

Meditation #1
John 1:46
Prof. Herman Hanko

And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Verses 35-51 of John 1 describe Jesus' calling some of his disciples. Andrew and another disciple not named, but probably John, were the first to be called to be disciples. They followed Jesus because they had heard John the Baptist point Jesus out as the Lamb of God (vv. 35-42). Andrew then rushed to call his brother Peter, who also followed the Lord. The next day Jesus called Philip who was from the same city as Peter and Andrew (vv. 43-44). The call of Jesus to these men was sovereign, irresistible and efficacious. They could not resist it nor did they want to. It became evident to them that Jesus was the promised Messiah (vv. 41, 45).

The text says that Jesus "found" Philip, which seems to indicate that Jesus knew who were to be his disciples – and even looked for them (v. 43). Philip's reaction was the same as that of Andrew and Peter (v. 45) and he hurried to tell Nathanael. Verse 46 tells us of Nathanael's response to Philip.

Nathanael was not so easily convinced. He apparently knew the village from which Jesus had come. Either Philip told him or he had already heard of Jesus and the arguments men had used to convince others that he could not be the promised Messiah. He used a sort of proverb with which to frame his response. It is a proverb that is still used today. While in Northern Ireland I was talking with a member of the Ulster Royal Constabulary about a town in Northern Ireland. Rather disdainfully, he said to me, "Can any good come out of _____?"

To Nathanael, that was proof that Jesus could not be the promised Messiah. The Scriptures had prophesied that Jesus would be from Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). Wisely, Philip told Nathanael to see Jesus for himself. Jesus demonstrated his omniscience with only a few words, and Nathanael was persuaded (vv. 47-51).

It is still the same today when Jesus calls us to be his disciples. We cannot refuse; Jesus makes us unwilling to refuse so that we gladly and joyfully follow him as the Lamb of God in whom we have deliverance from our sin. But let us never forget that to follow Christ has no reward in this world and is never an easy way to walk. Our Lord reminds us: "...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24b). But the reward is everlasting life with Christ. And those who are called will surely come.

Memory Verse: Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Meditation #2
John 4:11
Prof. Herman Hanko

The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

Unusual for a Jew and puzzling to the disciples, Jesus went to Galilee through Samaria. What we cannot understand but what was common to the Lord, was that he *had to go* through Samaria (John 4:4), because there was an elect in Samaria who had to be saved (vv. 28-30).

The meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan took place at Jacob's well, a well dug by Jacob 2000 years earlier, but still giving clear and cold water. It was very deep and water could be obtained only with a winch and pail.

There, at Jacob's well, Jesus directed the whole conversation with the goal of saving the Samaritan woman.

He asked for a drink. The Samaritan woman was puzzled, for Jews hated Samaritans and refused to talk with them. Jesus seized the opportunity to turn the question around: He said, *"If you knew who I am and why I came into the world, you would have asked **me** for a drink."*

The woman had no idea what Jesus was talking about, for although she had knowledge of the coming of a Messiah, she had no way of telling that she was talking with him at that moment. All she could think of was earthly water from Jacob's well; but living water? What could that possibly be?

And so she, puzzled by Jesus' words, asked him how he could give her water if he had nothing to get it out of Jacob's well. All she knew was earthly water and, no matter how good the water was, Jesus was not speaking of it. But the Lord meant by living water the Holy Spirit that would be given him when he ascended into heaven, and by whom all salvation would be given. It was the water that would quench anyone's thirst that would last eternally.

Water throughout Scripture is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who cleanses our spiritual thirst (See Isa. 55:1, John 7:37-39, Rev. 22:1-2, 17). By living water, Jesus gives the only water by which true thirst is quenched. The thirsty ones are those who have the unquenchable awareness of their sins and are crushed by this great burden. The Samaritan woman was brought to the consciousness of her sin by the Lord who uncovered her life of fornication by telling her to fetch her husband. And so, he revealed to her that he was the Messiah who alone could give this living water.

To us as well Christ gives the only water, the Holy Spirit, to quench our thirst for forgiveness.

The Spirit is sent by Christ to satisfy the thirsty soul with the assurance of forgiveness in Christ. Let us go to Christ and drink deeply to be freed from our burden of sin.

Memory Verse: *Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

Meditation #3
John 4:35
Prof. Herman Hanko

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest.

The words of this passage of Scripture are spoken by our Lord to his disciples. The Samaritan woman had gone into the village to summon the other villagers and had returned. The disciples were utterly surprised by Jesus talking to a Samaritan, because there was hatred between the Jews and Samaritans.

When the woman went into the village to fetch the villagers, the disciples urged the Lord to eat some of the food that they had purchased. But Jesus responded by reminding his disciples that God had sent him into the world to save the church God had given him. And he told the disciples that the church would be a *catholic* church, including also Samaritans. That work was Christ's food.

In pressing upon the hearts of the disciples, who would soon take over the work Jesus was doing, Jesus compares the gathering of the catholic church with a farmer gathering his harvest.

In John 4:35, to show that the gathering of the church is urgent, Jesus compared the gathering of the church to harvesting a ripe grain. Harvesting his crops was the joyful goal of all the farmer's work.

It also was the joyful goal of all the work of Christ, including his suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. After our Lord's ascension, Christ would use the apostles and later the church to bring in the "harvest" of the church.

As Jesus spoke these words, the harvest of wheat in Palestine would not come for four months, but the harvest of gathering the elect is always ready for gathering. This does not mean that the whole elect church is on earth at any given time; rather, it means that there are always elect on earth who must, through the church, do mission work. There is always the wheat of elect that must be gathered.

In the so-called "great commission" in Matthew 28:19, Christ gives his church her "marching orders". Never may the church fail to go into all the world and preach the gospel. But the church must remember that covenant children born of believing parents within the church are part of that harvest. And they too must be gathered by covenantal instruction. Both are important: covenantal instruction of the children of believers and mission work in the world. Such a church is blessed.

Memory Verse: *Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

Meditation #4
John 5:47
Prof. Herman Hanko

But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

The reference in the text to “his writings” is to Moses and the books that Moses wrote under divine inspiration, the books Genesis through Deuteronomy. In New Testament usage, all the books of the Old Testament were divided into “the law and the prophets.”

Jesus’ argument is very simple: Moses spoke of Christ, and the wicked Pharisees claimed to believe Moses; therefore, they ought to believe Christ as well.

The occasion for the bitter dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees, was Jesus’ miracle of healing a lame man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:2-9). The miracle Jesus performed had been done on the Sabbath. The result was that the lame man whom Jesus healed picked up his bed and walked (John 5:8-9). The hypocritical Pharisees condemned the man for violating the Sabbath by carrying his bed.

The Jews had corrupted Moses’ teaching concerning the Sabbath, as well as all of the law, by claiming the law to be a ladder they could climb to earn their salvation and heaven by keeping the law. They vigorously not only kept the law, though outwardly, but added countless new laws of their own devising. They were the first Arminians who believed in salvation by works.

Jesus had come to fulfill the law. The law said: Thou shalt work six days and then enter into the perfect rest of God’s covenant (Ex. 20:9-10). No man on earth could do this. Jesus had come to fulfill the law by keeping the law perfectly even when going to hell to pay for our sins. He kept the law *inwardly* as the Pharisees never even tried to do. He loved the Lord his God even when he suffered all the fury of the wrath of God against our sins. Not by keeping the law, but by entering into God’s rest by faith in Christ we enter into God’s rest, the rest of heaven. Christ earned the keeping of the law for us.

The Jews claimed to go to heaven by their works. But Moses had spoken of one who would keep the law, which we could never keep (Deut. 18:15, 16). Faith in Christ brings us into the perfect rest of God’s covenant.

The Jews corrupted this truth; Jesus taught it. And so, if the Jews believed in Christ they would be saved. And if they believed Moses, as they claimed to do, they would believe Christ as well. Believe in Christ therefore, and by faith in Christ you will enter the true rest.

Memory Verse: *Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

Meditation #5
John 6:28
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

The text quoted above was part of Jesus' discussion with the Jews after he had fed 5000 men. The crowd that Jesus fed wanted to make Jesus king so that he could feed them by miracles. Jesus warned them that they were carnal, and did not understand that the miracle was only a sign of the spiritual reality of Christ being the true bread (John 6:15, 26).

Misunderstanding Jesus completely, they thought they had to do some special work for Jesus to become their king. Perhaps they had to build a palace for him, or obtain royal clothing. They considered that this was a necessary work of God.

But Jesus put a stop immediately to such nonsense, and told them forthrightly that the work of God, about which they asked, was to believe in Jesus whom God had sent to accomplish salvation. Believing in Christ as God's eternal Son who had come to save sinners was eating and drinking Christ, for Christ is the true bread and drink that feeds the souls of them that believe in him (John 6:32-33)

The Jews would not believe that truth, for their whole spiritual life was built on salvation by works. That is why they asked Jesus about the works of God. They could not conceive of Jesus being the bread from heaven so that to be saved they had to eat him (John 6:51-52). And when Jesus had explained all this, many of his disciples forsook him (John 6:66).

This miracle and its spiritual meaning is the meaning of every Lord's Supper we celebrate. The bread of the Lord's Supper is the sign of Jesus' flesh and the wine a sign of Jesus' blood. To eat the bread of the Lord's Supper and to drink the wine is to believe in Christ, God's Son in whom alone is to be found salvation.

Our Belgic Confession speaks of this: It calls faith "the hand and mouth of our soul" (Belgic Confession Article 35). One ought to read this important article in our Belgic Confession. It is excellent reading to prepare us for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

We walk in this world as pilgrims and strangers. Our destination is heaven. We need more than earthly bread and water, for we already have the new life of heaven in our hearts. That new life has also to be fed. It cannot be nourished by earthly bread. Christ is the true bread; we eat him by faith. Every Lord's Supper is the feast in which we eat the true bread that enables us to walk the way to heaven.

Memory Verse: *John 6:33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

Meditation #6
John 6:60
Prof. Herman Hanko

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

The context of these words of the crowd is important. Jesus had fed 5000 men with five loaves of bread and two fishes. It was, other than the resurrection of Christ, the only miracle Jesus performed that is recorded in all four gospels. As a result of the miracle, the multitude was intent on taking Jesus by force and making him their king. But Jesus escaped and during the night went to Capernaum. However, he did not escape the crowd for they had preceded him and arrived in Capernaum before him, and found him there.

Once again, the people made an effort to make Jesus king; but to avoid their attempts, Jesus uncovered their motives in wanting to make him king: they were carnal and only wanted him king because he could, apparently, provide for their earthly needs so that they would never need to work again (vv. 26-27).

But the bread they wanted was earthly bread, which if one were to eat, one would still die. Jesus had come down from heaven as the true, spiritual and heavenly bread. He himself was that bread, and to eat his flesh and drink his blood was the same as believing in him. Faith in Christ was to eat spiritual bread that would nourish a man's spiritual life forever so that he would never die (vv. 47-51).

That Jesus spoke of his body and blood as bread and water prompted them to say that this statement of Jesus seemed to be promoting some form of cannibalism and they were offended. But the offense came not because they failed to see the analogy between earthly bread and Jesus' body, because it was mysterious. The trouble lay with them: they were earthly, carnal and of this world (vv. 51-54).

Behind their lack of spirituality lay their sin and the lack of the Holy Spirit to forgive their sins. This, in turn, was because the source of such spirituality is the sovereign and particular grace of God in Christ, worked by the Holy Spirit. If they or we come in faith to Christ, it is only the Father that draws us (v. 65).

Let us then come to him in faith and receive everlasting life.

Memory Verse: John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Meditation #7
John 6:67-68
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

The words of this text, along with verse 69 (And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God), have made an indelible impression on my mind. Rev. Herman Hoeksema preached on this text to his congregation on the first service the congregation came together after Hubert De Wolf took about 60% of the congregation away from the Protestant Reformed Church in 1953. He told us at the beginning of his sermon that he had preached on the same text when he and his congregation worshipped on the first Sunday after they were expelled from the Christian Reformed Church in 1924.

The question of the text stunned us. It seemed as if he were saying that he was puzzled that so many people were still in our church, and that he would just as soon that we left too. But that was not the case.

The occasion was Jesus' debate with the Jews in Capernaum after he had fed 5000 men with five loaves and two fishes. The crowds wanted to make him their king, but only because he could give them bread.

When he explained that he was the Bread of Life, and that they should want him, not earthly bread, they all forsook him (v. 66).

Why did Jesus seem almost to encourage the disciples to leave him?

It was not because he wanted them to leave him, but it was a pointed question that pierced their heart like a dagger and meant: *"Are you twelve also following me for earthly bread? If you are, just leave me as the other did."*

The only reason for the disciples to stay with Christ was because he is the Bread of Life; and he is the Bread of life because he is able to feed us with heavenly bread, which is his own body. And that bread will nourish us unto everlasting life. Peter made that clear in his response to the Lord. No other place could be found to eat the Bread of Life than at the feet of Jesus.

Why do we follow Christ? – is Christ's question to you and me. Will he bring us riches? A good job? Popularity? An easy life in the world? All our friends are doing it?

If these are the reasons, you might just as well leave. The only reason is that in Christ is all our salvation for now and for eternity. But to follow Christ means, not earthly pleasures, but self-denial, cross-bearing, persecution.

Will you leave him as so many do?

And, don't forget: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (v. 44a).

Memory Verse: *John 10:29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

Meditation #8
John 8:5
Prof. Herman Hanko

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

The circumstances of this question put to Jesus by the Pharisees are explained in verses 1-3. The woman they took with them was taken because she had committed adultery, she had been caught in the act! They thought that perhaps Jesus would excuse her and thus violate the law of Moses that said an adulterer and adulteress must be stoned (Lev. 20:10-13).

The purpose of the Pharisees was devilish. Jesus had told others whom he healed that their sins were forgiven. They hoped, apparently, that Jesus would now do the same, and thus contradict Moses. Then they could kill him for teaching something contrary to Moses.

We do not know with certainty why Jesus, in answer to their question, stooped down and wrote in the dust. Nor do we know what he wrote. But it may have been Jeremiah 17:13. That text fits exactly what was happening at that moment: "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me *shall be written in the earth*, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters."

The text was perfectly applicable because the Pharisee had committed the dreadful sin of self-righteousness. In their self-righteous pride, they thought they would go to heaven, while this woman would go to hell – even if she had repented. They had forsaken the Lord in their self-righteousness; this poor sinner whom they wanted stoned was repentant (vv. 10-11).

The Pharisees were confronted by a soul-searching statement of the Lord: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (v. 7b). That statement, so powerfully made, awakened their consciences (v. 9).

It is interesting that they left Jesus and the woman one by one, convicted in their consciences, beginning with the oldest. Even in their unholy self-righteousness, they had to admit that they were sinners; and the oldest departed first, for he had spent the longest time on earth and his conscience brought to his consciousness a greater multitude of sins.

I have found that it is true that the older one becomes, the heavier grows the burden of sin and the greater becomes the need to flee to Christ. And if we are children of our Father in heaven, the dreadful sin of self-righteousness gradually disappears. Then those words of the Lord still ring in our souls: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Memory Verse: *Psalm 25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.*

Meditation #9
John 8:19
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

The wicked Pharisees dogged Jesus' footsteps to find, if they could, some infraction of the Mosaic law on the basis of which they could kill him. In this case, although the law of Moses stipulated that no one man might prove that he had said was the truth (v. 17). Jesus points out to the Pharisees that he does have sufficient proof that what he says is true – he has two witnesses: his own word and the witness of his Father. This is proof that he is the one whom he claims to be, that is, Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God.

Some of the elements of that proof are: Moses spoke of him; he had fulfilled all prophecy made in the Old Testament; he performed miracles, which only God could perform; God's voice from heaven from heaven that had said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17b). Those combined were more than sufficient proof.

Some might object that the one witness to Jesus' divinity was Jesus himself. But, first of all, he distinguishes himself from God because he is the eternal Son of God in our flesh; and, secondly, he made no excuses for his claim to be the Son of God, for his miracles were his testimony that he was divine. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night because he had seen some of Jesus' mighty works (John 3). And the Samaritan woman had believed his divinity because Jesus was a prophet who knew her past (John 4:29).

These words of Jesus are similar to his answer to Philip in John 14:8-12. Jesus tells Philip that if Philip had seen Jesus, he would see God as well.

How can this be?

The answer to this is Jesus' divinity. Our Lord unites in his person the whole of the Godhead and whole and complete man.

In his years on earth, in the state of humiliation, the Lord's glory, the glory of God was hidden as it were by the veil of his human nature. But as John says in John 1:14, there were those who beheld his glory, the glory of God himself. They saw through the veil. Jesus' words and miracles were lightning flashes of Jesus' divinity.

In our Lord's exaltation the veil of his human nature loses its human characteristics, and becomes the revelation of the divine. The human nature, now made heavenly, is the "picture window" through which we see his divine nature, and thus see God himself.

The Scriptures are a mirror, Paul says, (1 Cor. 13:12), in which we see Christ darkly, for he is glorified and we are not. But when we go to heaven we shall see Christ face to face. And seeing him who is the revelation of God himself, we see God. What a glory that shall be.

Memory Verse: *1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

Meditation #10
John 9:2
Prof. Herman Hanko

And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

The history recorded in John 9 took place in Jerusalem; and the healing of this blind man took place in the temple (John 8:20). The blind man was either in the temple grounds or immediately outside the temple.

When Jesus and his disciples passed the man, the disciples asked Jesus a rather simple question: Who was responsible for this man's blindness? Was it himself? Or were his parents responsible?

Apparently, it was common among the Jews to believe that physical and perhaps mental illnesses were due to some sin which the person who was afflicted had committed; although the text indicates that the Jews also believed that a child could be punished with some affliction for a sin of the parents. Perhaps they had in mind the second commandment which teaches that God visited the sins of parents upon their children, since heretical versions of the truth result in a church (or anyone) sinking deeper into false doctrine, with the result that they go lost in their generations.

This incorrect opinion of the Jews, to which the disciples refer, is held by many even today. Psychiatrists will often approach mental problems in patients from the false notion that any affliction especially of unusual severity, is due to some sin the sufferer committed.

Although it is true that all suffering of every kind is due to the sin that ruined the entire human race since Adam's sin, it is not necessarily true that people can trace a particular affliction back to a particular sin and interpret it as God's judgment on them. Although this is certainly possible in some instances, Jesus makes plain that we may not make it a general rule. After all, God himself speaks of Job, whom he afflicted dreadfully, as a perfect and upright man, who feared God and turned his back on evil (Job 1:8).

For the wicked, all the sufferings and afflictions of the wicked are God's punishment for sin. Equally true is the fact that all the sufferings and afflictions of the righteous are chastisements sent by God in love to save his people (Heb. 12:4-11). The latter may be for definite reasons and particular sins, but God makes the sin clear. A converted drunkard, for example, knows that his ruined health is God's chastisement for his sin of drunkenness.

Our calling in times of affliction is to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, and cast all our cares on our God (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

In this way God will be glorified as he was through the healing of the man born blind.

Memory Verse: *1 Peter 5: 7 Casting all your care upon him [God]; for he careth for you.*

Meditation #11
John 9:36
Prof. Herman Hanko

He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

These words are the words that the man born blind asked Jesus after the wonderful miracle Jesus had performed for him. It is one of two or three miracles in which Jesus explains the power of miracles, namely salvation. It is also the history of the blind man's conversion.

First, the man only knew that he was healed, but did not know who healed him or the miracle's significance (v. 11).

The Pharisees asked him a second time and warned him that the healer could not have been a man of God, for he healed on the Sabbath (vv. 15-16). The man, now bolder, said he was his healer was a prophet (v. 17).

When the Pharisees said to the man, in yet another confrontation, that sinners cannot do miracles, the man said he didn't know whether the one who healed him was a sinner, but he had performed this miracle (v. 25).

When the Pharisees asked him yet again, he asked them if they also wanted to be his disciples (v. 27). He thus, with the word "also" implied that he was a disciple of the one who healed him, but he was taunting the Pharisees.

When they said they were Moses' disciples, the man, now than ever convinced that his healer was the Messiah, insisted that his healer was of God and that no one else had the power to heal him (vv. 30-33).

At that point, he was expelled from the synagogue (v. 34). The result was that the man concluded that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, but asked Jesus whether the man who healed him was the Messiah, because he wanted to believe in him (v. 36).

When Jesus told him that he was the Messiah, he believed and worshipped Jesus. He worshipped Jesus because he believed Jesus was divine.

What a remarkable passage! It shows how Jesus gradually worked in this unconverted man to bring him to faith in Christ.

He is only one of two (the Samaritan woman being the other one) to whom Jesus made himself known by saying who he was.

By means of the miracle, Jesus tells all who believe in him that sin is true blindness and that to see is true sight for it is the sight that faith gives to believe Christ and his salvation (vv. 40-41), but conversion can sometimes come over a period of time. That is the miracle Jesus works in our hearts. Do we confess that we are blind? Then we truly see.

Memory Verse: *John 9:39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.*

Meditation #12
John 10:20
Prof. Herman Hanko

And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

The verse quoted above appears immediately after Jesus' remarkable and beautiful sermon on the good Shepherd. He had ended this section of his sermon with telling the people gathered there that as the good Shepherd, he would lay down his life for the sheep, for he had the power (authority) to lay it down and to take it again – an obvious reference to his death on the cross and resurrection.

The apostle John tells us of two reactions to Jesus' preaching. The wicked Pharisees condemned his preaching as a clear indication of the fact that he was demon-possessed (v. 20).

But others in the audience disagreed. They pointed to the obvious fact that a demon-possessed man could not do miracles of healing (v. 21).

There was division among the people.

The Pharisees reacted to his preaching in the way that they did because they hated Jesus and wanted to kill him (v. 31). This attempt was a terrible effort to persuade the people that Jesus was worthy of death. There can scarcely be a worse sin than to accuse Jesus of having a devil.

But so fierce was their anger that they, in trying to stone him, would have broken the Roman law that required that no judicial courts could execute a criminal except with the permission of Roman courts. This is why the Sanhedrin would eventually seek Pilate's permission to kill Jesus.

But Scripture also tells us in more than one place of the reactions to Jesus' preaching – and to the gospel wherever and by whom it is preached.

This was the case in Jesus' parable of the four kinds of soil (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23).

Also when Jesus preached in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, John tells us that those who heard him were divided (John 7:25-27, 30-31, 40-43).

Basically, the division among those who heard him was between those who believed that he was the Christ and those who denied it. Those who did believe in him were God's elect, for whom Christ died and in whom the Spirit worked true faith.

Those who did not believe in him were reprobate and who were not of Jesus' sheep. Jesus himself said so: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep" (v. 26). Jesus did not say, "Ye are not my sheep because ye believe not;". Jesus said, "Ye believe not, *because* ye are not of my sheep."

So it is today. God accomplishes his eternal purpose in the preaching. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Memory Verse: *John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*

Meditation #13
John 11:26
Prof. Herman Hanko

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

This saying of Jesus is of marvellous comfort as we stand at the side of the grave of one we love. I have preached on it at funerals.

Lazarus had died; Jesus' close friend! Our Lord was grief-stricken, for he was like us in all things except sin. He knew the pain of losing one he loved (v. 35).

But Jesus had waited with coming to Bethany until Lazarus died. This puzzled Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters. But Jesus had done so purposely (vv. 13-16).

Jesus' words, spoken to Martha, are of eternal blessedness.

We must understand these words of the Lord in connection with the preceding verse: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:"

Jesus contrasts our life here in the world with true life. In our life in the world, we are most emphatically dead. We live, it is true, but we live briefly a natural life only to die for no man escapes the grave. Only two in all the history of the world did not die: Enoch and Elijah.

But, if in this life in which we are truly dead – spiritually and physically, we believe in Christ, it is gloriously different.

While this life is nothing but a continuous death, if we believe in Jesus, we will never die! To be by faith in Christ is to become a part of his glorious body, and his life becomes ours! His life becomes ours in this life already!

Then, though our bodies die and go to the grave, our souls do not die. We cannot die. We live. We live with Christ. We live where he is, in heaven. We never die.

All this is true for us because Christ died and rose again. He died to banish death and destroy the power of death.

But he arose by his own power. For him, the grave had lost its sting. Death is swallowed up in victory. Those who are with him and engrafted into him go also through the grave and to glory.

To you who hear this word, comes the same question: "Believest thou this?"

Memory Verse: *John 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*

Meditation #14
John 12:5
Prof. Herman Hanko

Why was not this ointment not sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus whom Christ raised from the dead, was perhaps the most perceptive of Jesus' friends. Her act of anointing Jesus' feet with expensive ointment was an act of faith, for she did this in preparation for Jesus' burial (v. 7). She knew Jesus would die. It may have been also an expression of her faith in Jesus' resurrection, for Jews often anointed the bodies of the dead, thereby expressing their hope in the resurrection.

The ointment she used was indeed expensive. If it were worth 300 pence, it represented the entire year's wages of a labouring man, which amounted to one pence a day.

Judas Iscariot spoke the words found in this text. But as the next verse tells us, he did not question Mary's deed because he loved the poor and thought it would actually benefit them. He said this because he was a thief and carried the bag (or the purse). That is, he was responsible for the little money given to Jesus and his disciples, and which supported Jesus and the disciples in their meager needs. But from these meager possessions he stole coins for his personal gain.

His seemingly pious suggestion therefore was hypocritical. Nevertheless, Jesus turned it into a remarkable bit of instruction, especially for the exercise of the office of deacons in the church.

Jesus told him "For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." The word "always" is important. It means that Jesus would personally see to it when he was in heaven that there were poor in the church – always.

We have it all wrong. We are proud of the fact that our church is wealthy enough to have no poor. It is however, just the opposite. Poor in the church are a blessing. They themselves are a blessing, for they live lives that show their contentment in the Lord's way. But the necessity of giving to the poor is a mighty blessing for the congregation and teaches them one of the most important Christian virtues: compassion for the poor. The office of deacons and their work is as important as the offices of elder and minister.

If it is really true that a congregation has no poor, then the words of Scripture are necessary to obey: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). There are many poor of the household of faith outside our denomination or congregation.

Let us show our gratitude for God's rich gifts of grace to us in our caring for the poor.

Memory Verse: *Galatians 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Meditation #15
John 13:6
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then cometh he (Jesus) to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

It is striking that this incident in the life of our Lord took place the night before the Lord's suffering and death. How beautiful is this incident introduced in verse 1: "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end". This is told us as the reason why Jesus washed his disciples' feet: "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Jesus went around the table where his disciples were seated and washed the feet of each disciple. A host, having prepared a banquet and his guests having arrived, he ordered one of his slaves to wash the feet of the guests as they arrived. It was a gesture of true hospitality that was always done for the guests whose feet had become dirty while wearing sandals on the dusty roads of Palestine. But it was a job for slaves or servants (Luke 7:36-50).

Peter was aware of this and could not imagine that Jesus, their Lord and Master, would stoop so low as to become their slave. In pious hypocrisy, undoubtedly congratulating himself on his refusal to let Jesus wash his feet, he refused.

Jesus explained why he was doing this. Jesus was indeed ready to become their slave out of love for them. He would be their slave in his terrible death on the cross, a death that was to deliver his people from their sins. Jesus had to become the slave of his people to save them; but it was an awful humiliation (Phil. 2:7-8).

This act of Jesus was a startling explanation of the necessity of his cross and the work Jesus did for us when he died on Calvary's hill.

The eternal God, infinitely higher than us poor mortals and the full embodiment of holiness, made himself a slave for wretched unworthy sinners. Who can fathom the depths of such love?

By his humiliation in becoming our slave, he becomes our Lord who rules over us in infinite grace. It is no wonder then that we must become like him and humbly serve others as their slave.

Memory Verse: Philippians 2:5-6 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Meditation #16
John 13:37
Prof. Herman Hanko

Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

The context of this passage is important. Jesus was in an upper room, possibly in the house belonging to John Mark, eating the last supper with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion and death. The Lord concluded the meal with his last words recorded for us and in chapters 14-16. His sermon was closed with his glorious “High-Priestly Prayer” (John 17).

In the last verses of chapter 13, Jesus carefully explained that he was going to go away from his disciples. He spoke of it in very clear language, for he had told his disciples before this evening, but it was as if he never told them, for they could not imagine the horror of Jesus’ leaving them.

The hour was very sad. The grief of the Lord was great for his departure from them was by way of the awful cross on which he would die; and the sorrow of the disciples was also great, for, after three years with him, they could not bear to think of a time when he would no more be with them.

The question of Peter was born out of his sadness, for he wanted to remain with the Lord. He was totally sincere and had no intention of being frivolous. He thought he would indeed die for Christ if only he could be with Christ.

At the same time, Peter’s question was born out of ignorance. He was still thinking about Jesus’ kingdom as an earthly kingdom, a restoration of the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. If it was necessary to die for Christ to follow him into that kingdom (perhaps in war against the Roman squadrons, he was willing to do that).

Peter’s willingness to die for Christ’s sake was shown to be an empty boast, for he, to escape dying with the Lord, denied his Lord three times when the Lord was captured and led away to be killed.

But he was impetuous and unthinking, the Peter who boasted of what he would do. Anything we promise to do for the Lord is empty and vain when we say it while standing in our own strength. When nothing is required of us, we show our moral courage. When the time comes to die with the Lord, we will rather take the mark of the beast and serve Antichrist than die for the Lord.

That is, unless we made our vows in the consciousness that Christ is all our strength. Then with fear and trembling, but faith in Christ’s strength we say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

Dying for Christ may very well be demanded of us. But standing in the strength of Christ, we shall surely die for him and follow him to the glory of his heavenly kingdom.

Memory Verse: *John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Meditation #17
John 16:17
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

It was a night of great sorrow, for Jesus and his disciples were in an upper room where Jesus changed the Old Testament Passover into the New Testament Lord's Supper and gave parting teachings to his beloved disciples.

Jesus was gripped by a great sorrow for he knew that on the next day he would have to go to his cross. The disciples were sorrowful because the Lord had made it unmistakably clear that he was about to leave them.

Jesus, ever mindful of the sorrow of his people, comforted them with the words that so greatly puzzled his disciples and are quoted in this verse.

It is striking that only some of his disciples were puzzled by the Lord's speech. But Jesus had said what he did because of his desire to comfort the disciples in their sorrow. In fact, he was telling them that he had to go away from them to his Father in heaven in order to come again to them in a way far, far more wonderful than his presence with them while walking the dusty roads of Palestine.

The disciples could not understand it all. The chief reason for their inability to understand their Lord was their tenacious clinging to the false idea that Jesus was come to establish an earthly kingdom, which would be, in their minds, a restoration of the kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon.

Because he would fulfil his Father's will on the cross and rise again from the dead, Christ would come again to them in a very blessed way. Christ himself would say, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:20b) That promise was partially fulfilled on Pentecost when Jesus came to his church in the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on the church.

But the final fulfilment must wait until the end of time, when Jesus will come to destroy the wicked and all their earthly kingdoms, take all the dead out of their graves, take his whole church to glory where they shall see their Christ face to face and live and princes and princesses in Christ's heavenly kingdom in the new heaven and the new earth – forever and ever!

That this glorious kingdom might be realized, Jesus had to go to his Father who determined it all.

Memory Verse: *Matthew 28:20b* ...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Meditation #18
John 18:4
Prof. Herman Hanko

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

The question in the text that our Lord asked was directed to the mob, led by Judas Iscariot, that had come to capture him in the Garden of Gethsemane. As is evident from verse 5, the Lord greeted them in this way to identify himself and thus make his capture easier for the mob. He thus, in effect, was surrendering to them.

Throughout the final events that led to the crucifixion of our Lord, it is evident from Scripture that our Lord willingly and even actively did what was required to be crucified on Calvary.

One who does not understand the Scriptures might be puzzled by such conduct. But the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied that this would be characteristic of our Lord's ministry. Isaiah in a moving description of our Lord's suffering wrote: "...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

Christ's obedience to his Father's will is the key to the atonement. Of that too Scripture speaks. In Psalm 40:6-8 is an important passage that is quoted in Hebrews 10:5-10: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God... By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

In the darkest hour of Calvary, when our Lord had even to ask "Why," he remained obedient. He loved the LORD his God when he knew only his Father's wrath.

Nor was his suffering passive. Obedience requires that one himself do what was involved in obedience. In the mystery of the atonement, our Lord died willingly – for us! John 13:1 says it all: "...having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

He, the Son of God, was obedient that we might be sanctified. What a comfort this is for us, his people.

Memory Verse: *Isaiah 53:7b ...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

Meditation #19
John 18:33
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

The accusation that Jesus made himself a king was first brought to Pilate by the Jews (Luke 23:1-2). First of all, when the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate to be judged, they tried to bluff their way into securing Pilate's condemnation; but that ploy did not work (John 18:30-31). So, according to Luke, they charged Jesus with claiming that he was a king. That charge was, of course, true.

Pilate was obviously puzzled. He knew that Jesus was no king representing Rome, and so he must be a king of the Jews. But the puzzlement remained: Why were the Jews themselves giving Jesus over to Pilate to be tried? Would they do that if he were their king? And what a spectacle Jesus was as he stood before Pilate: there was nothing royal about his appearance, for he had no royal clothing, no army, no royal dignity; he saw only a bound man whom the Jews themselves rejected as their king.

Yet, as the trial continued, it did become evident to Pilate that he was indeed confronted by a king, although a king that was not of this world. That frightened Pilate, and he finally consented to Christ's death by crucifixion under extreme duress. He himself wanted no part of Jesus' kingship.

We must remember that Jesus gave himself willingly to be tried by the Sanhedrin, Pilate represented the world-power of the day, and the mob that had collected and were hollering for Jesus' blood represented the church. God had ordained that Jesus should be tried before Pilate, and Jesus willingly submitted.

In the final analysis, the judgment that God pronounces on all men is based on one fundamental question: What are you going to do with Jesus? What are you going to do with him, the eternal Son of God, not when he is arrayed in all his glory, but when he stands before you helpless and bound, on his way to the cross?

Every man must answer that question! The whole world did in Jerusalem so long ago. The elders did when they condemned him in the Sanhedrin. The world powers answered when in its representative, Pilate, it condemned him to death. The church in its membership rejected him when they bellowed, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." (John 19:15)

So it is today when Christ is set forth in the gospel as God's eternal Son who died and rose again for our sins. The gospel confronts all men with the question: What are you going to do with Christ?

The false church says, "Away with him... We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:15) The believer, from the depths of his sin-soaked soul says, "My Lord and My God."

Memory Verse: *John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

Meditation #20
John 20:13
Prof. Herman Hanko

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him.

After his death, Jesus' body had been buried by Joseph and Nicodemus. Joseph had seen to it that Jesus was buried in his own sepulchre.

The order of events is not altogether clear from the text in John 20. It appears as if Mary Magdalene was first at the sepulchre early Sunday morning. She found the grave empty and ran back to the city to tell Peter and John that Jesus' body was gone.

Peter and John both saw the empty grave but did not see the angels. Peter was puzzled and did not know what to make of it. John saw the grave clothes lying as if the body of the Lord was still in them, although the cloth around Jesus' head was lying, neatly folded, by itself. Upon seeing the grave clothes, John believed in the resurrection (John 20:8-9).

It is quite possible that the visit of the women to the grave (Luke 24:1-8) came while Mary was running back to inform Peter and John of the empty tomb; and that both groups took different ways back, living in different parts of the city.

It is probable that Mary's return was after the visit of Peter and John. The order of visits then would be: Mary, the women, Peter and John, and then Mary's return.

Mary immediately jumped to the conclusion that someone had stolen the Lord's body and put it elsewhere. This to her was sheer calamity, for she intended to bestow on his body the last tokens of her great love for him who had delivered her from seven devils. Her grief was almost beyond enduring, for she had, with other women, attended to the Lord's earthly needs while he was preaching and healing. She could care for him no longer, not even perform her last gestures of love.

Her love was satisfied when the Lord appeared to her. Though she thought him the gardener first. When he called her by her name, she recognized him as her Lord (John 20:16). Even then she did not understand why he had to die, be buried and rise again. But Jesus explained in part by refusing to let her touch him.

Jesus did not leave her, but was present with her from his throne in heaven, from which place he sends his Spirit. And so he is with all those for whom he died: "Lo, I am with you always. . ." (Matt. 28:20).

Memory Verse: *John 10:3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

Meditation #21
John 21:17
Prof. Herman Hanko

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

This verse is a part of a conversation between Jesus and Peter when Jesus appeared to some of his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The background of the conversation had been Peter's terrible denial of the Lord in the courtyard of Caiaphas the high priest during Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. By his denial, Peter had forfeited his right to be Jesus' disciple. This conversation is part of Jesus' restoration and forgiveness of Peter so that he could be a disciple again.

The KJV translation does not capture the force of the conversation because two different words are used for "love." Jesus asked Peter whether he loved his Lord. Peter answered by using a different word, the closest to which is our English word "like."

The conversation went like this:

Jesus: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

Peter: Yes, Lord; thou knowest that I like thee." Peter was afraid to use the strong word "love" and so used a weaker one.

Jesus: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Not now did Jesus ask about Peter loving him more than the other disciples; just, "Do you love me at all?"

Peter: "Yes, Lord; thou knowest that I like thee."

Jesus: "Simon, son of Jonas, do you even like me?" This grieved Peter, for Jesus questioned the fact that Peter even liked him.

Peter: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I like thee."

We could interpret Peter's words as meaning: "Lord, I love thee; but I committed a terrible sin in denying thee. I am not worthy to be thy disciple. Forgive me."

In boundless grace, the Lord forgave Peter and brought him again into the fold of the disciples. Peter became a chief among them, and if tradition is correct, he died on a cross, hanging upside down, because he was not worthy, he said, to die as his Lord died.

So is there forgiveness and pardon for all of us who confess our sins and seek our Saviour. No sin is too great to be forgiven. Let us go to him who loved us unto death.

Memory Verse: *John 13:1 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Meditation #22
John 21:22
Prof. Herman Hanko

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

These words which Jesus spoke to Peter were our Lord's response to Peter's query, "Lord, and what shall this man (the apostle John) do?" (v. 21) This question of Peter was itself prompted by that comforting passage in which is recorded how Peter who denied his Lord was restored to the apostleship. Jesus then spoke to Peter of the death Peter would die as an apostle, but the command came loud and clear: whatever your life may be, "Follow me." (vv. 19, 22)

In a way, it is not surprising that Peter should ask this question, for John was one of the three most intimate disciples of the Lord: Peter, James and John. Peter was curious what was God's plan and purpose for John.

This answer of the Lord is really a rebuke. Jesus means to say, it is none of your business. You will have such a difficult way to walk that you will need to be concerned only about yourself. You have no right to concern yourself with others.

What Jesus meant by the expression "If I will that he tarry till I come," is capable of several meanings. Jesus speaks of him coming to his people when the Spirit was poured out on Pentecost (John 14-16). But this is unlikely. Jesus also speaks of his coming at our death (John 14:1-3), but that too is not really possible, for then Jesus would mean that John would tarry till his death – an obvious redundancy.

It is likely therefore that Jesus refers to the end of the world when he would come again to take his church into heaven with him. Jesus means to say to Peter, *"Even if John should live to the end of the world, it is not and ought not to be any concern to you; you have enough to concern you in your own calling as an apostle. Your calling is to follow me. that will occupy all your attention."*

The text reminds me of Scripture's admonition in Philippians 2:12, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." We have all we can do to work out our own salvation without trying to work out the salvation of another saint.

This word therefore, comes to us as well. Each has the calling to follow the Lord in his own life.

Memory Verse: *Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*