ST MARYS
NANTWICH

# Lent Course 2026

## The Gospel according to St John

## Week 5

### The Big Picture

As we read the final chapters of the Gospel it is worth looking at the many ways in which themes are brought to fulfilment, or questions resolved.

In no particular order…

*Creation:*

> The Gospel begins with the opening words of the creation narrative in Genesis: "In the beginning". At the end of the Gospel (20.22) when Jesus appears to the disciples behind locked doors, he breathes on them and says "Receive the Holy Spirit". As God breathed life into Adam (Genesis 2.7) in the first creation, so here Christ breathes life into his followers in the new creation.
>
> Similarly we may compare "In the beginning" with "It is finished" (19.30), which may be translated "It has been completed".

There is reference to creation at the beginning of the Gospel, and indirectly to the fall (the darkness, 1.5) and at the end we are back in a garden (19.41, 20.15) – not now expelled but called by name.

*The 8th Sign*

We have read the seven signs:

Turning Water into Wine (2.1–11)
Healing the Nobleman's Son (4.46-54)
Healing the Paralytic at Bethesda (5.1–15)
Feeding the 5000 (6.1–15)
Walking on Water (6.6–21)
Healing the Man Born Blind (9.1–7)
Raising Lazarus (11.1–44)

The resurrection may be recognised as the 8th sign, just as the day of resurrection is the 8th day of the week, a day of new creation beyond the days of the old creation.

*We have seen his glory*

This is the climax of our Christmas Gospel (1.14), the high point in the prologue, the Word became flesh, and through the Gospel the glory is revealed. But it is towards the end – in fact, at the original ending – 20.28 where we have Thomas exclaim "My Lord and my God!", the most explicit statement of the divinity of Christ in the Gospel, and the point where the glory is recognised most fully.

*So that you may come to believe*

Belief is a strong theme throughout the Gospel, from 1.12 onwards – "But to all who received him, who believed in

his name, he gave power to become children of God". At the end of the Gospel this purpose is made explicit (20.31) and Thomas is an example of belief, and his faith is the occasion of a special blessing for those who would follow and believe.

*Where may we abide?*

As we have seen before, in the prologue we have a description of where Christ abides: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made him known" (1.18). And the same phrase is used of the one whom Jesus loved, who was "reclining in the bosom of Jesus" (13.23). At the end of the Gospel, any tension between Peter and this disciple is resolved. They each have different roles, but both remain with Jesus.

*The Restoration of Peter*

Compare Peter's threefold denial (18.15-18; 25-27) around the charcoal fire, with his restoration, questioned three times, around a charcoal fire (21.9-19).

*The Unfinished Gospel*

See 21.25. The things that Jesus does include what his followers do, so this is an encouragement to continue the Gospel. And we know from chapter 1 that Jesus does everything – he is the creator – so how can that be contained in a book?

*153 fish – 21.11*

Is this simply a historical detail? Or is the number significant? St Augustine noted that 153 is the 17th triangular number (1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9+10+11+12+13+14+15+16+17=153). And 17 = 10 (Commandments, gifts of the old covenant) + 7 (Gifts of the Spirit, the new covenant), representing the gathering of all in the net; Jew, Gentile, the whole world. Far-fetched? Maybe. Fun? Certainly!

**Some of the Questions in John**

Chapters 17-21

Who are you looking for? (18.4,7  20.15)

What is truth? (18.38)

Where are you from? (19.8)

Why are you crying? (20.15)

Do you love me? (21.15-17)

**Questions for us:**

- Work through the above questions and look at the context. Can we hear them being asked by us now, or asked of us now? How can they be answered? Are any answers found in the text?
- What have you found fresh, inspiring, or encouraging in these chapters?
- What have you found difficult or disturbing?
- "What are you looking for?" – a theme that runs through the Gospel. How do these chapters point to answers?