Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Word Made Flesh
Scripture: John 1:1-18
Code: 1295

I would like to draw your attention to the first chapter of the gospel of John for our message this Christmas morning...John chapter 1. There are many views of Christmas, as no doubt you're aware. I was thinking about all of the various ways in which people tend to perceive Christmas. A little child sees Christmas as bright lights, trees, Santa, sort of a mystical magical time full of fun, full of anticipation and excitement like no other time during the year...a time to receive gifts. And this year, it's everything from video games to Cabbage Patch dolls, whatever in the world those are.

And then teenagers look at Christmas as a time, I think, to be with friends and go to parties and be out of school and get a new wardrobe. And adults see Christmas as a time with family and friends, a time of overdrawn checkbooks and overcharged credit cards...shopping malls, trying to imagine whether all your relatives have gained weight or lost weight and what size they should be given without being insulted. Businesses see Christmas as a time to deplete the inventory and raise the profits. There are a lot of views of Christmas.

This week I just went to my New Testament and I began to go through the New Testament and find all of the perspectives that are there, relative to Christmas. Paul in Romans chapter 1 verses 2 and 3 sees the birth of Christ as the time that the word of the prophets in the holy Scripture came to pass. In writing to the Philippians in chapter 2 he sees Christmas, as it were, as a time when God condescends in great humiliation to come into the world. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews in chapter 2 verse 14 sees it as the time when Satan is going to be destroyed, and again in chapter 10 the writer of Hebrews sees Christmas as the great event in which God provides a sacrificial offering for the sins of men. John in his epistle chapter 4 verse 14 talks about it being the birth of the Savior of the world. Paul in writing to Timothy chapter 1 verse 15 says Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And then sees it as a very personal event by saying, "Of whom I am chief."

And then we're most familiar with Christmas as viewed by Matthew and Luke for they give us historical detail, telling us all about shepherds and angels and Mary and Joseph and wise men and hillsides and mangers and the Christ Child, Bethlehem. But one of the most important certainly unique accounts of Christmas is found in John chapter 1. And John presents to us the story of Christmas without ever mentioning Bethlehem, without ever mentioning Mary, without ever mentioning Joseph, without ever mentioning an inn or a manger or shepherds or angels or any of those things. But really, this is the story. This is the story behind the scenes. This is the story that couldn't be seen if you were on the hillside and heard the angels with their proclamation. This is the

story that you couldn't know if you stood in the manger and looked at the child and His father and mother, you would have to have a revelation from God to know this element of the story.

It is rich, unique to all the New Testament...profound and powerful. It is the realilty of Christmas not seen historically but seen theologically. And it answers the question: who is this child born in Bethlehem? John takes us into the very mind of God. He takes us into eternity. We leave time. We go out of the world for this for a while, to find out the real message of Christmas. But it is a perspective that we must have if we are to understand at all.

Now John introduces the child to us in six pictures, magnificently portrayed. And we ask the question: what child is this with the writer who wrote it in the song, what child is this? And John answers it. First of all, he tells us that this is the eternal one...the eternal one. Notice verses 1 through 3. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made."

Now in those three verses which stretch our minds to the breaking point, to even conceive of the truths that they bear, John tells us in initiating his gospel which is to present to us the Savior, that is its intention. We find that in the twentieth chapter and the thirtieth and thirty-first verses where he says his purpose is to present to us the Savior that we might believe and be saved. He begins by introducing us to Him. And his first point is that the child born is none other than the eternal one. And John ascends beyond the beginning. And he goes past creation to the preexistence of this eternal one. And he finds Him already existing in eternity in the presence of God before anything is created...for the verse says "In the beginning."

What beginning? Oh I suppose John is identifying for us there the beginning of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created..." In that beginning, the only beginning we can know about because before the creation there was no beginning, there was no time, there was no starting of anything for God existed in eternal existence. So in the beginning, the only beginning we know, the beginning of God's creation, was the Word.

In other words, what he's saying simply is that when the beginning began the Word already was. That is a marvelous statement that surpasses our ability to understand it. We just accept it. When the heavens and earth were created the Word already existed. From all eternity it was already there.

There's an interesting personification of wisdom that could appropriately be applied to the Word found in Proverbs chapter 8 verse 27, listen to this. "When He prepared the heavens I was there. When He set a compass upon the face of the depth, when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, when He gave to the sea its decree that the waters should not pass its commandment, when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him as

one brought up with Him and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." And wisdom personified in that chapter could be no better personified than in the living eternal co-existent Word of God. And when He made everything, the Word was there, already there...the eternal one.

So, first of all, John tells us that this Word is eternal. Secondly, he tells us that in eternity the Word was with God...the Word was with God, pros ton theon. The best way to understand it is face to face with God, on a level of equality, not under God, not looking up to Him, not above and looking down, not on the side having no intimacy but face to face with the living God. This eternal one then is in intimate personal equal communion with the eternal God. And then he tells us point blank the Word was God...or, in the Greek it says, "God was the Word...God was the Word."

And so the progression here is very important. First we learn that when everything was created, the Word already existed eternally. And in that eternal existence the Word was equal to God, in fact the Word was God.

Now the question comes immediately as to why John chooses to use the term "Word," logos. What is his point? Well I believe he does this because it provides a dramatic beginning for his great gospel and also because it is a point of identification with his readers, both Jew and Gentile. Let me explain why. The Jew understood the Word of God as a very important concept. For all throughout the Old Testament when God revealed Himself, He spoke. And many many times it says, "The Lord spake unto so-and- so...the Lord spoke here...the Lord spoke there...and the Lord said this," and so forth. God in revealing Himself revealed Himself through speaking.

So, the Jew knew the Word of the Lord as that revelation that preceded from God. When the Jew thought about the power of God and the will of God and the mind of God and the purpose of God and the design of God and the plan of God, it was embodied in the Word of God. And so to the Jew that which preceded from God to reveal Himself was His Word. And so John in adapting that term identifies with the Jew by saying that will of God, that mind of God, that plan of God, that purpose of God, that design of God, that power of God which is His self-revelation has come to you. That's where he's going with his thought.

If you want to see the Word of God, if you want to know the creative power of God, if you want to see that Word which brought the universe into existence which gives the mind of God to men, then look, He's here. And the word logos itself was uniquely common to the Greeks. They had philosophized about quote: "the logos," and they saw the logos as an impersonal, even non- personal force which emanated from the God..whoever the God was..responsible for generating all that was, they saw the Word which precedes from that God as that non-personal force that brought things into existence.

Heracleitus writes about the logos. The Stoics write about the logos. That totally impersonal force in no sense a person, in no sense having personality, but some kind of force, some kind of power which

came from the ground of being, as Paul Tillic(?) calls it, that basic cause, that force brought things into existence, created whatever is, sustains whatever is. Philo calls it "The power of creation, the tiller by which God stirs all things, the intermediary between the world and God, the priest which sets the soul before God," end quote. That is the logos...this non-discriminate power of word, reason, mind and will.

So, the Greek knew about the logos, thought about that creative directing force. And John is saying by using that term for centuries, you Greeks have thought and talked and written and discussed and dreamed and philosophized about the logos, the power of the universe, the power by which men are and by which men think and reason, the power by which men contact God, I submit to you that He is here. And so in using the term logos he collects in understanding both the Jew and the Greek and he says this one is eternal, this one is equal to God, this one is God...the eternal one.

Verse 2, the same was in the beginning with God, adds nothing new to verse 1, just unites the thoughts of verse 1. The Word was in the beginning with God, equal to God, eternal. It's a marvelous thought.

But how can you sustain that thought? How can you verify that thought? That's verse 3, look at it. "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." The great proof, the great proof that the Word is God is that the Word created. And whoever creates all that is is God. I mean, you don't have to think very long to come to that obvious conclusion. Whoever made everything is God. And the verification of the statement that the Word was God is that everything that was made was made by the Word. And it said positively, "All things were made by Him," and negatively, "without Him was not anything made that was made."

So he hits it both ways, positively and negatively. All things were made by Him. And someone might say, "Oh well, but there were others..." No, without Him was not anything made that was made. Now whoever made everything that is is God. And he is saying the eternal one is God who made everything. Marvelous, incredible introduction.

So, John wants to introduce us to the Word, to the force in the universe that made everything, to that emanation that comes from God, that revelation that comes from God, that manifestation that comes from God which expresses the will of God, the mind of God, the power of God, the purpose of God, the design of God, the plan of God. He wants us to meet this powerful force.

And then he says one more thing about the eternal one in verse 4, "In Him was...what?...life." Obviously...if He was the creator, in Him was life. If He was the one who made everything that is, then life came from Him. So John opens up his gospel, his Christmas story by saying the child is none other than the eternal God who made everything, who is self-possessed of life eternal and who granted life and existence to all that is...for as Acts 17 puts it, "It is in Him we live and move and have

our being."

John has a second thing to tell us. The one he's introducing to us is not only the eternal one but the revealed one...the revealed one. Look at verse 4 again. "The life was the light of men and the light shines in darkness and the darkness couldn't put it out." Now this is a very important statement. The life became the light of men. This is revelation. The life which is reference to that eternal one, the Word, became the light of men. In other words, the life transcendent far beyond men. In no way could we ever grasp or conceive of that transcendent eternal life of God and we would stand like Job who said, "Behold, I go forward and He is not there, I go backward and I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand where He doth work, I cannot behold Him, He hideth Himself on His right hand that I cannot see Him." And all of us would be in that same situation except for the fact that it says "And the life became the light of men." The life is seen in an analogy as light, coming in to brighten the darkness.

The living Word then is the living God fully expressed in the darkness. Where is the darkness? Well, you will notice it says in verse 4, "The life was the light of men," and verse 5, "The light shines in darkness." You can equate it. The light in verse 4 and the light in verse 5, men in verse 4 and darkness in verse 5. Darkness is the world of men. The light came into the world of men. The light came into the dark world of men. Dark, because it is a sinful world, it is a world inhabited by demons, it is a world dominated by Satan. And John says this light came into the darkness. And he switches from the life concept to light because light is a purposeful and helpful analogy. Light shining in darkness illustrates life coming to deadness. He is life. He is the one who gives life. And He came into the world of men, light was manifest in darkness, light shines forth in darkness. Twenty-one times in the gospel of John John talks about that light. So the light comes.

And notice, it shines in the darkness. Have you noticed how darkness cannot put out light. The darkness cannot extinguish the smallest match. It cannot extinguish the smallest candle. It cannot put out the tiniest light. The blackest midnight cannot put out the smallest candle. So into the world of men, the dark world of men comes the light. And it is the light of life, the living God invading human darkness. And verse 5 says the darkness could not put it out.

In John 3, would you notice verse 18 for a moment? Just moving ahead a couple of chapters in John's gospel, he says, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." And then this explanation, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved, but he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be manifest that they are wrought in God." So there John expands on that thought that light came into the world and men loved darkness rather than light but even in their love of the darkness, the darkness could not put out the light.

So who is this child? John says, first of all, He is the eternal one. Secondly, He is the revealed one, or the manifest one. Eternity has come into time. And we know it because the light has shined in the darkness and the darkness couldn't put it out. It's as if he wants to verify everything. He says He is eternal and he says the proof is He created everything. He says He is revealed and the proof is that the darkness couldn't put the light out. And the world knows the light came. They can try to deny it but they cannot extinguish it. The world may deny till its blue in the face that the light came but the light did come.

And then there's a third feature that must be discussed about who this child is, He is the promised one...He is the promised one. Notice verse 6, "There came a man sent from God whose name was John." I can't tell you how many times that verse has been used to introduce me to preach a sermon...commonly used in my behalf but I'm not the John of whom it speaks, by any stretch of the imagination. The reference here is the Apostle John referring to John the Baptist. "There came a man sent from God whose name was John."

Now into the testimony John wants to bring the supreme man of all the prophets, the last Old Testament prophet. He came after 400 silent years when there had been no prophetic voice. He came and of him it is said in Matthew 11:11 that there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist. He's the greatest man that ever lived. He came into the world for one reason and that was that he was sent by God to announce the coming of the Messiah...the coming of the light, the coming of the life, the coming of the living Word, that was his task. Verse 7, "The same came for a witness."

That's the reason he came. He had no other purpose to exist, really. He came for a witness, to bear witness, to give testimony of the light "That all men through him--that is through John the Baptist--might believe in that light." In other words, he came to draw people to him that through his testimony they might believe in that light. He was not that light but was sent to give testimony of that light. And John the Apostle is saying He is the eternal one proven by creation, He is the revealed one proven by light in the midst of darkness, He is the promised one proven by the fact that the greatest of all prophets said He is the one. That's verification. And the gospel of John is loaded with that. John calls the testimony of the Father on behalf of the incarnation, the testimony of the words and works of the Lord, the testimony of Old Testament Scripture, the testimony of people who met Him, the testimony of the disciples and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. And then here begins that whole string of testimony with the testimony of John the Baptist...the first witness listed in the gospel of John. He testifies that the logos has come and is the true light in the world.

Verse 7 says, "The same came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all men through him might believe that through his testimony they might believe." What is believing? It's used a hundred times in John's gospel. It's the essence of everything. It means to put faith in, to account as true. To believe means to say yes to the living Word and all that He is and all that He has done.

He was not the light, he knew that. He was not the light. He said that in chapter 3. He said, "I am not the Christ," verse 28, "But I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears Him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled." In other words, I'm not the...I'm not part of the wedding, I'm just the Best Man. He must increase and I decrease. He knew who he was and who he was not. He was a portable lamp, chapter 5 he's referred to a luchnos which is a little tiny lamp. But the one coming was a billion blazing suns and he was to the coming of the Word what the moon is to the sun, it is only a small reflector. He was not that light.

And somebody might at this point say, "Well, since when does light need an announcement? Since when do you have to tell people the light is on?" Well you don't unless, of course, they're blind. And, of course, in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 it says, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them." And the world in its darkness and blindness needed to be told that the light had come. John the Baptist was the one who told them.

So, we see the Word, the eternal one proven by creation, revealed one proven by light shining in darkness, the promised one proven by the verification of the greatest of all Old Testament prophets. Something more about this child, He is also the rejected one, notice verse 9...the rejected one. That light that came was the true light, alethinos, the genuine one, the real one. Oh there's been some flickering candles before. There had been some messengers from God, some glimpses of the light but now the full real light has come. This is the true light, this is it. And then it says in verse 9, "Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The coming of the light literally shattered the darkness, lighting every man that comes into the world.

Now that's difficult construction in the Greek text. And you can look at it two ways, maybe more, but two that seem to me to be reasonable. One is that what it is saying is basically that this was the true light which lights every man that comes into the world. In other words, the only light that could ever light anybody is that light. There is salvation under no other name, that this is the light which lights every man that comes into the world who is lit. This is the only light there is. That is to say that it is an exclusive light, that all other religious systems are darkness, that if anyone is ever to be lit they ought to be lit by this light. He is the light that lights every man that comes into the world, every man who is lit.

But perhaps a better way to see it is to see it just in the simplicity of exactly what it says, that He is the light who lights every man that comes into the world. That in some way the light of Christ is so far-reaching and so comprehensive and so darkness dispelling that it lights every man that comes into the world to one extent or another. And so this comes as a parallel to Romans 1 where it says that we have enough knowledge about God to be without excuse, right? We have so much knowledge of God

that we can stand in jeopardy and in judgment because of what we have or have not done with the light we have. And I like to see this verse in that same vein, that what he is saying is that the light is so comprehensive and the light is so far reaching that in some way or another, every soul in the face of the earth has had that light shed to them. Now whether or not they live up to that light is another issue. And it may just be that in some cases that light dispels the darkness and in some cases that light only reveals the evil for which later judgment will occur. But Christ is that light that lights every man that ever enters the world.

He lights some perhaps we can see unto salvation. He lights some unto judgment, revealing their evil. But He is the light. He is the only light that will ever light a heart. He is the light that in some way lights every man. God has revealed enough of Himself to every person to hold them accountable. And He is a light, either a light unto salvation or a light unto judgment.

But I take it that the message eminently in verse 9 is that He is come to bring the light of God to every soul, that He has made it available to every person in the world. That's what I see as the heart of that verse based on the next verse, "He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Here He came to light the world. Here He came to light every man that came into the world and the world received Him not.

Sad beyond description, heartbreaking. He was in the world. That's what we saw in verses 4 and 5, light in darkness, life coming to the world of men. The world was made by Him, we saw that in verse 3, "All things were made by Him, without Him was not anything made that was made." "And the world knew Him not," we saw that in verse 5, the darkness remained the darkness and tried even to put out the light. There was no recognition. And when it says the world knew Him not, it doesn't mean they didn't know who He was, it means they didn't have an intimate personal relationship with Him. The word "know" used in John's gospel carries the idea very often a very intimate personal fellowship. They didn't have that with Him...the evil world of men.

He came unto His own, His own...what?...His own everything. Everything that was made was made by Him, right? Verse 3. So He came unto everything that was His, everything. His own received Him not.

I think especially though we can see Israel there. But Israel is only like a symbol of the whole world of rejectors. And I think Israel lives with some sense of...I don't know..sort of a deep down fear that they really made a mistake about Jesus Christ. I get that feeling. I remember talking to a rabbi who when I named the name of Jesus Christ leaped out of his chair and put his fist on his desk and said, "Don't ever mention that name in my presence." Now there's something wrong when somebody reacts like that. There may be that gnawing fear down inside many of them that they may have missed their Messiah. In fact, Rabbi Ben Ezra(?) wrote a prayer, that I find very interesting, years ago, "Thou if Thou was He who at midnight watch came by the starlight, naming a dubious name, and if too heavy

with sleep too rash with fear, O Thou, if that martyred gash fell on Thee, coming to take Thy own and we gave Thee the cross when we owed Thee the throne, Thou art the judge." The suspicion haunts the mind, perhaps, that the Messiah has been rejected. He came to His own and His own received Him not.

The eternal one, this child, the revealed one, the promised one, the rejected one. But the rejected one was also...look at verse 12...the saving one...the saving one. The plan was not thwarted. God was in no way frustrated by men's unbelief. His coming was successful for the very time of rejection became the time of redemption. But...oh I love that...that adversity, that turning the corner, turning the tables, in spite of all of that, "As many as received Him," and such receiving is defined at the end of the verse, "even to them that believe on His name," that is to say they received Him, they believed on His name. What do you mean "on His name?" On all that He is that the idea of name of means all that He is, all that He claimed to be, all that He did, all that He said, all that He is. Those who believed that He was all that He said and He did all that He did, those who believed that were receiving Him. Yes, they were saying to Him, yes. "And to them gave He power to become the children of God."

Oh, and men had so long to know God. Religions from one end of the globe to the other demonstrate that men want to know God. Unfortunately they want to know Him on their terms, not His. Thus they reject His terms. But for those that accepted His terms, they became children of God. Not just friends, not associates, not members of the society, sons.

The whole point of the coming of the logos was to bring people into intimacy with the living God. And that's why the Apostle Paul says that we are joint heirs with Him. We are sons of God crying "Abba, Father." John says in 1 John 3 that we'll be like Him for we see Him as He is. We are drawn into intimacy, that His fullness dwells in us, that we possess the divine nature. He's made us children.

Who? Them that believe on His name. What's His name? His name is all that He is. That's our side. Verse 13 is His side, "Who were born"...that is born into God's family, not of blood. In other words, it didn't happen because you inherited it, it wasn't racial. "Nor of the will of the flesh." It didn't happen because you longed for it and you hungered for it and you desired it and you exercised yourself for it. "Nor of the will of man." And nobody else could do that for you either. It didn't come to you because some human agency or human instrumentation made it possible. It wasn't due to your heritage. It wasn't due to your strong desire. It wasn't due to some other human resource. You came because of God, that's what verse 13 says. So 12 says, "As many as believed received," but 13 says, "If you did that it wasn't because you desired it, it wasn't because somebody desired it for you, and it wasn't because you inherited it, it was because of God." So you have at the very beginning of John's gospel the introduction of the tension between the electing sovereign power of God and the faith of an individual. In verse 12 we are saved because we believe. In verse 13 it's all of God. That non-reconcilable tension, at least non-reconcilable in this world is given us there.

No human birth, no human desire, no racial identity, no human resource can bring us to salvation. It is a sovereign act of God. He does it. But it is always accompanied by personal faith in all that the living Word is and did. So He's the saving one. How marvelous.

John has said this is the Christmas story. Who came into the world? The eternal one did, the revealed one, the promised one, the rejected one, the saving one. And we're still saying: but who is it? Many babies are born, who is it? It's not until verses 14 to 18 that he answers our question specifically. He's taking us to this. And here we find the glorious one...the glorious one. Here's his Christmas story in verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Oh what a great statement. That's the Christmas story. The Word, the eternal one became the revealed one because He was the promised one and though He was the rejected one He is the saving one. It is that Word that eternal power and will and mind and wisdom of God who was made flesh...the infinite became finite, the invisible became visible, God became man, the powerful creative divine force that was the cause of everything has taken on human flesh.

So when you look at the manger you see something different than you see in Matthew and Luke, staggering...staggering thought. Unable to be conceived that God the all transcendent, all wise, all knowing, all powerful, all holy, all glorious God appears as one of His own creations. And notice it says, "The Word became flesh." It assumes His preexistence. He didn't come into being, He just came to be flesh. And when He came to be flesh He didn't cease to be what He was.

This is the mystery...the Word became man and did not cease to be God...and dwelt among us. The word there is to pitch your tent, askenos, and put up your tent. He put up His tent with us.

And here comes the testimony of John the Apostle, "And we...personal...beheld His...what?...His glory." We beheld His glory. Well what did you see when you beheld His glory? Well we saw God.

So John says when that Word was made flesh, we saw God...we saw God. And He was full of grace and truth, not partial, full...complete perfect deity. It's marvelous, he sees His essential glory in Him being one with God, His moral glory in His grace and truth...two dimensions there. Truth...no man knows truth except by the revelation of God. Grace...no man knows grace but by the revelation of God. And when this one became flesh and we saw His essential glory, we saw God. Where did you see God? We saw it in His deeds, we saw God in His words, we saw God in His emotions. We saw God when He pulled back the veil of His flesh and we were with Him in the holy mount, says Peter. And we saw His glory. We saw in Him the glory of God and it was manifest to us in truth and grace, not partial truth and partial grace but full truth and full grace.

Nobody knows truth, the truth about God, the truth about destiny, the truth that we need so desperately to know. And no one knows grace apart from the revelation that came in the incarnate

Word. That's why Paul says to the Colossians, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily." It's a monumental statement, Colossians 2:10. In Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily...full...full...full of grace and truth.

And you keep saying to yourself, "Well who is He? But who is He?" And he takes us a step further in verse 15. He's given us these pictures, the eternal one, the revealed one, the promised one, the rejected one, the saving one, the glorious one, but who is He? Verse 15, "John bore witness of Him and cried saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that cometh after me is preferred before me for He was before me." Wow...

When John the Baptist came he gave testimony, he said the one who is coming after me really was before me. In other words, the one who comes after me is eternal. You notice down in verse 27 that John actually speaks as he gives a picture of John the Baptist baptizing. John is speaking and he says in verse 27, "He it is who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to loose," and so forth.

Who is it? It is the one of whom John bore witness. The one of whom John said He's preferred before me because He was before me. And of His fullness have all we received. It's the one whose fullness we've all received and from Him grace in the place of grace. That's a tremendous statement. What does it mean grace for grace, or grace in the place of grace? Well the best way to understand it is it's like waves rolling in on the sea, grace upon grace upon grace, it just washes out and more comes in. And when we received this one in all His fullness, we got grace upon grace upon grace upon grace rolling in like some endless divine tide. Grace which is that blood-red mark that cancels the debt of sin. Grace which is the star of hope that lights the dark sky of iniquity. Grace which is the immovable pillar that stands to hold up the covenant of peace with God. Grace which is the staff on which we lean in our infirmity and weakness. Grace rolls into us. And of all the fullness of that have we received. And here is John's personal testimony, he says, John the Baptist gave his testimony in verse 15, I give my testimony and those with me in verse 16.

And we say, "But who is He?" And in verse 17 he says it. "The law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by...whom?...Jesus Christ." Who is this Word? Who is this eternal one? This revealed one? Who is this promised one? Who is this rejected and saving one? This all glorious one who is this one of whom John gave testimony and said, Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world? In chapter 1 verse 29. Who is this one of whom John said, "This is the Son of God," in verse 34? Jesus Christ. He's the Word. And the law...the law came by Moses. And the law brought part of the truth and no grace. The law only brought part of the truth, not the full truth. The full truth didn't come until the new covenant. The full truth didn't come until the arrival of the Son. The law brought part of the truth and no grace. There's no grace in the law, only judgment, only guilt. But in Jesus Christ came grace and truth.

And then he sums it all up in verse 18, the sum of the whole thing. "No man has seen God at any time," true? No man's ever seen God. How we going to reach out and know God? Are we all going to be like Job, I looked over here and I looked over there and he couldn't find Him anyplace? No man's ever seen God. Is that the end? No. "The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, the one who is in the middle connected with the living God He hath declared Him." Marvelous...incredible truth.

The child born in Bethlehem is none other than the living God come to declare Himself to us. In Jesus Christ the unknowable becomes knowable, the invisible becomes visible, the transcendent becomes intimate, the untouchable becomes touchable, the unreachable becomes embraceable. And God is never again a stranger to a believing heart.

That's the Christmas story according to John. Let's bow in prayer.

Before you go in a closing word, do you really understand the meaning of Christmas? An ill prepared college student took an exam just before Christmas vacation. He wasn't ready for the exam so he just wrote on his paper, "Only God knows the answers to these questions. Merry Christmas." The professor wrote back, "God gets 100, you get zero." I'm afraid that Christmas is that way for a lot of people. God gets 100, they get zero. The test of Christmas, your test today. Who is Christ? Given you all the answers. If you don't pass the test it's because you will not to, it's because you choose not to. Oh, come to Christ, receive Him, believe on His name and become a child of God.

Father, we pray that You'll bring to the prayer room those that You would desire to come. And, Lord, that all of us might see this season in a new and fresh and wonderful new way, behind the history to the theology of what really happened 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. Do Your work in every life, we give You glory in Christ's name. Amen. God bless you.

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