



**December 19, 2021**

**John 1:14-18. We Have Seen His Glory**

**Advent Theme: Love**

**Kevin Maloney**

**Service Order:**

Song #1

Call to Worship - Kevin

Song #2

Building Thanks and Lisa Intro - Kevin

Lisa's Video

Sermon

Song #3

Song #4

Benediction

Thank you, Lisa, for your willingness to share your story with us...

We are going to John 1 today, finishing up our four weeks looking at the Word that became flesh, the incarnation of Jesus that we celebrate each year at Christmas.

**John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

In the Old Testament, God commanded Moses to build a tent or a tabernacle that the Israelites would carry with them as they wandered through the wilderness. They would

set that tent of meeting up, and at times, what's described as the glory of God would come and cover it and fill it:

**Exodus 40:34-38 “34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.”**

So at this tabernacle, God would be present in a unique way among His people, He would lead His people with his glory. And He showed up in a fire and a cloud. It was majestic and frightening, and at times because of the thickness of that glory Moses couldn't even enter in to the tent.

And this glory of God was so important to show His presence with His people and his leadership of his people that at one point Moses said to God, “unless your presence goes with us, don't let us move” (Exodus 33:15). They wanted to see God's glory.

And there was a time in Exodus 33 where this happened:

**Exodus 33:18 Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” 19 And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. 20 But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” 21 And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, 22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”**

So God would come to be among His people in this glory cloud, He would dwell with his people in the tabernacle in that cloud. It was terrifying, it was bright, it was holy, you couldn't look at his face and live.

And then we get to the New Testament in our passage today where the apostle John is describing Jesus as the Word who came to dwell among us, and he says this:

**John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

Jesus, the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us.

“Dwelt” is the greek word for tent or tabernacle. Jesus came and tabernacled among us, and in Jesus, we see the glory of God.

The glory of God in our day is not connected to a place - it doesn't come and fill the tabernacle or a church building in the same way. As grand as this new place is and as God-glorifying as the beauty is, this place is not the place where His glory ultimately rests. It rests on Jesus.

The place that we most clearly see the glory of God is in Jesus who came to dwell among us. As amazing as the glory of God was in the tabernacle, we look at the baby in the manger, the word became flesh, and we say IN HIM we see the glory of God.

Humankind has been on a quest for that glory since the beginning. We sinned and got kicked out of the garden, banished from the presence of God. But we were made for that presence. We need the presence of God. We were made to know His leadership, His love, His acceptance. But our sin keeps us away, we can't look on His face.

So we want that glory, we need that ultimate love and ultimate relationship. But at the same time we are banished from the real thing. So we go looking for His love, but we look in all the wrong places.

But then the word is made flesh. And there's the glory.

How do we see the glory of God in Jesus?

**We see his glory in the fact that He even would dwell among us.**

Think of how absolutely incredible it is that God dwelt among us.

All of humankind had been dehumanized by our sin. The knowledge of who God is had been hidden by the blindness of our eyes, by the scheming of evil spirits. We were deserving of God's condemnation for our sins and failures.

We were in this completely sorry state that would make anyone say God would be well within His rights to wash His hands of the whole thing and walk away.

But instead, our helpless condition provoked His love for us. It was our huge need that caused Him to come down to us in Christ.

To look at that is to see His glory.

John asks, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God!?!?” What kind of love would stir up God to leave his comforts and set aside the use of some of attributes of deity so He could come to us?

What a glorious God! How full of love must God be to do that.

So that’s why John says, in effect, “God’s glory in the tabernacle was impressive. God’s Old Testament glory that showed up but where you couldn’t look at Him directly showed his holiness, it showed his presence and leadership. But when God took on flesh and came all the way down to us: that’s where we really saw His glory.”

This incarnation, where the Son of God, the second person of the trinity added to himself humanity without surrendering anything that made Him deity, when He became fully human in every way but without ever sinning or ever giving up His deity - that’s where we saw glory.

So we see His glory in His dwelling among us. We also see His glory in that He is full of grace and truth.

Verse 14 again: **:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

Jesus comes full of truth and full of grace.

**He gives truth to the ignorant, to the blind.**

Jesus is the truth that makes sense of everything. Why is the world so broken? Why are things not the way they should be? Why do I feel this sense of guilt and unworthiness?

The story of Jesus and the words of Jesus make sense of all of that.

The perfection of Jesus shows us that, compared to Him, we do fall short.

The miracles of Jesus show us that the world should be better than it is and fixed where it's broken. He came full of truth. To look at the world through the lens of Jesus makes sense of the world.

**CS Lewis: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."**

And maybe you're here today and you say you don't believe in any of this stuff, but you get the sense that things aren't what they should be, there is more to life than this, that I'm made for a connection with someone or something higher. I would encourage you to read a portion of the Bible, maybe the book of Mark or Matthew.

And see if Jesus doesn't just ring true. See how much sense Jesus makes of the world. If you don't have a Bible, take one of ours. And do yourself the favor of spending just a little time reading it maybe each morning to see how TRUE Jesus is.

Now, truth alone is not great news. Because truth shows us things about ourselves we don't want to see. You want a doctor who will tell you the truth about your condition, for sure, but you also want a doctor who can cure your condition.

**Jesus also came full of grace.**

Another time that God showed His glory to Moses, this is how God described Himself:

**Exodus 34:5-7 "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation"**

God is a God who will not clear the guilty - he is full of truth, He won't tell us we are OK when we aren't.

But listen to the grace: he's merciful, not giving us what we deserve. He's gracious, giving us what we don't deserve. He's patient with us. He is abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

And that steadfast love is the Hebrew word "hesed"- a word that sometimes is translated "lovingkindness." It's covenant love - the kind of love God pledged to his people, like the kind of love you commit to when you get married.

It's a combination of love and loyalty. Author Paul Miller calls it "one-way love. Love without an exit strategy. When you love with hesed love, you bind yourself to the object of your love, no matter what the response is."

That's what God announced He was like when he showed his glory.

And when John thinks of the word becoming flesh, he says, "We saw his glory there - he was full of truth, but also full of grace."

That relentless love of God to go after us, to connect Himself to us so that we could be forgiven, was on full display in Jesus.

**Jesus is full of truth**, so He won't tell us we are OK when we are not. One of the reasons we don't always like Jesus is because we compare ourselves to His perfections and we see our sins and faults and flaws - they stand out next to his holiness.

**But Jesus is full of grace.**

This baby in the manger grew, and went to the cross. There He took on Himself the sins of all who would ever trust in Him. He died to pay the price for them - He became sin for us, scripture says - He took on our guilt, and died so justice could be done.

And makes this offer: whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

And think of the grace even that He would add humanity to Himself - think of how much dignity that adds to humanity.

About 10 years ago, I officiated my youngest brother's wedding in New Canaan, CT. And the venue they rented for the wedding and reception was called Waveny House, a huge

mansion on a huge estate. And I learned when we were there that it was the childhood home of Christopher Lloyd (the actor - Doc Brown from Back to the Future.) And just knowing that this famous person lived there changed the place - it brought a different sense of honor to the place, you felt more special being there, because you were now in the place where this famous person lived. (Not that Doc Brown is that big of a deal, but the fact that he lived there does change the place a little.)

So how much infinitely more is there a new dignity brought to humanity, when God became one of us. God lived here. God took on flesh like this. God experienced all of this. God subjected Himself to these limitations. The whole human experience is changed because the word became flesh and dwelt among us. God was here!

By taking on flesh, Jesus enchanted the whole human experience and brought so much more meaning and dignity to humanity.

**We see His glory in that He came to dwell among us. We see His glory in being full of grace and truth.**

**We see his glory because Jesus makes God known**

**16 And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

Scripture says in a number of places that the whole fullness of Deity dwells in Jesus:

**“In him all *the fullness of God* was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1:19).**

**“In him *the whole fullness of deity* dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9).**

So this means that if we want to know what God is like, if we want to see the fullness of God, the place we see that is in Jesus.

Hebrews says it this way:

**Hebrews 1:1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the**

**radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.**

God spoke to us in his Son. So he came as the ultimate and final message of God to us. And Jesus is the exact imprint of the nature of God. Like a face stamped onto a coin. If I want to know what George Washington looks like, I can look at a quarter, where there's an imprint.

Jesus is that stamped imprint of the nature of God. If we want to know what God is like, we look to Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

So while we can't know God fully, we can know Him truly in Jesus.

Does God love us? He dwelt among us! What kind of love is that!

Is God willing to forgive? He went to the cross for us!

Will God tell us we're wrong? He flipped over tables to point out the wrong.

Will God lift our guilt - again and again with sinners of all sorts, when God was among us He looked at them with compassion and forgave.

Will God accept me if I turn to Him? Jesus accepted everyone who truly repented and came to Him, and none of the proud who refused to. That's what God does- Jesus is the exact imprint of His nature.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Buechner from his sermon "A Face in the Sky":

"Those who believe in God can never in a way be sure of him again. Once they have seen him in a stable, they can never be sure where he will appear or to what lengths he will go or to what ludicrous depths of self-humiliation he will descend in his wild pursuit of humankind. If holiness and the awful power and majesty of God were present in this least auspicious of all events, this birth of a peasant's child, then there is no place or time so lowly and earthbound but that holiness can be present there too. And this means that we are never safe, that there is no place where we can hide from God, no place where we are safe from his power to break in two and recreate the human heart, because it is just where he seems most helpless that he is most strong, and just where we least expect him that he comes most fully."



So if you wonder if God will accept you when you're broken and weary and guilty, read what Jesus did when He was here, that's what God does.

If you wonder, as Lisa said in her video, where you can find peace and love and fulfillment, read about what Jesus was like when He was among us and ask yourself if a God like that would be enough.

When we look at Jesus, the Word made flesh, we see the glory of God.

And this really matters.

**It should matter because we are only Christians, we are only forgiven, we are only redeemed if we recognize in Christ the glory of God.**

In the stories of Jesus in the Bible, the people who didn't see the glory of God in Jesus were lost. The people who did not and would not see God's glory in Jesus missed a relationship with God altogether, because there is no other way.

The essence of saving faith is to see the glory of God in Jesus, to know He is full of grace and truth. (John Owen)

If you look at Jesus and see glory you can be saved. But if you look at Jesus and don't see anything much, you aren't.

*John Owen wrote, "Consequently, the great scheme of the devil when the gospel was first preached was to blind the eyes of men and to fill their minds with prejudices, that they might not behold Christ's glory. The Apostle gives an account of Satan's success in this design:*

*"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)*

If we look at Jesus and just say, "Meh," if he is boring or inconsequential or not divine in our minds, then we don't know God at all.

We can only know Him in Jesus. And if Jesus isn't glorious to us, we don't know Him.

**It should matter that we behold the glory of God in Christ because seeing the glory of God is profoundly transformative:**

**2 Corinthians 3:15-18 “15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

We have seen his glory - and we are transformed into the same image. Seeing his glory in Christ transforms us into the image of Christ. Celebrating Christmas the right way should make us more like Jesus.

Look at where we saw the glory of God: when God stepped down and took on humanity. When the High and Mighty one made himself low. We all agree that that's where we see His greatest glory, when He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

And we are supposed to transform into the same image.

**So how does it make any sense at all that we are proud?**

Because if the truest place that we see the glory of God is when He humbled Himself and took on flesh, then why is our goal for ourselves so different? Why do we desire to be such a big deal, when we have seen His glory?

Why are we all about exalting ourselves when we have seen His glory - and it was clearest when He made Himself small?

Why are we so obsessed with our rights and our freedoms when we have seen His glory? And he was most glorious when He gave those things up for us.

What kind of glory are we seeking? We have seen His glory - what we are striving for is not what Christian glory looks like!

Dietrich Boenhoeffer said this:

*Who among us will celebrate Christmas correctly? Whoever finally lays down all power, all honor, all reputation, all vanity, all arrogance, all individualism beside the manger; whoever remains lowly and lets God alone be high; whoever looks at the child in the manger and sees the glory of God precisely in his lowliness.<sup>2</sup>*

If we see the glory of God in the lowliness of Christ, we shouldn't be afraid of lowliness ourselves. In fact, we are kind of striving for it.

And if in Jesus we see God's glory most clearly when He goes to the cross for us to pay for our sin, why do we so often act like that is not enough for us?

For example, we will confess our sin to Jesus, renounce it, but still carry with us guilt forever like it can never be forgiven. As if the glory of God wasn't glorious enough.

*In an incomprehensible reversal of all righteous and pious thinking, God declares himself guilty to the world and thereby extinguishes the guilt of the world. God himself takes the humiliating path of reconciliation and thereby sets the world free. God wants to be guilty of our guilt and takes upon himself the punishment and suffering that this guilt brought to us.*

*God stands in for godlessness, love stands in for hate, the Holy One for the sinner. Now there is no longer any godlessness, any hate, any sin that God has not taken upon himself, suffered, and atoned for. Now there is no more reality and no more world that is not reconciled with God and in peace. That is what God did in his beloved Son Jesus Christ... see the incarnate God, the unfathomable mystery of the love of God for the world. God loves human beings. God loves the world—not ideal human beings but people as they are, not an ideal world but the real world.<sup>3</sup>*

That's the meaning of Christmas. That God loves us even while we are in our sin, took on flesh and moved in among us, and died to redeem.

So behold that glory. And trust him. And be saved.

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<sup>2</sup>

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *God Is in the Manger* (p. 26). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *God Is in the Manger* (p. 30). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

And Christians, behold that glory and be transformed into His image. And be secure- all of the glory of God came down in Jesus to forgive you. So rest in that and find your joy. Let's pray.

Prayer of Confession:

Father, we have beheld your glory in the incarnation of Jesus.

But we confess, we act like we haven't. We act like we haven't when we carry our guilt and think we must have some other way of making it go away. We act like we haven't when we strive for a glory and autonomy that look altogether different than the glory of Jesus. We act like we haven't when our hearts are restless like there is still something greater than Jesus out there that we are looking for.

Jesus, thank you that you showed us what glory is. Thank you that you humbled yourself and poured out your life so that we could be forgiven and live. Thank you for the glory of your Gospel, that we can only be forgiven in you.

Spirit, help us to believe that the incarnation of Jesus is the place we see glory, so that we are shaped and changed into a glory like that. So that our definition of glory is not freedom, it isn't maximum rights, it isn't for me to be the biggest possible me, but it is in love and service.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is "glory" in the Bible?
- 2) Why is it significant that John says "we have seen His glory" when he describes the incarnation of Christ?
- 3) How is it significant that Jesus is full of grace and truth?
- 4) How are our lives different if we believe that Jesus shows us what God is like?
- 5) What forms of glory do we often pursue that don't look like the glory of the incarnation?