

**Daily Office Devotional, Monday, January 4, 2020**  
**The week of the Second Sunday after Christmas**  
**The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.**

Today we celebrate the Feast of Elizabeth Seton. (See below.)

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (BCP, 940)

AM Psalm 85, 87; PM Psalm 136

Exod. 3:1-12; Heb. 11:23-31; John 14:6-14

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, Book of Common Prayer

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, Book of Common Prayer

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, Book of Common Prayer

Daily Office Gospel, John 14:6-14

6Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' 8Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' 9Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

David's Reflections

Today's reading makes the fundamental affirmation that in Jesus the disciples were experiencing the Father, that Jesus is the ultimate and final disclosure of the nature of the Father. As Jesus said to Philip, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." (14:9).

The stumbling stone of this reading comes in verse six, which makes a positive and a negative statement. The positive statement, "I am the way, the truth and the life." The negative, "No one comes to the Father except through me." Other statements in this Gospel convey this same idea, but none do so more bluntly (See John 1:5; 1:14; 10:1, 9; 12:47). Are we to understand this in an exclusive or inclusive way?

Two opposite answers seem to me equally inadequate. On the one hand, some claim that only faith in the historical Jesus, faith as experienced in Christian churches brings salvation and brings people into the presence of God. On the other extreme, those of a more pluralistic bent claim that Christianity is one of a number of ways to God and that the Christian claim to unique and final truth is arrogant and elitist. Neither option, a radical exclusivism or radical inclusivism, seem adequate, at least not from my perspective.

The Christian belief in the uniqueness of the Christian revelation can acknowledge God's missionary activity outside the efforts of the Christian missionary movement without surrendering the truth claim that Jesus reveals God ultimately. John's Gospel claims that the revelation of God comes in personal terms. Jesus does not merely proclaim the truth about God; rather, he embodies that truth. Would we limit God's missionary work only to the witness of the church in the world?

Can one come to salvation and into God's presence after death if he or she either does not know about the historical Jesus and/or if he or she adheres to another world religion? God revealed Godself to Abraham and that revelation brought Abraham to salvation (Genesis 12 and 15). Paul's sermon in Acts 14:17 says that God has not left Godself without a witness everywhere. John 1:9 says that Jesus is the true light coming into the world that enlightens every person. Matthew 25 says that there will be people in the final judgment who will say, "When did we see you hungry or thirsty?", and that they will learn that they had come into direct contact with Jesus without knowing it. Those people who practice radical hospitality to the hungry, the imprisoned, the sick, and others enter into God's eternal salvation. What if those persons are Muslims or Buddhists caring for Christ in those they meet without knowing it?

Consider the words of D. T. Niles: ". . . when Jesus Christ makes his place and time of appointment with (people) men, he does not always give his name. . . . The point is not that there are alternatives to commitment to Christ--other ways by which (people) men can be saved--but that to speak of the finality of Christ is not to

tie oneself to where his name is actually pronounced. As he himself tells us, he determines the form and occasion of his presence, and where and to whom he will come incognito." [D. T. Niles, *Who is This Jesus?* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), p. 102.]

[For additional reading, I would refer you to the excellent summary discussion of this issue in the writing of the Roman Catholic Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 89-113).]

*Collect of the Second Sunday after Christmas Day*

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 214)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Elizabeth Seton, Founder of the American Sisters of Charity (died 4 Jan 1821). [http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/elizabeth\\_seton.htm](http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/elizabeth_seton.htm)

*Collect of the Feast of Elizabeth Seton*

Give us grace, O God, to love you in all things and above all things, that, following the example of your servant Elizabeth Ann Seton, we might express our love for you in the service of others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

*A Collect for Protection*

O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night. Bring us in safety to the morning hours; through him who died and rose again for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 124)

*In the Order of Worship for Evening*

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers, creator of the changes of day and night, giving rest to the weary, renewing the strength of those who are spent, bestowing upon us occasions of song in the evening. As you have protected us in the day that is past, so be with us in the coming night; keep us from every sin, every evil, and every fear; for you are our light and salvation, and the strength of our life. To you be glory for endless ages. *Amen.* (BCP, 113)

*A Collect for Mission*

Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (*BCP*, 816-817)