

John 1:1-18

Proximity

Image Church

Well good morning Image Church, Happy Thanksgiving. I hope you all had a great few days off of work, maybe spent time with some family and as with all holidays in America, you probably ate too much food

But what's a holiday without food... the next one gets even better because its food and presents, tis the reason for the season right...

My name is Bryson Moon and I am one of the elders here at Image Church. I am always grateful for the opportunity to stand before you and share God's Word with you

And it is something that I do not take lightly, and especially in light of our passage this morning.

This morning we are going to be looking at the first half of John chapter 1.

Our text this morning is John 1:1-18 we are going to look briefly at the first part of this passage as it will set the stage for where we will spend the bulk of our time this morning.

And as we dive in I want to tell you where we are going and what I hope to accomplish this morning...

My desire for us this morning is that we walk away with with a clear understanding that

We are both called by Jesus and empowered by the holy spirit to advance the kingdom in the world around us.

I am sure you have heard it said from this stage "live on mission"

We talk all the time about the implications of the gospel on our lives, how we are to live our lives

One of our core values at Image is Missionary but I think at times we can hear this and just think we must do more or man I better get busy spreading the gospel

Because that's what I am suppose to do as a christian is be an evangelist with my megaphone on the street corner, right?

I have felt this immense pressure all my life that I have to always be sharing the gospel with anyone I come in contact with and when I don't, I feel shame that I might have blown this person's chance of ever hearing about Jesus

But also, **God's salvific work is so much bigger than me**, and its arrogant of me to think that a missed opportunity by me was the only shot someone had to hear about Jesus.

Don't get me wrong though, I truly believe that these random opportunities to share the gospel with complete strangers do exist, and when they arise we should take them

But if you have ever felt the weight or even shame of not taking an opportunity to share the gospel, or carrying the weight that

you have to somehow fit a gospel conversation in with every server in a restaurant, every grocery store attendant, or run-ins with a co-worker in the break room

Let me free you from that shame, don't carry that weight. God is not mad at you for those moments, and not even mad at you if you do miss an opportunity to share Jesus...

So while I do believe that God uses those random opportunities with strangers, or in the breakroom at work and at times the Holy Spirit may be nudging you in that moment

I think what we learn from Jesus through how he came and lived, we actually are given a more wholistic way that we ought to live,

a way that shares Jesus with those around us **in both word and deed**

This morning I want us to examine 2 aspects of our passage this morning.

1. Jesus is God and worthy of our lives
2. Proximity is key to the advancement of the kingdom

Our focus this morning is John 1: 14-18 but it would be impossible for us to understand our text without first seeing what came before it!

So we will look briefly at 1-13 for context

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through him, and apart from him not

one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life,[a] and that life was the light of men. 5 That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome[b] it.

The Word is Jesus... Jesus has existed for all of time, he was not a created being but has always existed - all things are created through him

We have reference here to Genesis 1 - God through his Word spoke all things into existence...

This is a big deal... This here is a claim on the deity of Jesus... that He has existed always and forever

And the reference to Genesis only further hits this point home, that all things were created through and not a single thing was created apart from him!

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.[c] 8 He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.[d]

John the Baptist, sent by God to testify to the coming of the Messiah, to testify to the light, the light that would shine into the darkness is coming so be ready!

10 He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be[e] children of God, to those who believe in his name, 13 who were born,

not of natural descent,[f] or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man,[g] but of God.

He who created the world, has come into the world, but his own people would not recognize him. **But** this is a big but... to those that did receive him

He gives them the right to be **children of God**

John has just made some big claims about the identity of Jesus

We have to keep in mind though, John tells us why he wrote this book

John says in **John 20:31** But these are written *so that* you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John is writing his account of things he witnessed and heard being with Jesus and

John is going to tell us a lot throughout the book of John, **but all of it hinges** on what this claim here in chapter 1...

Which is that **Jesus is the Word, the Word was with God, and THE WORD WAS GOD...**

This is all very important for our understanding of what is coming next and where we will focus in our time this morning!

John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This verse right here is one of my favorites in Scripture for a number of reasons and this is where we are going to spend the bulk of our time unpacking

The Word became flesh, this is Jesus incarnate taking on human flesh. Jesus, fully God becomes also fully human

The eternally existing Word, the creator, comes to creation... This is what we need to see: God becomes man without ceasing to be God...

- **Hypostatic Union-** *Fully God and fully man fused together...*

See the significance of this verse because this is a big deal

What does John mean that we observe His glory?

- He means that he and the other disciples saw Jesus signs and they witness His death and resurrection... They bore witness to the glory bestowed on Jesus as God... They tangibly witnessed the *visible manifestation of God's self-disclosure* through the person and work of Jesus.¹

John's directing his readers to Exodus 33-34: Moses asks God to show me your glory... God says I will let my goodness pass in front of you... But for that to happen you need to be in the cleft of the rock and I will need to cover you with my hand until I have passed by...

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 128).

- In **Exodus 34:6** we see that God passes by and He declares...
- *The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in **faithful love and truth**, 7 maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin.*
 - **faithful love and truth = full of grace and truth.**²

*The glory revealed to Moses when the Lord passed in front of him and sounded his name, displaying that divine goodness characterized by ineffable grace and truth, was the very same glory John and his friends saw in the Word-made-flesh.*³

“In the Old Testament the glory of the Lord was the “visible manifestation of the excellence of God’s character⁴ In other words, the glory of God was the greatness of God seen visibly.”⁵

15 (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’”) 16 Indeed, we have all received grace upon[] grace from his fullness, 17 for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

OK so John continues his reference with Moses...

Moses pointed to grace and truth, Jesus was grace and truth...⁶

² Mike McKee “The Word Became Flesh”

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 129).

⁴ Grudem, Systematic Theology, 221

⁵ Exalting Jesus in John, 24

⁶ Mike McKee “The Word Became Flesh”

What the law did... revealed sin, revealed our hearts, showed the separation between us and God- **that’s the truth** that Moses pointed to, and **the grace** is that God didn’t wipe everyone off the face of the earth but that He created a temporary sacrificial system of atonement...

- All of this kept them oriented around the faithfulness of God...

What Jesus did...

- Jesus is truth, He is God’s self-disclosure and revelation to humanity...

18 No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side[k]—he has revealed him.

No one has see God, until now... Jesus has revealed his glory full of grace and truth...

We read these verses and if we aren’t careful to slow down and to sit in the weight of this passage we can simplify it to simply being something we already know right...

Yes Jesus (fully God and fully man) came in human form... I mean there is no real debate on whether Jesus existed. Was he a real person... pretty much all scholars would say yes... there is debate about his deity but not his existence

But we need to sit in the weightiness of this passage and what does this all mean for us, how does this shape who we are, how we think, what we believe, how we live and how we operate in the world

And that is precisely what I want for us this morning because what we just read in this passage is a big deal and it has vast implications for us here and now

I told you when we first jumped in that my hope was that we would walk away with with a clear understanding that

We are both called by Jesus and empowered by the holy spirit to advance the kingdom in the world around us.

And I believe that we have to start with the fact that...

1. Jesus is God and worthy of our lives

What John makes abundantly clear is that Jesus is God... we know this right. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

All things were created by him and through him... so when we talk about Jesus we are operating from this starting place

The claim that Jesus was God is the *hinge* in which Christianity hangs... It differentiates and distinguishes Christianity from every other religion, and it has massive implications for us...

If Jesus was just a teacher or even just a prophet it really means nothing for us

All of Christianity rises or falls on one simple truth... Jesus is in fact the Son of God, who took on human flesh and lived the perfect life that we could not live, and died the death that we deserved, death that was meant for us

The punishment for our sin, that Jesus did in fact bear the weight of our sin on the cross, that He went to the grave but did not stay there but rose again victorious over sin and death

This is the truth of the gospel right... but if this is true and if this is what we believe about Jesus. If we have put our faith in this truth, our hope is in this truth

That without this, if Jesus is not in fact God, who took on flesh... if that is not true than we have nothing..,

BUT... but if it is true, if Jesus is then we have everything!!
Right??

So if Jesus is all of those things, if He did all of that for us, on our behalf, because we couldn't than we owe him everything

And even though we could never repay the debt, and we could live our entire lives in perfect submission to Him and still come up short

Should it not still be the aim of our lives... that in response to what God has done for us through Jesus do we not owe Him our lives?

That every aspect of who we are, everything we have, every bit of it must be laid down at his feet.

We have nothing apart from Him, and because of Him, because we see Him for who He is and what He has done we gladly lay down our lives to live a life that brings him glory and honor

And why??? **When God had every right to move away from us, he actually moved towards us. He sent the Word to become flesh and dwell among us**

This simple yet profound truth is what moves us towards a life of service for our Savior... God was in no way obligated to remedy the sinfulness and brokenness of humanity

Ephesians 2 tells us, BUT God being rich in mercy, for no reason other than because of who He is, His very nature of compassion and kindness, mercy and grace God came to us, to rescue, save and redeem

It is but for the love of God that we have been redeemed and that church should be as Paul says, for the love of Christ compels us.

Is our understanding of this fundamental truth, our understanding of the gospel of who God is and what He did for us that then helps us to understand

Why we ought live our lives a certain way, but it is the very fact that the Word became flesh and then showed us how we are suppose to live

But remember I said at the beginning... **We are both called by Jesus and empowered by the holy spirit to advance the kingdom in the world around us.**

And to be clear, when I say the world around us I am not in this moment referring to our global world but rather the world directly around us

Our sphere of influence, our community, our families, our jobs etc... the place that God has us here and now... it's our proximity

2. Proximity is key to the advancement of the kingdom

A number of years ago while living in Durham, NC a group of friends and I moved into an under resourced community, known as East Durham.

Most if not all of us had really no clue what were doing, we did not know much about life in communities like East Durham, none of us were from that context

We didn't know much about community development or how to walk with people facing poverty

What we did know is that we all wanted to follow Jesus and the example that he laid out for us to love our neighbor, to care for the poor, the widow and the orphan and if we wanted to serve this community we had to be in proximity to the people of the community

The text says that He **Dwelt** among us, literally **tabernacled among us... Pitched a tent among us...**

or as Euguen Peterson says of John 1:14 **"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood."**

We see the intentionality of Jesus in the way that He came and lived as one of them, among them, with them

This was intentional and intimate and it speaks to the relationship we are able to have with Jesus... but

Tony Evans says “ to know Jesus Christ and become intimate with him... To only know Jesus for heaven tomorrow is to miss the joy of heaven on earth in a growing, living relationship with Christ today”

See the gospel is not just a get of jail free card... it isn't just a means to get to heaven, that is to miss the joy of heaven on earth as Dr. Evans puts it...

We are redeemed for so much more than to just solidify our eternity and Jesus shows us that in how he became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood

The disciples lives and trajectory of their lives was completely changed **by their proximity to Jesus...** by living with him, going where he went, watching him, listening to him observing all that they saw

The learned what it means to follow Jesus, to follow the example set by Christ on this is what it means to live for His kingdom, to be about the kingdom work that Jesus invited them into

And He now invites us into... **the Christian life is so much more** than just reading our Bibles, going to church, and some good deeds along the way

Jesus is invites us into the work of the ministry that he began when he took on flesh and dwelt among us
Jesus was the embodiment of God's glory, and we testify to the glory of God when we are about the work of the Father...

John will later point us to the abundant life that is found in Christ and I am of the belief that the abundant life promised in John 10 is found in the kingdom work that all believers are called to

And it starts with proximity.... **I 100% believe that the Christian life is a life lived on the margins**

When we look at the life of Jesus, and ask ourselves where did Jesus spend his time? Who did he spend time with, who did he go to often

We often find Jesus on the margins with

- the adulteress woman
- the lame
- the blind
- the leper
- those considered unclean

And we can't overlook this... we can't ignore the life of Jesus and the things we find in Scripture to care for the poor, the marginalized, the broken, the outcaste

Those on the fringes of society

When God had every right to move away from us, he actually moved towards us. He sent the Word to become flesh and dwell among us

And we walk in the steps of Jesus when we see hard places and broken people and we move towards them and not away from them.⁷

⁷ Heard from Pastor Danny Abell

James tells us “Pure and undefiled religion is this, to care for the widow and the orphan

Jesus entered into hard places, He saw broken people and he moved towards them

I came across this quote the other day... I think its actually from a number of years ago when it was said but listen to this

If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we have to just pretend Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don't want to do it" -

This stings... this was said by Stephen Colbert a late show host but it's an indictment on the church... we either have to pretend Jesus didn't say certain things, or didn't model a certain way for us to live

Or we have to acknowledge that He did and we just don't want to do it

When we talk about all of this.... this is never meant to shame anyone into serving or to engage in the community because shame is not of God,

But rather my hope this morning is that together **we would catch a vision for the kingdom of God**, and what it means to be apart of that kingdom

That as our view of God becomes great and greater and bigger and bigger, that we simply want to respond by giving our lives to the things of the kingdom

And at the very heart of Jesus is the call to care for the most vulnerable among us

And this call is not just for a few... but the call of the church collectively as believers apart of Christ church we can push back darkness in our world **but only when followers of Christ takes the life and words of Jesus seriously**

and respond by laying down our lives. I have yet to meet a church or really a Christian who says no, I don't want to help others or make a difference in the lives of others

But what I think we lack is a vision for what this looks like... I am not asking you to the change the the entire world

I think there is language used among evangelical that cast this vision that we are all supposed to change the world, but that puts an unrealistic expectation and a weight on your shoulders you were never meant to carry

But we can make a difference in our world... meaning the places we have influence in, our spheres of influence...

For each of us, our proximity to others looks different... many of us live in other communities, work our jobs in other locations and your proximity to those places is apart of the advancement of God's kingdom in those places

But at the same time, there is a very real reality that for this season this is where our church building is located and we

want this church, Image Church to be a beacon of hope for those in proximity to this building

The church should be the greatest resource in any community caring and loving well its neighbors

When we think of poverty we tend to think about a lack of financial resources or making bad financial decisions... almost every pair of shoes I own was a bad financial decision I made and my wife allowed me to get away with...we all make them...

Poverty is so much more though... it takes many forms yes it is and can be financial, but also physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, relational, lack of support system

When Princess and I moved to Georgia, we had just gotten married... I was still raising support and Princess had a job making like 12 bucks an hour... we moved into our first apartment not a single thing in that apartment was bought by us... we had no money

But my family, her family, people here at Image gave us stuff to furnish our apartment

When my daughter Kynslee was born... her entire room, crib, dresser, changing table, car seat, stroller, bassinet all provided for by members of this church

And this isn't about getting stuff or our bills paid... but understanding that just by simply being a part of this body we have a support system... many of the forms that poverty can take we gain by being connected to a community like this one

And there are so many within walking distance that don't have that...

This church is an amazing place, with amazing people and what I want to point us to is this... **let's expand our walls**

Inviting people into our lives, those we are in proximity to, be intentional with how we live our lives

*****VAMP*****

we want to be the church that Christ calls us to be by caring for those on the margins

As followers of Jesus, we are working toward the end promise of Gods restoration of all things... we won't see the fulfillment of that promise until Jesus returns

But what happened in John 1:14 is that Jesus initiated his kingdom being ushered in

We are the continuation of what Jesus started when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us

And there is much work to be done, for those who have been saved and called we are being invited in to so much more than

a gathering on sunday, coffee and conversations, guys night and community group

these are all tools of discipleship and I am by no means knocking any of them you should engage in those

But if the Christian life gets boiled down into what happens inside these four walls I think we have missed big

When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus started something that we continue today

So what now?

For some here this morning, would you believe that Jesus is God who took on flesh and came to rescue you from your sin. That Jesus incarnate, who would go to the cross for our sin and rose again was God's redemption plan to save you, would you believe!

For those of you that are pursuing Christ,

My hope this morning was not to tee up some serving opportunities to get you to do something

But rather that you would walk away this morning,

- 1. Reminded of what Christ has done for you, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, that God himself came to rescue us from our sin*
- 2. That as you leave, an internal dialogue would take place... asking yourself in what ways am i engaged in the Kingdom of God that are not simply for my personal benefit*

The Christian life is two-fold... growing in our knowledge of who God is and what He has done... discipleship... growing as disciples

And pouring out our lives for the sake of the kingdom... so this morning I wanted to remind you of Jesus and what He did, so keep pursuing him!

So ok, I am growing as a disciple, ok great... now how am I going to pour my life out?

My aim this morning was to invite us all into something greater that I believe Jesus has for us... that the Christian life is more than just our personal walks with Jesus

But that God has instituted the church not just simply to be a gathering place for Christians, it is but just as Christ was the revelation of the glory of God

The church stands to testify to the glory of God revealed in Christ, and to not only be the greatest resource in every community but to be a beacon of light and hope for all that would encounter us

But it's not us simply sitting idly by waiting for our community to come find us, but rather through intentional proximity we see hard places and broken people and we move towards them

Remember where we started our time together. **We are both called by Jesus and empowered by the holy spirit to advance the kingdom in the world around us.**

Our world begins to change... people come to faith, people are disciplined, lives are transformed, we began to see generational change, families transformed,

We as a church must decide **that we will hold the line** and that we will fight to push back the darkness all around us

That we will take serious the call to lay down our lives, to be for and about the kingdom of God

We may never change the entire world, but would our impact have ripple effects across eternity because we were willing to stand in the gap and take seriously the call to follow Jesus

When God had every right to move away from us, he actually moved towards us. He sent the Word to become flesh and dwell among us

And we walk in the steps of Jesus when we see hard places and broken people and we move towards them and not away from them.⁸

Lets Pray

⁸ Heard from Pastor Danny Abell

Notes

John says that he wrote this gospel in **John 20:31** **so that** you may **believe** that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by **believing** you may have life in his name.

By the way Christian, you never get past this- ***believing in Jesus is a lifelong journey, not just a one-time prayer...***

So, the first 3 words on Jesus' resume: The Word; the Light; and the Life. In vs. 14 we find the 4th: 14 And (that word, that light)

"Dwelt among us" is literally, "tabernacled." In the Old Testament, the tabernacle was the tent-like structure that housed the Presence and Glory of God on earth. That's the word John uses here,⁷ because that's what the body of Jesus was. In Jesus, God took on flesh and dwelt among us. Christians call this the "incarnation," which literally means

“en-fleshing,” and that’s your 4th word on your resume sheet: **4. Glory enfleshed.** The glory of God took on flesh and blood so we could see it and touch it and understand it. - JD Greear “In The **Beginning Was Jesus**”

Eugene Peterson translated this text. He says, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”

But as we work through our text this morning I want you to think about the glory of God.

Its something that gets mentioned often, yet I think we often fail to really sit in.

When you think about the word glory... my mind typically goes to some sort of sports analogy, chasing glory. Glory is often in reference to notable achievements

But when talking about the glory of God, that doesn’t come anywhere close to doing it justice

But what I want you to walk away with this morning, is a better understanding of glory of God, that there would be a sense of awe about us

That as we think about who God is, as we think about who Jesus is that we would move from knowledge and understanding to awe.

Tony Evans “ to know Jesus Christ and become intimate with him... To only know Jesus for heaven tomorrow is to miss the joy of heaven on earth in a growing, living relationship with Christ today”

Jesus moved towards us... demonstrate the Gospel is to See hard places and broken people and move towards them and not a way from them.

when we could not get to God on our own, God came to us

“The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God” ([Hebrews 1:3, NLT](#)).

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As followers of Jesus, we are working toward the end promise of Gods restoration of all things... we won’t see the fulfillment of that promise until Jesus returns

But what happened in John 1:14 is that Jesus initiated his kingdom being ushered in

We are the continuation of what Jesus started when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us

If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn’t help the poor, either we have to just pretend Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we’ve got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don’t want to do it” - Stephen Colbert

When God had every right to move away from us, he actually moved towards us. He sent the Word to become flesh and dwell among us

For each of us, our proximity to others looks different... many of us live in other communities, work our jobs in other locations and your proximity to those places is apart of the advancement of God's kingdom in those places

But at the same time, there is a very real reality that for this season this is where our church building is located and we want this church, Image Church to be a beacon of hope for those in proximity to this place

From more than Enough Newsletter - Jason Johnson

In 2016, a Santa Clara, CA man saved a total stranger from a burning car.

The car was on fire and the driver was incoherent. Some onlookers watched in the parking lot while others recorded the whole thing on their phones. Only one person jumped in to help. His name was Aram.

With one swift move, Aram grabbed the man from behind the wheel and pulled him to safety. When asked later by reporters why he did it, Aram matter-of-factly responded, "Nobody was pulling him out. I figured if we don't, he's going die. So, why not me."

Aram knew the risks of what he was doing that day, but he also understood the costs of doing nothing at all. So, he moved towards the fire, not away.

For some on the outside looking in, the world of foster care seems too risky. But you've chosen to be on the inside, and having deeply felt the complexities of beauty and brokenness and joy and sorrow, you know that the risks that come with not doing anything are simply too great to ignore.

Earlier this month, I saw glimpses of some of your Pure Religion Sunday and Stand Sunday Services where so many of you were sharing your heart for vulnerable children and families with your congregations—a heart that knows the risks of doing nothing. The world around us tells us to avoid, isolate, and insulate ourselves from anything that's potentially hard, uncomfortable, or dangerous. We're indoctrinated in all forms to set up the kind of life where we can live the rest of our days pretending that hard places and broken people don't exist around us—in our city, around the world, or even across the street.

You were inviting your communities to do just the opposite, because the Gospel compels us to be proximate to hard things.

The doctrine of Christ's incarnation speaks to God stepping into humanity, wrapping Himself in mortality, and living completely and fully as both God and man. It's most notably recognized at Christmas with the birth of Jesus, yet its implications are far more pervasive than just December 25th of every year. Since the moment sin first fractured the perfect union between God and man in the Garden of Eden, He has been on a redemptive pursuit to be as close and near to us as humanly possible. God saw us in the burning car and moved towards us, not away. That's what He's always done. He is saying at all times and in all circumstances, "I see you where you are, and I'm coming after you!"

At Pure Religion Sunday services across the country, you declared that we want to be the kind of people who move towards hard places and broken people because that's exactly who Jesus has been for us.

And it's who we want to be year round—not just for a weekend—as we become people and churches that make ourselves proximate to hard things. Because as we do, it says something true about who Jesus is in our lives. So like Aram that day in Santa Clara, let's keep running towards those places that are hard and confusing and full of risk. That's who we are; that's what we do—together.