verse 1 --- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

And for John the “Word” here means Jesus --- Jesus is the living Word of God.

So if we replace the word ---“Word” ---- with the word “Jesus” ---- this is how the beginning of John’s Gospel reads --- “In the beginning was Jesus --- - and Jesus was with God --- and Jesus was God. He was with God in the beginning.

For John --- when the world was created --- Jesus was with God.

For John when God flooded the earth and asked Noah to build an ark Jesus was there.

For John when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac --- Jesus was with God.

From the beginning of time --- Jesus was with God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

---- or -----

“In the beginning was Jesus ---- and Jesus was with God --- and Jesus was God. He was with God in the beginning.

What we experience and remember today --- Christ on the cross --- was something God had in mind --- knew was going to happen ---- had written in to His great and saving love story ----- right from the very beginning.

“In the beginning was Jesus ---- the Word --- the “logos” in Greek ---- and Jesus was with God --- and Jesus was God. He was with God in the beginning. --- John 1:1.

And then at the top of our bulletin today on the inside page there is the verse from Revelation 22:13 ----

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

Jesus was with God from the beginning ---- and Jesus is with God at the end.

Jesus is the beginning and Jesus is the end.

He is the Alpha --- the first letter in the Greek alphabet --- and He is the Omega --- the last letter in the Greek alphabet.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

All through the scriptures --- not just the New Testament --- but the Old as well ---- we see Jesus.

Jesus was there at the beginning and He will be there at the end as well.

Christ is the fulfillment and the completion of the scriptures --- the beginning and the end----- every story whispers His name ---- Old and New Testament stories.

Today --- as we consider God’s great plan for His creation --- Christ crucified ---- we’re going to take a bit of a journey through some passages in the Bible and images in our church ---- all with the purpose of leading us up to the cross.

We're going to take a journey through the images and passages of scripture as depicted on our stained glass windows --- as they lead us to the cross ---- the final window over to my right.

And then when we get there ---- we're going to read about that time ---- the arrest ---- betrayal ---sentencing and crucifixion of Christ according to John.

But first --- Christ ----- the living Word of God --- beginning with ----- the beginning --- creation ----- the window to my immediate left closet here to the pulpit.

And you'll notice the windows have been covered up --- veiled a bit by black sheets ---- and you'll also notice they are portrayed on the PowerPoint.

When you come in --- or should you come in ---- on Easter morning when this service finds its completion ----- you'll see them in all of their radiant beauty and light --- unveiled if you like ----- and hopefully then --- or the next time you're here if it's not Easter morning ---- hopefully the next time you see them you'll see and experience them like never before --- maybe you'll even behold them --- not just see or look but behold them.

But for today they are dimmed a bit --- veiled a bit ---- ready to pop in all their radiant colour in a few days time --- and hopefully after we may even see them with new light it a figurative way as well.

As many of you likely know our windows here at St. Andrew's begin in the Old Testament starting at creation and they progress through the Scriptures - --- 3 Old Testament windows on this the North side --- and then 3 New Testament windows on this the South side.

There is a little booklet that Rev. Jim McClure put together some years ago outlining --- explaining --- highlighting the images on the windows.

The windows begin as you'll see in juts a minute on the PowerPoint --- the windows begin with creation ---- and the windows end with the crucifixion - ---- resurrection ---- and ascension.

Window 1 ---- beginning with creation.

Jesus was there at the creation ---- “I am the Alpha and the Omega” ---- and ---- “In the beginning was the Word --- “Jesus” ----- and the Word “Jesus” -- - was with God, and the Word --- “Jesus” --- was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

Jesus is the living Word of God and Jesus was there at the beginning ----- at creation --- with God.

And then also in window 1 --- is Noah and the Ark and the flood --- covenant --- the covenant God made with Noah that He --- God ---- would never flood the earth again ----- and of course Jesus initiates a new covenant as well in His blood ----- which we’ll celebrate shortly with Communion -- -- “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” ---- Jesus said.

Jesus is part of the same Covenant God spoke of with Noah--- indeed Jesus is the culmination --- fulfillment of the New Covenant ---- indeed He was there every step of the way including the Covenant God made with Noah --- the water ---- the ark ---- the rainbow.

And then there is the third panel in the first window --- Abraham and Isaac.

And if you look closely you’ll see there is also a cross in the upper right hand corner ----- just as Abraham was prepared to sacrifice Isaac --- so God is prepared and in fact does sacrifice Himself --- Jesus on the cross --- and there up in the right hand corner is Jesus carrying His cross to Golgotha --- what we remember and celebrate and ponder here today on Good Friday --- Holy Friday --- God’s Friday.

Right from the beginning of time as we know it --- creation --- we can see Jesus in the actions of God --- perhaps most clearly in Genesis 22 ----- with the complete surrender to God that Abraham emphasizes in his readiness to kill his son Isaac just as God eventually will kill His Son Jesus.

Our windows catch this similarity and our windows are faithful to this parallel --- up in the right hand corner we have this powerful image of Jesus carrying His cross.

And now window # 2.

Moses --- and Ruth ---- and Samuel.

Providence ---- faithfulness --- and listening to God.

Moses --- providence ---- Ruth --- faithfulness --- and Samuel listening to God.

Moses --- providence --- strange birth --- unusual birth --- providential --- God designed birth ----- just like Jesus' birth --- Moses' birth is unusual ---- providential ----- a God designed birth.

Moses abandoned in the reeds in the Nile River in a basket ---- Jesus --- virgin birth --- both births ----- unusual ---- providential ---- God designed.

Moses standing on no one's shoulders except God Himself --- Jesus standing on no one shoulders except God Himself.

Every Rabbi stood on someone's shoulders --- had some teacher who stood out above all their other teachers ---- remember Paul in Acts 22 verse 3 says that he was taught by Gamaliel ---- the very best of the very best ---- and then in John's Gospel the Jews are amazed asking of Jesus --- "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

Jesus like Moses and only Moses --- only Jesus and only Moses stand directly on the shoulders of God --- without a teacher or mentor ---- in between them and God --- Jesus was there at the beginning --- "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

And then there is Ruth --- talk about a faithful person --- "Where you go I will go" ----- Ruth says to Naomi ---- and of course that is exactly what Jesus says to us as well --- "Where you go I will go."

Jesus was there at the beginning of creation --- with Adam and Eve and Noah and Abraham ---- and He is also right here with Ruth and Naomi and Orpah.

And then still window 2 --- panel 3 --- the third passage on window #2 ---- the boy Samuel ----- a young Samuel at the bottom and an older Samuel at the top when he was a Judge of Israel.

Just as Samuel listened to God so Jesus listened to God --- and if we think of the upper image on the window --- upper right hand --- where the cross was on the last window ---- if we look to the upper right hand corner ---- it's not much of a stretch to imagine Jesus holding a scroll just as Samuel does here ---- remember Jesus reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in Luke chapter 4.

Just as Samuel read from the scroll --- so Jesus read from the scroll ---- just as Samuel listened to God read His word and made judgments for the people ---- using the 10 Commandments --- so did Jesus.

So ----- Window 2 ----- providence --- faithfulness --- listening to God --- Moses --- Ruth --- Samuel.

Window 2 ----- providence --- faithfulness --- listening to God --- Moses --- Ruth ---- Samuel ---- and Jesus.

Now the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final Old Testament window.

Daniel ---- David ---- and then the bridge between the Old and New Testaments --- John the Baptist as referenced in the book of Malachi.

First Daniel.

Daniel the prophet of interpretation.

Then David ---- the anointed leader ---- David the one who led so many people back into the fold of faithfulness.

And then John the Baptist the one who prepared a way just as Jesus prepares a way for us --- a way back into the presence of God eternally.

Daniel a great interpreter ----- Jesus was also a great in fact the greatest of all interpreters ----- remember in Luke 24 we have Jesus walking with 2 of His disciples on the road to Emmaus --- “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures

concerning himself.” ---- Jesus the greatest interpreter of them all --- like Daniel --- and others ---- before Him only greater and better and more faithful.

And then in window 3 after Daniel it's David ---- a great and faithful man anointed one who brought all kinds of people back to the flock --- David the shepherd.

And of course Jesus was anointed too ---- at Bethany --- all 4 Gospels recount the event ----- and then just as David --- among other things --- is remembered as a great shepherd ----- Jesus describes Himself as a shepherd in John 10 --- saying “I am the good shepherd.”

David a shepherd ---- and so much more ---- Jesus the good shepherd and so much more.

And then finally --- for window 3 ---- and then finally wrapping up our Old Testament windows ---- we have John the Baptist.

The great preparer --- leader of the way --- the one showing us the way --- preparing the way for us ---- and also preparing us for the way ---- pointing us to the greatest messenger of all ---- the Christ.

And of course Jesus is all of this --- and so much more as well.

Leading the way for us into the goodness of God --- into our salvation ---- into our eternal dwelling place with God.

“My father's house has many rooms” --- Jesus said --- “If it were not so --- would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you.”

Jesus like John ---- Jesus more than John or anyone else --- is leading us and preparing us for a place in God's eternal house --- in heaven.

And then we come to window 4 ---- and here it gets a lot easier --- it's far more obvious and explicit ---- the New Testament --- Jesus is everywhere and it is obvious and it is explicit.

Window 4 panel 1 --- the nativity --- links to Moses in the Old Testament as already mentioned in window 2 --- and then also here on window 4 in the

middle --- Jesus reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in the temple --  
- linked to the Old Testament in window 2 where we have Samuel holding a  
scroll in his hand.

And then finally on window 4 ---- Jesus' baptism --- linked to Old  
Testament window 1 with Noah and the water --- and also linked to the Old  
Testament window 3 with John the Baptist in the book of Malachi the last  
book in the Old Testament.

Jesus is everywhere in the Old Testament --- and Jesus is everywhere in the  
New Testament ----- He truly is the Alpha and the Omega --- the first and  
the last the beginning and the end --- and --- "In the beginning was the  
Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," ----- where  
Jesus is the living Word.

Indeed in one of the best new children's Bible out there --- we have copies  
of it in our church Library --- and in truth it's not just for kids ---- there is  
even an adult version available too ----- in the ---- "Jesus storybook Bible" --  
--- the subtitle is ---- "Every story whispers His name."

"Every story whispers His name" ---- meaning every story in the Bible ---  
including the Old Testament ones --- whisper ---- His ---- Jesus' name.

The Jesus Storybook Bible ----- Every Story Whispers His name --- it's true  
every story does whisper His name if we read them carefully --- if we read  
them with the guidance of the Holy Spirit --- if we read them with eyes and  
ears of faith.

But back to the windows ---- we're at window 5 now.

Window 5 ----

Calling the disciples ---- the wedding at Cana --- and also Jesus calling the  
children --- "Let the children come to me --- and do not hinder them --- for  
the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" --- from Matthew 19 ---  
one of the reasons we are intentionally welcoming the children into more  
and more areas of the life of our church --- the table --- worship --- God's  
Word and so on.

And then finally window 6 ---- The crucifixion ----- the resurrection --- and then of course the ascension.

The crucifixion --- panel 1 --- left most side of the window.

The resurrection -- panel 2 --- the centre panel --- the empty tomb --- you can see it there at the top of the window in the centre.

And on the bottom id the Passover Lamb from the Old Testament ---- and of course Jesus is the Lamb of God ---- the Agnes Dei.

And then panel 3 --- the right most panel Jesus ascending --- going back to be with God in heaven until He returns again at the end of time as we know it.

And tying it into the Old Testament Jesus ascends in a similar fashion to the way Elijah ascended in 2 Kings 2.

And of course if you look at the bottom of the window --- right hand corner - --- we have the Alpha and the Omega symbols.

Just as we also had the Alpha and the Omega symbols in the upper right hand side of window 3 --- the final Old Testament window on the North side.

Indeed all of the upper right hand corners of the Old Testament windows explicitly point to Christ --- the cross in window one --- Samuel reading from the scroll in window 2 ---- and then the Chi Rho ---- the X and the P --- the first two letters of the word “Christ” in Greek --- “Christos” --- beginning with Chi and Rho --- X and P ----and then of course also in the upper right hand corner of window 3 ---- the Alpha and the Omega --- the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet --- pointing to Christ the Alpha and the Omega ---- the beginning and the end.

From the beginning to the end --- from the first to the last --- every story whispers His --- Jesus’ name.

And the crowning moment ---- the moment of glory ---- the moment of our salvation being procured and secured --- comes at the cross --- the very heart

of our faith ---- the very reason we are here today --- on Good Friday ---- Holy Friday --- God's Friday.

We've had a very cursory --- a very brief journey --- through some of the Old Testament ---- and New Testament stories --- and passages --- that all led up to today --- and beyond today as well.

And now we're going to turn to the Gospel story --- John's Gospel --- picking it up at the beginning of chapter 18 and then reading through to the end of chapter 19 ---- the arrest ---- the denial --- the sentencing --- the crucifixion ----- the death and burial of Jesus Christ ---- the living Word --- the Alpha and the Omega.

This is God's Word for God's people ---- on this Good Friday.

Read John 18 and 19.