

Grace and Truth

John 1:14

January 25, 2026 am

HDBC

Last week we wrapped up our sermon series on John 15. Next week we will dive into a series called Greater Love, based on 1 Corinthians 13. The last time we considered that passage was the Covid year, and I was preaching into the camera on my phone and you all were watching from home. I knew then that I wanted to come back to it, in person. We'll begin that next week. So, today we are between series and I want to direct your attention to a statement written by the apostle John about Jesus.

Matthew and Luke begin their accounts of the life of Jesus with his conception and birth. John goes even further back than that. They focus on the physical birth of Jesus. John focuses more on the divine nature of Jesus. That is clearly seen in John 1:14. It is the foundational verse of John's introduction to his account of the life of Jesus. **READ John 1:14**

The dominate line in that verse is certainly the first one. ***And the Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us.*** That captures the essence of Christmas and introduces us to this important phase in God's mission to rescue sinful people from the condemnation and judgment we deserve.

As a loving creator and master artist, He would not simply discard the spoiled, ruined painting that He had created. He would enter into it in order to fix it, restore it, make it as good as it was at the beginning.

That is how John begins his account of the life of Jesus. He was fortunate enough to live during that time and to be chosen to be one of the twelve disciples who spent three years with Jesus. He was, as he would write in **1 John**, an eyewitness to the life of Jesus. Here is how he describes it.

What was from the beginning what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life (Jesus)

We saw Him, we touched Him, we heard Him. He was writing from personal experience. He was able to see Jesus up close, not simply for a few days or weeks, but for three years. John was qualified as much as any person to tell us what Jesus was like.

Most of the apostles died for their faith. The Bible records the death of James at the hand of Herod. Historical records provide testimony that all the others died in a variety of ways, as martyrs. **John outlived them all.**

Then, as an old man, he sat down to write his account of the life of Jesus. In his opening lines He chose to describe Jesus with an interesting statement. It is the second half of verse 14. **Full of grace and truth.**

This is how John saw Him. He was a man who did not simply possess grace and truth . . . He was full of grace and truth. How did John come to this conclusion? Why would he choose to describe Jesus in that way?

Because that is how Jesus interacted with people.

It was never grace without truth.

It was never truth without grace.

And John noticed it. Jesus demonstrated the perfect harmony of those two things. We marvel at that because all of us struggle with finding the right balance as we interact with others. So, let's think about it under three headings.

1. The Tension

Most of us don't like tension. Yet there are many tensions in life that can never be solved. And, in fact, should never be solved. Tension can be a good thing. It often promotes balance between two competing things which may both be good. Yet the value of each one is best seen when in balance with its competition. That balance keeps each one from gravitating toward extremes, which can often be destructive. The key for them is to find the balance. That is true of **grace and truth.**

Imagine grace on one end of a line and truth on the other. Most of us

gravitate toward one end or another. Not Jesus. He lived in the perfect balance. He never sacrificed grace for truth or truth for grace. He was full of each one. We naturally fall short of that balance.

If you are all about truth you focus on do's & don'ts. It's all about what is right and wrong. No middle ground. Those who lean toward the truth side tend to be more rigid, firm, less forgiving. Less likely to give another person the benefit of the doubt. *You made your bed, now you have to sleep in it*, kind of attitude. **Truth** people want to defend what they believe to be the standard of righteousness, at the cost of people.

If you are all about grace without truth, right and wrong can be watered down. The standards get blurred. People are seldom held accountable for their actions. There is a tendency to overlook sin and make excuses for others. Never want to make others uncomfortable. Everyone is your friend. **Grace** people defend people at the cost of the standard of righteousness.

Most of us gravitate to one side of the other. Why? There may be a lot of factors. **Personality**. Just how we are wired. **Parents**. *Some of you grew up in a home with Mr. Truth and Mrs. Grace . . . or the other way around. Or maybe for you they were both all about truth or all about grace.* Your parents certainly had an impact on you.

There is still another reason most of us want to move to one side or the other. **It resolves the tension**. If I decide that I am **fully a truth person** then I know how to respond to every situation and person. There is no tension. It is always a certain way. If I decide that I am **fully a grace person** then I know how to respond in every situation and person. There is no tension. It's always a certain way.

Here is the problem with either of those. The only way to resolve this tension is to give up one or the other. If you do, you will not be showing the kind of love that Jesus shared. **Jesus demonstrated how to show love in a way involving complete grace and complete truth.**

2. The Example

When you read the Gospels it would be easy to be confused. Because sometimes He acted one way and at other times he seemed to act another way. At times He seemed inconsistent, unfair and confusing.

Just about the time you think you have Him figured out and can anticipate what He will do, He surprises you. At times He is forgiving and at other times He condemns. At times He seems to be harsh and at other times kind. Sometimes He points out sin and at other times He seems to ignore it.

Soon after starting his public ministry he took a whip into the temple and drove out the moneychangers who had turned the temple from a house of prayer into a den of thieves. **That's truth!** Bold, harsh, clear.

Shortly a religious leader, Nicodemus, came to Jesus to talk about spiritual things. He was a Pharisee. They were arrogant, self-serving, condescending. This is Jesus' opportunity to condemn one of them personally. He simply says, *you need to be born again. That's grace!*

While traveling through the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida He pronounced and harsh judgment on them. *Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes.* (Truth)

When Jesus was being arrested in Gethsemane Peter responded by defending Jesus. He drew his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Rather than commanding Peter, he told him to put his sword away and healed the ear of the servant. **(Grace)**

A young rich guy comes to Jesus and asks what he needs to do to have eternal life. Jesus tells him to sell everything and follow me. Discipleship requires a total commitment and absolute sacrifice of everything. **(Truth).**

Jesus was crucified between two terrorists. One says, *we are getting what we deserve.* Jesus offers no argument. He does not let the man off the hook. But then he says, *today, when we die, we are both going to Heaven.* (**Grace**)

Ultimate example of these two found together is in John's Gospel

Woman caught in adultery. They bring her to Jesus and remind Him that according to the law (**truth**) they were supposed to stone her. He responds, *ok, the person with no sin, throw the first stone.* They all go away. Jesus looks at the woman and says *I don't condemn you.*
(Grace) *Now go and leave this life of sin.* (**Truth**)

What are we to make of this? John's description of Jesus offers the explanation. Jesus was **full of grace and truth.** He operated with both in perfect harmony. **That brings us to the Challenge.**

3. The Challenge

You might say, *well, that's Jesus.* No need to try to learn from Him. Just accept it by faith. That would be fine except for one thing. **We are a called to love others as He loved.** In other words, we are called to treat others like He did. We are called to operate in **grace and truth** just like Jesus did.

It was messy when He did it. It will be messy when we do it. There will be times when **truth is the greatest need.** When you demonstrate it, you might be accused of being harsh, judgmental, unforgiving. Operate in **truth**, anyway.

There will be times when **grace is the greatest need.** When you demonstrate it, you might be accused of being weak, having no conviction, worldly. Operate in **grace** anyway.

If we want to be like Jesus, we must operate toward others with both.

Must never stop telling the truth. For it sets people free. Must never compromise the truth. The wages of sin is death, even for those who do not know this. All of us have sinned and are separated from God. These things are universally true whether people know it or not. We must never stop saying it, because they need to know it.

Must never stop operating in grace. Grace is vital for it is the only way to find forgiveness and to be delivered from the consequences of sin. Grace is our only way to God. Only through grace can we find favor with God.

Jesus embodied grace and truth.

The **church is His body**. We are His hands and feet.

As a church, we must operate in both.

It would be so easy to just be **a truth church**. To take a strong, vocal stand on the great moral issues of our day. To rail about how bad the culture is and what we need to do about it. Preach hard against sin and for righteousness. Easy to get people fired up against all the evils of our day. Rigid, hard, firm. This may make us feel good about the church, but it will offer no hope for lost people. They may learn how bad they are, but will feel there is no hope.

It would be easy to just be **the grace church**. Never focus on absolutes in Scripture. Keep everything vague. Focus on relationships at all costs and on making people feel good. Become all-inclusive. Be accepting of any and everything. This may make people feel good, but they will never have an awareness of sin, lostness or of the need for repentance, confession and salvation.

May God help HDBC to be a church full of grace and truth.