

The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us

John 1:14

Quentin Smith, December 25, 2022

Well good morning, everybody and Merry Christmas. As I look out, I see lots of visitors with us. We have some friends for Prairie Chapel. We have some old faces with us. We have Caleb's parents, Shannon and David; we want to welcome you for the first time here. And I just want to make mention also of Jenny Hartzenberg's parents, Henny and Leticia all the way from South Africa. They gave up 35 degrees to come here. Somebody, check them out. We also see Judy's parents, welcome here. And Wally. We're hopeful that you will have a time with us that'll be edifying today. For those of you haven't been with us, we're walking our way through the Gospel according to John, Christmas in the Gospel of John. And Jeremy kicked us off, Kevin was preaching last week and I get to be the anchor and bring us home with John chapter 1:14 today.

But before I get there, Tanya and I became grandparents this year. And if you've had a child, or if you've had a grandchild, you will understand the wonder and the joy, and really the thankfulness that is wrapped up in seeing that child who he or she is unfolding before your eyes. And if you want to see something really sweet, you watch Oumy when she sees Ira, and you watch Ira when he sees Oumy. And if that's how you feel about your child or your grandchild, then it gives us some insight into heaven's response to the birth of Christ. When everything about Christ, all that He was and all that He would be was already known.

Let's pray as we start. Father, I just want to bow my heart today, as we begin this lesson, just acknowledging Father that I feel completely inadequate to deliver it. And I know that we all feel completely inadequate to absorb the depth and the weightiness of these truths. So, I pray Father, that as we go through Your word that You would reveal it to us in an extra special way today. And we ask for your help in this in Christ. Amen.

The apostle John wrote this book in about 85 AD. And his purpose was that you would believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that believing you would have life in His name. And if you are to believe in something or someone, there is one thing that you need to have and that is confidence that you are right to do so. John was convinced, and he wants us to be convinced, and so he records many signs that Jesus did and the signs were miraculous. They could only have been performed by God; God who has dominion and power and authority over creation. And so in John chapter two, we see Jesus's first miracle, the water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. In John chapter four, we have the healing of a terminal illness of the son of the royal official. And we also, in John chapter five, have the lame man by the pool of Bethesda who's been lying there for 38 years when he gets healed. We have the creation of food for 5000 people in John chapter six. And that miracle has exactly the effect that John intends it to have when it says, "When the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, 'This is truly the prophet who was to come into the world.'" That's exactly what the sign was intended to do is that we would believe. We have Jesus walking on the water at night after the disciples have left the area Tiberius going west across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. Jesus has gone off to be alone. They leave in the

boat. It's dark, He comes walking on the water to them, and when they invite Him onto the boat, they're suddenly there at Capernaum. That doesn't just happen. We have John chapter nine, giving sight to a blind man. We have Lazarus being raised from the dead in John chapter 11. This is not complicated. The thesis of John is simple. These miracles were never debated by the people who saw them. There were literally more than 5000 people who saw all of that food come from five loaves and two fish. This was not fake news. And so, if Jesus could do the things that only God can do, then He must have that authority of God. And if He is the Son, and He can do all these incredible things, then His other claims must be true as well. And therefore we would do well to listen to those. In a sense, his actions proved His credibility of the message. How can we ignore this messenger from God therefore? In John chapter 20, he says,

Therefore many other signs, Jesus also performed in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these have been written, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

If you're not a believer here today, and you've been investigating Christianity, and you've been around Christianity, you've been thinking about it. Let me say this, there is no other revelation that is going to come. John says there was much else that was done that was not even recorded, but this that has been recorded, he says is enough. What has been recorded is enough for you to believe. And he urges us to believe. Believing in Jesus that He is the Son of God has everything to do with life, real life, abundant life, eternal life. And what you do with Jesus Christ is the most important and critical decision that you will ever make. It is the weightiest dilemma that you will ever have to deal with. Everything else is noise. Nothing else matters if you don't have the spiritual life. Everything will seem purposeless, meaningless without having that spiritual life that comes from believing this truth.

I invite you to open up to John chapter one. We're familiar with the passage. And we're in verse 14, and it says,

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The word "word" as we've heard is the Greek word *logos*. And, in and of itself, it is a common word. It is a common Greek word. It's 318 times in the New Testament. Nothing unusual about it. It's translated word or words most frequently, but it's also translated news, or sayings, or an account in Luke chapter 16. The rich man says to the unrighteous steward, "I need you to give an account of your management. Let me hear your explanation. Defend your management of my assets." It's also a statement or a message or an answer. These are the ways in which it is translated in the New Testament. But I want you to notice something. There are lots of plain and ordinary words in the Bible. Things like light, bread, way, truth, life, shepherd, door, vine. Just ordinary, everyday words, nonspecific until the word "the" is placed in front of it. That definite article "the" makes a difference. In fact, it makes all *the* difference, doesn't it?

And so as John writes to help us understand that Jesus is the Son of God that you might believe. You'll notice that these common words take on new significance. Suddenly, light becomes *the* light. *The* light of men, *the* light of the world. Bread becomes *the* bread, *the* bread of life, *the* way, *the* truth, *the* life, *the* door, *the* Good Shepherd, *the* vine. specifics. And this little definite article helps us to understand how significant and unique Jesus is. He is personified by these things; He is embodied in these things. These are metaphors that are dripping with meaning. And so in a sense, *the Word* is that statement from heaven. Jesus Himself is the message. Jesus becomes the good news.

I want us today to just walk through this verse, the single verse, and I've just got four points. Point number one, Jesus is the Word. There's no doubt that He is talking about Jesus here. In fact, Jesus is the only one in history who has ever claimed to be God in the flesh. And it's interesting that if you look at John 10:33, the Jews understood that that's what He was claiming. That's the reason why they wanted to stone Him for the blasphemy of claiming to be God in the flesh.

Verse one of our passage, we're just going to briefly walk through it. Very familiar to you by now, "In the beginning was the Word." That means that if Jesus is the Word, He is eternal by nature. "And the Word was with God", Greek phrase, *prosthontheon*. You heard last night when Jeremy said "face to face." And face to face, as Jeremy said last night, implies equality. You will not stand face to face, he said, because you're going to be bowing. But when Jesus stands *prosthontheon*, face to face, it's not in the neighborhood of God, it's right there. Coequal with God. In the company, but separate person from God. And verse one goes on "and the Word was God," although He's a separate person, He is God Himself. That is the Trinity. The mystery of the three and one. And then he goes on in verse two to say, "He was in the beginning with God." He repeats himself as if to say, "Did you get it?" There's an emphasis here. John repeats himself in case you missed it, I'm going to say it again. He was in the beginning with God. Before there was a beginning, Jesus was with God. And this is not trivial. The fact that He is the Word of God because it's important to heaven. It's important to the Godhead. In Revelation chapter 19, as Jesus is displayed as returning to Earth, this time, not as a child in a manger; this time, as a judge to rule. There are three phrases that are used. And if you look in chapter 19:11, you'll see that Jesus is referred to as Faithful and True. You dropped down to 13, and it says, "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called, the Word of God." And you drop down to verse 16, and He's described as being the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This is the triumphant Christ returning to Earth, and one of His names is the Word of God. It is not trivial.

Verse three, "All things came into being through Him and apart from Him, nothing came into being that has come into being." He is the Creator, so it ought not to surprise us that it was nothing for Jesus to create that food. It was nothing for Him to raise Lazarus from the dead. Verse four to five "In Him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, the darkness did not comprehend it." He came to bring us a certain kind of life, a life that is real life; a life for your soul. It's a life that illuminates, that chases away darkness. It's life that is abundant and satisfying and real. And to be honest, it's the kind of life that we all know that everybody is searching for. There is this elusiveness when I have this, I'll feel that life. When I marry her, I'll feel that life. When I have this, and yet sadly, most of the time when we try to fill that void that is within us, we're looking in all the wrong places for

that specific life that Jesus says was in Him. And yet the world into which He was born into, did not recognize Him. They did not comprehend Him, did not understand who He was. And so there were two responses. They rejected Him, or they received Him.

Verses six through 11, John's whole ministry was to witness about the light, he testified about it, he went ahead of Jesus. He wanted people to know that Jesus was the source of life as God intended it. So, Jesus Himself is the Word, the statement from heaven. He is the message. He is the answer. He is in every way, the good news.

Point number two. This Word, Jesus, became flesh and dwelt among us. Literally, it means He tabernacled with us. And that is something that the other Scriptures endorse and confirm. And I'm not sure if the importance of this has ever hit you, but it is absolutely mission critical to our faith.

Let's go through some of these passages here. I'll just read them to you. Romans 1:3, if you're taking notes, he was born of a descendant of David. Galatians 4:4 born of a woman born under the law. Philippians 2:7, being made in the likeness of man, being found in appearance as a man. First Timothy 3:16, revealed in the flesh. Hebrews 2:14, He partook of flesh and blood in order to render the devil powerless, and free those who were subject to slavery because of the fear of death. When John writes his epistles, his letters, 1 John and 2 John, he starts off 1 John in verse one saying, "What was from the beginning, what we've heard, what we've seen with our eyes, what we've looked at and touched with our hands concerning the Word of life." John says Jesus was tangible. We walked with Him for three years. We saw, we felt, we touched. This is the word of life. And perhaps, penultimate is the second epistle of John, verse seven, that says, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." Folks, you cannot be a Christian if you don't acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh. And why is it so mission critical? Because if Jesus didn't come in the flesh, there is no cross. If there is no cross, there is no forgiveness of sin. If there is no forgiveness of sin, you have no hope. That's why His coming to earth was so mission critical.

Point number three, we saw His glory. It may interest you to know, it's certainly interested me, I did not know this, but the Greek word *doxa*, glory, means opinion. And you can sort of see that when you think about God's opinion, and specifically His approval of something. In John 5:44, Jesus is questioning the sincerity of the faith of the Jews. And He says, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you don't seek the glory that is from the one and only God?" And so we can take from that verse, that there is a glory that we seek from God. That is His good opinion of us, His approval of us, if you like. It matters more that God approves us than man approves us, does it not? But there are other senses used in the Bible and the definition of glory that I came up with was this. And I want you to write this down. The display, the revelation, or the manifestation of it His magnificence, splendour and majesty. The display, revelation or manifestation of His magnificence, splendour and majesty. And His glory is displayed to us in multiple ways.

I just chose four domains in which His glory is made obvious to us. The first is in His creation. The Bible says we saw His glory. Well, how did we see His glory? Well in creation. Matthew 4:8 says, during His temptation with the devil, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And you know, that stands to reason because God who is so glorious, is obviously going to create something that has glory. And you and I both know that there are places on this earth of phenomenal beauty and grandeur, and you are breathless when you look at that. And you think, “Wow. Whoever created this is glorious.” Matthew 6:28, “Why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow, they don't toil they don't spin. Yet I say to you, not even Solomon, in all his glory, clothed himself like one of these.” Now, if anybody was going to be able to be glorious, it would be Solomon; all the wealth or the power that he had. And yet, Jesus says that his glory, his manufactured human glory, pales in significance to the glory revealed in a lily

Second domain, His person. Second Peter 1:17, Peter is referring to the transfiguration where Jesus and Elijah and Moses appear. And he says this about that, “For when He, that is Jesus, received honour and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory.” So God is the Majestic Glory, and He is now going to refer to Jesus and He says this, Peter quotes, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.”

Thirdly, His power. When Jesus attends the wedding feast in Cana to which Mary and the disciples had also been invited, they run out of wine. And Mary tells the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” She delegates to Jesus, and He complies. And He makes this water turn into wine, and it's just one of the most powerful things that He did. And in John chapter 2:11, it again has exactly the effect that it was intended to have. That verse says “This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and He manifested His glory, and his disciples believed in Him.”

Fourthly, His position. We are familiar now from last night's reading and what David brought us in with today in Luke 2:9,

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’

We sang about how vulnerable He was. That brought great glory as the angels delivered their verdict about how they felt about Christ, God becoming flesh. The heavens erupted. Even in that vulnerability, we saw His glory declared by others who knew what was coming. But He's not coming back as a baby. And the glory that we will witness if we are still here, and even if we are gone, when we return with Him, is phenomenal. Because Matthew 24:30 says, “The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn.” It will be a terrifying experience if you do not know Christ when He returns. “And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” So we saw His glory.

Point number four, full of grace and truth. This glory, that John talks about, this glory that is displayed in at least these four domains is incredible. But John here goes deeper to describe in greater detail, the character, the nature of that glory. He says it's full of grace and truth, and that's what affects us the most about the glory of God. How do you possibly pick examples when there are so many? I want to just give you one example of grace and one example of truth.

Let's talk first about grace. I had David read that long passage in John Chapter Four that it would save me time. Jesus is in Judea; He's baptizing. As soon as he realizes that the Pharisees know that He's a threat, He's baptizing more people than John, He decides to leave the center of religion in the South, in Judea, and go up to Galilee. And we know that Judea is in the south, Samaria is in the middle and Galilee is in the north. And I don't know if you picked up on this in the passage, but in chapter 4:4, Jesus, it says, *had* to pass through Samaria. Jesus didn't *have* to pass through Samaria, geographically. No self-respecting Jew would pass through Samaria. The Jews considered the Samaritans to be half breeds, people who had mixed their race with probably the Assyrians, they were considered to be unclean, even condemned by God. And so what they would do is if Judea is in the south and Galilee is where they're going, they would go east across the river Jordan, and they would travel up in Perea and in through the Decapolis and then they would come back west, into Galilee; so as not even to touch the ground of Samaria and become unclean. Jesus could have done that. But the Bible says He *had* to go through Samaria. Why did He *have* to go through Samaria? Well, He had to go through Samaria because He had an appointment. And He had an appointment in a little city called Sicar with a woman. And He timed coming to the well where Jacob's well was at midday, and He was weary from His journey and He sat down next to the well, and it's the middle of the day. And His disciples go off into Sicar to try and get some food. And Jesus sits at the well waiting. It's midday. It's hot. This is not a time when the women would come to the well normally with their water jars. They did that in the morning when it was cool because it was hard. Water is heavy. And if you have to carry it so far, you do it when it's least unpleasant. But while He's there, she comes; and she doesn't know that she has an appointment with the Saviour. He's alone. And the Samaritan woman is confused as to why He would call upon her to ask her for a drink. She's a woman. She is a sinner. This woman who is with her sixth man, this Samaritan woman, this outcast who cannot come in the beginning of the day and has to come when there's nobody else around because she's a social outcast, this scorned and broken person who has to come. She, she is why Jesus had to come and pass through Samaria. Let me ask you, how is your life any different to hers? You may be more polished on the outside, we may be better at hiding so that other people don't know that we are no different to this unnamed, broken, outcast Samaritan woman. Because we know that on the inside, Jeremiah tells us that our own hearts are more deceitful than all else and desperately sick. Jeremiah 17:10. That's why Jesus had to come to Earth. That's why the Word had to become flesh. That's why the Word had to dwell amongst us. We had to see His glory from the Father and expressed in the overwhelming kindness of His grace, for our sin.

Point B, not only is His glory manifested full of grace, but secondly, full of truth. There are so many examples, but I had to choose one. And so I chose one of the I am statements, turn with me to John 14. Just verses one through six,

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?” And Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Jesus' glory is revealed in this truth. There is no other way that we get to God. There is no other way that we can be reconciled to the Father. Our broken relationship with God cannot be made right any other way. There is no other truth but the truth; and so you can discard this insanity that says there is your truth and my truth. Feel free to take it and cast it as far as you can because there is only one truth. And Jesus says “I am the way the life and the truth.” You don't need to look anywhere else. In fact, we dare not look anywhere else. There are not multiple ways to God; there is one way. There are no good works, no great sacrifice, no great donation. There is only the humility and the sincerity of the acknowledgement of your brokenness and coming to God in all His glory, and recognizing your need for that grace and truth.

So the question becomes, why does all this matter? Well, because you have to decide what you're going to do with Jesus. He's either a liar, and a con man who was able to deceive thousands upon thousands of people. or He's a deluded madman, or He is, in fact, who He said He was. The Godman, God in the flesh. They either rejected Him or received Him. And that's what each one of us has to decide to do. The decisions is no different now than it was back then. John has documented these miracles that Jesus did that only God could do. And he wrote those down for us as an eyewitness, so that we would believe, and believing we would have life in His name.

Oh, you're saying, “Well, I can't believe that I wasn't there. I didn't see it.” Really? Is that your line? Is that going to be your defense when you stand before the Lord? Let me say this, you and I believe a lot of things that we weren't there to witness. Do you believe that man walked on the moon? Do you believe that was a First and Second World War? My dad was on a destroyer in the Second World War in the Royal Navy. I wasn't there, but am I to discard his testimony? Do you believe that there's a war going on in Ukraine? There are lots of things that we were not witness to, that we believe because of the eyewitnesses who were there.

Do you have to understand something, to accept that it is? My kids laugh at me because I'm still blown away by a Bubble Jet printer. Never mind a 3D printer, I'm a bit of a laggard. Every time I hit that print button., I'm thinking to myself, “How on earth does that come out like that? Does it stop me from using my bubble jet printer? No. You might have an iPhone, if you're very fortunate today, waiting under the tree. You have no idea how that works. You press the button on and you quite happily go back and forth texting. You don't have to know how things do, to except that. You have no idea how bees pollinate flowers. You have no idea how a seed becomes grass, or how the roots of a redwood tree sustain a massive tree that is 30 feet in circumference. You see, there are things that we don't have to understand

the minutiae about to believe. Jesus came to reveal God to us, to reveal reality, to reveal the future to us, to reveal our predicament to us, and to reveal that we actually do have to stand before God. We have to give an account at some point. And this child whose birth we choose to remember today, to borrow from the song that says “Jesus was born once so that you could be born again.” Jesus was born once so you could be born again. He came with a message and what is that message?

Well, the message is that we were created for relationship with God for His pleasure for His glory. And that relationship initially was marked by love and trust and respect and obedience. And yet Adam and Eve sinned by not trusting God's command. He gave them one thing that they were not allowed to do, and they were influenced by Satan's deception, and they disobeyed what they were told, and sin was born. They had strayed from that obedience to God, and they had chosen the wrong way, under the influence of deception. And they disregarded God's word to them. And instead of being satisfied with all that the garden had to offer, they were enticed by what they did not have, what they could not have, what did not belong to them, and they took it anyway. And so began the long legacy of rebellion and disobedience that we recognize in our own heart, the dissatisfaction with what we have. And so we take what is not ours desiring to live independent of God's authority, and do whatever we want to do without apparent consequence, but that's just it, The Word became flesh. He had to become flesh in order for us to know that there is a consequence for sin. There is an accountability before God. God is loving, yes, absolutely infinitely, but He's also just. And justice demands a penalty for that attitude of rebellion. And it's a hard penalty for a hardness of heart that rejects. It's an eternal consequence of separation from God and suffering in a lake of fire. Because friends, that sounds really harsh, but that's how God feels about our sin. That's our hopeless fate because we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We know we have. We know it's bad news. We understand the message of Ephesians chapter two, that we were dead in our trespasses and sins, and that we formally walked according to the course of this world. The Bible says we “formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of our flesh and our mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest;” but we also know that beautiful next verse which says, “But God,” say it with me, “But God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive,” gave us that real life together with Christ, “for by grace you have been saved through faith; that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

I would wager that you're going to go home from here as we are, and that there are some gifts waiting. I don't care, whatever the gift is, it might be the most thoughtful, most magnificent gift that you have ever received, it is going to pale in comparison to the gift of God of salvation in Christ. Not only the gift of faith to believe, but the gift of having that relationship restored with God. It is the gift of God. Jesus left heaven at the Father's bidding, and condescended to human birth, born in a stable, grew up in humble circumstances. He showed His authority and power in signs and miracles doing only what God could do. And then He went to the cross. The very reason why He had to come, and He bore the cruel punishment of our sin and the Father's wrath on Him in our stead. He had no sin, but the Bible says He became sin on our behalf, so that we would never have to experience that. Folks, I want you to understand that our sin was not overlooked. It wasn't simply pardoned. There was this certificate of debt that, Paul writes to Colossians in chapter two about, that certificate of debt was cancelled because it was paid in full, and it

was nailed to the cross, so that we would never ever have to experience that aspect of the wrath of God. But if you don't believe that you will experience that wrath of God.

In Him was life and that life was the light of men. He came as a baby. He is coming back as the King of kings and Lord of lords, as the Word If God, Faithful and True. If He didn't come in the flesh, then there's no cross. If there's no cross, we're still in our sin. If we're still in our sin, there's no redemption. If there's no redemption, then we're fools and we have no hope. Praise God that that is not the message of the Bible because as Christians, we have incredible hope. We have a secure future, we have an eternity with the Lord, we have great joy despite our circumstances, because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Let's pray.

Father, we have no other posture right now than to simply bow. There is nothing that we can say that is going to be meaningful. And we feel like we simply need to be quiet before You, thankful that You condescended to send Jesus, that He condescended to obey You, that He took great joy in obeying You. That He brought great glory to Your name and to His name in obeying You. That His power was even manifest in Heaven's response to His birth as a vulnerable child in the flesh. That any of these signs that He did were effortless because of who He was and is. Effortless. So why would we think, Lord that it would be hard for Him to just be who He is. To reveal those signs, to fulfill the prophecy that He would be born in that way.

Father, we're so thankful that His glory is full of grace and truth. And that You have opened up our eyes to that. And I pray that if there's somebody here today who does not know you in that way, Lord, that You would open up their eyes to the grace and truth; and that they would believe the testimony, the eyewitness testimony of John and that, believing they would have life in Your name. There is nothing else that matters or is as important as this Father, and we know that.

And there is nothing that brings You greater glory than to see Your Son glorified for what He did on our behalf. And so we bow and we thank You. We pray, Lord, that as a result of Your word, we would be forever changed. Help us with our sin, Lord. Help us with our sanctification. Help us to begin to lead lives that are worthy of the calling, though not in our strength, but fully through grace. And we ask this in Jesus' precious name, amen.