

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

We Beheld His Glory

Scripture: John 1:14-18

Code: 90-423

Part of what I feel like I want the Lord to do for us in these messages that we give around the Christmas season is to just help you to be fresh in your understanding of the glories of Christ for those very opportunities that will come to you to answer questions, enter into dialogue with people who may not have committed their lives to Christ, just to give you a fresh and a new insight. It's not as if we don't know the story of Christ, it's not as if we don't understand the depth of the incarnation, the theology of what was going on in Bethlehem, we do know that and that's why we're here. We love these truths. We worship. And they're familiar like an old song that we love that brings back rich and wonderful memories. That's part of what makes Christmas the celebration that it is, it's so loaded with history and memories from the past and we sort of dive back into the pool of all that's gone before and enjoy all of the memories that have made up the Christmases of our past.

And so from the standpoint of the Word of God, not to introduce anything new to you but to go back to the familiar ground of John chapter 1, John's account of the incarnation, as I told you last week. John tells the Christmas story without Joseph, without Mary, without the baby, without the stable, without the manger, without the shepherds, without the wise men, without the star, without the angels, without all the familiar components of the Christmas story, John gives us the real story of what was happening. It's a theological look at Christmas, rather than the historical facts that we find in Matthew and Luke's account.

And the key verse that we're looking at in the first chapter of John's gospel is verse 14, and the opening phrase, "The Word became flesh." The Word became flesh. With an economy of words, marvelous, profound simplicity captures our minds. "The Word became flesh" says it all. When you unpack that, there's an infinity in those four words, the Word became flesh. That is the theology of Christmas.

The Word, as we learned last time, is the eternal God, God the Son. The Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, have existed always, eternally and the Word became flesh explains that the second member of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God became a man. As I told you last time, God is eternal, pure being, no beginning and no end, and no changing. God is pure eternal being. Everything else that has been created is becoming. God is *ami* the verb to be. Everything that is created is *ginomai*, becoming, changing, altering, mutating, moving, growing. And here the amazing miracle is the Word, eternal pure being, entered into the universe of the becoming ones and became a man.

John's point is clear. God became something He had never been without ceasing to be what He had always been, the Word became flesh, the eternal God became a man. The Word, pure eternal being, became a man, a creature becoming, starting out as an embryo planted by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, growing there for nine months, and then born as an infant, a child, a young adult, and a man subject to all the change of being part of His creation.

This didn't happen on December 25th by the way. And it didn't happen on the Jewish equivalent of that in their calendar. But that really doesn't matter. It shouldn't matter. No celebration could be too great to overstate the incarnation. No celebration could be too grand to overestimate the impact of the incarnation. I'm fine with picking a day a year. The only thing better than that would be just to be reminded of it every single day. We cannot overstate the importance of this, the impact of the incarnation. As Christians, we get that. We understand that. We grasp this with all our spiritual might and make everything we can out of it so that we can fully focus our attention for a month a year on the glory of the greatest event in the history of the world, the incarnation of God in human form.

It is, however, a very strange and bizarre paradox that another figure has intruded into the middle of our celebration. And there doesn't seem to be any way to get rid of him. He is everywhere at this time of the year and is far more prevalent than any representation of Jesus Christ. Oddly enough, his name is a rearrangement of the letters that are the New Testament title for the demonic archenemy of Jesus Christ Himself.

And by the way, there is a hymn to this intruder. There is a hymn with his theology in it and you know the hymn and you're kids know the hymn. It goes like this, "You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout I'm telling you why, Santa Claus is coming to town." You probably couldn't quote Robert Burns. You probably couldn't quote Emily Dickenson. You probably couldn't quote Keats and Shelley, but you can quote that...unfortunately. Meager effort at poetry at best, and a hopeless attempt at theology. "He's making a list and checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty and nice, Santa Claus is coming to town. He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He's knows when you've been good or bad, so be good for goodness sake. You better not pout, you better not cry...oh, you better watch out, you better not pout...no, you better watch out, you better not," You can see I'm not familiar with this theology. "You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout I'm telling you why, Santa Claus is coming to town." That was written by two guys, Coots was one of them, and a man named Haven in 1934 and established a hymn to this intruder.

As I said, you all know it, you hear it all the time, your children may know it, and it teaches a false theology about a false non-existent person, sets up a set of false doctrines and a means for you to gain heavenly favor from this individual if you're good.

What is interesting about this whole Santa Claus thing is that he has powers that are paralleled to God. Now I know that to sort of talk against Santa Claus is to line up with the Grinch who stole Christmas, and at the risk of being a Grinch for a moment or two, I'll bear the stigma to point out the bizarre nature of this Santa myth.

First of all, it teaches that Santa is a transcendent being...he is a transcendent being; he's not subject to the powers of this world. He can fly and he can cover the entire planet, stop at every single house and do it in one night. He is a very powerful being. He lives at the North Pole, but if you go to the North Pole, there's a town in Alaska called North Pole, you're not going to find him there because he's way north of that, he's a heavenly being and he's surrounded by other heavenly beings who aren't subject to normal constraints in life of the rest of creation. He is also all-knowing. He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake, he knows if you've been good or bad, so be good for goodness sake. He is omniscient. He is omnipresent. He knows what's going on. And by the way, he also promises and threatens. If you're good, you'll get gifts; and if you're not good, the idea is if you're naughty you're not going to get any gifts. At that point he doesn't keep his word because we're all naughty and we still get our gifts. And so this guy doesn't tell the truth. He's not consistent with his promises.

He makes threats and doesn't follow through on them. My parents threw that at me when I was a kid. If you expect anything for Christmas, you better be good. And they gave me things anyway. The good thing about Santa is, you only have to worry about him once a year. And by the way, because he does bring gifts anyway, even though we're all bad, I've decided that theologically he's a Universalist. You will ultimately receive his favor even if you're bad.

It's a powerful kind of figure, this Santa who favors people on the basis of them being good. That's a familiar line, isn't it? That's essentially what makes up every religion in the world but Christianity. Good works will earn you favor with transcendent God. Santa represents a transcendent being who doesn't exist, who doesn't tell the truth, who has empty threats, who has a works system, rewards people on the basis of their doing good and who only shows up once a year.

On the other hand, this obliterates the true God, the true Christ, the living Son of God who speaks only the truth, gives salvation not by works but by grace. Keeps all His promises. Will judge those who reject Him. And always be gracious to those who receive Him and is always present, not just one night a year. It's just an odd juxtaposing, isn't it?

Well let's look at John's account, enough of Santa Claus, that's really kind of a hard thing for me to talk about from this pulpit, Santa Claus...who'd a thought, huh? We'll go back to John chapter 1 and we'll talk about the real story of Christmas, the Word became flesh...the Word became flesh. The incarnation is a reality in time/space history. This is Christianity. If we don't have an incarnation, we don't have Christianity.

The world is consumed at this time of year with the frivolous joy tied to a fantasy and reinforcing good works is the epitome of self-elevation. And in the celebration of Santa, the true Savior, the only source of true joy, eternal joy, is obscured. But we get it and that's why we're here. And I know there are a lot of churches that canceled their Sunday services because they didn't want to intrude into Christmas. What a bizarre idea. Of all times to meet together it would be on this day, wouldn't it?, to celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was 1934 when those two men gave us the theology of Santa. It was two thousand years ago when John gave us the divine theology of Jesus Christ. John opens his majestic account of the life of Christ, called the gospel of John, by establishing Him as the incarnate God. That's the whole point of the opening 18 verses. He starts out referring to Him as the eternal Son who is preexistent, coexistent and self-existent. And that identifies Him as God.

You know these familiar verses, "In the beginning was the Word." The Word is identified here as the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God, who came into the world in human form, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is called the Word because in the Greek world, in the secular world, the Gentile world, they had taken the term *logos* which is the Greek word for word, and they had used that as a title to identify the mind, the intelligence, the wisdom and the power that created the universe. They knew there was an intelligent mind, that there was a massive power. There had to be a cause for this effect called creation. They knew that. Philosophers knew it. They gave it a name, *logos*, it was impersonal. It was a power. It was a force. It was some kind of an entity without being a person.

And John borrows that and simply says, "That which you identify as the force that made everything that is, that embedded it with wisdom and intelligence is none other than the person of Jesus Christ. He is the Creator of the universe. He says that in verse 3. There isn't anything that exists that He didn't make.

So, He is preexistent. In the beginning, that's the beginning of the creation, Genesis 1, "In the beginning God created," in the beginning when God created the Word was. In other words, He was already existing at creation which makes Him preexistent which makes Him God. Anything that is preexistent to creation is outside of creation and that can only be God. He is also co-existent. The Word was God. He is not only with God, preexistent, He is God coexistent. And then the third evidence of His deity in verse 4, "In Him was life, He is self-existent." Nobody gave Him life. He didn't take life from someone else.

Somebody said to me last week, "What about John 5:26 where it says the Father gave Him to have life in Himself." All that simply means is that in the incarnation, the Father did not withdraw from Him in His humiliation the power to give life. He is life. "I am the way, the truth and the life." The Father gave Him to have life in Himself, only in the sense that in His self-emptying and His incarnation, He

retained all that He was before His incarnation. This is the eternal one, the eternal Son called the Word.

Word works also for the Jews because the Word of the Lord was an expression they were familiar with. Whenever God revealed Himself, disclosed Himself in the Old Testament, He was speaking. Sure there were appearances of God and in fire and a cloud and the glory of God and things like that, but when God communicated, He spoke. And so, the Word became the manifestation of God. So for the Gentile, God is manifest in the person Jesus Christ. God the one who is the power behind creation. To the Jew, God has spoken in His Son. He spoke in time past, Hebrews 1:1 and 2 says, through the prophets, now He has spoken to us by His Son. And He is speaking more clearly than ever in Christ. So He is the communication of God, the manifestation of God, the proclamation of God, the declaration of God in human flesh, the eternal Son.

In verses 6 through 8 we read that He is not only the eternal Son, He is the manifest Son. He is the manifest Son. He comes as light into the darkness and He lights every man who sees Him and believes. The eternal Son becomes the manifest Son. Sadly verses 9 to 11 tell us He became the rejected Son. He came into the world, the world didn't know Him and that's the broad sense, He came to His own people, the Jews, and they refused Him. They did not receive Him. In fact, they rejected Him.

The eternal Son becomes the manifest Son in His incarnation. Life, eternal life becomes light and that's simply to say He becomes visible. He is the rejected Son, verses 12 and 13, we closed off last Sunday by saying He is still the sovereign Son, as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God even to those who believe in His name who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. A divine miracle occurs to those who believe and the Son Himself gives them the right to become eternal children of God. That's salvation.

John is pointing us in the direction of this child that is born in a manger in Bethlehem in saying He's the eternal Son, He is the manifest Son, the rejected Son and the sovereign Son. And that brings us to verses 14 to 18 for just a little bit this morning. He is the glorious Son. John pulls all kinds of things together here that He's already indicated and adds a few that he hasn't and plays off this opening statement, "The Word became flesh...The Word became flesh." That, my dear friends, is the most important reality in human history. It is the most important essential truth in Christianity. No incarnation – no Christianity. It is essential for Christianity, it is essential for salvation. Unless God becomes a man, unless there is a perfect sacrifice, a man to die in the place of men and God at the same time to conquer death, there is no salvation. So the eternal Word became flesh, pure eternal being becomes something He had never been before without ceasing to be what He always was.

This is the mystery of Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man. It's a staggering concept. It's a stunning declaration by the apostle John and there have been people very early on in the Christian world who

felt that this was just too irreverent. There was this idea that flesh, mortal flesh was bad and evil, and you wonder where they got that idea? Not hard to conclude that. Sinful people recognize they couldn't comprehend humanity without sinfulness, and for Christ to take on humanity seemed to be too demeaning and out of misguided reverence they came up with this notion that He only appeared to be human, it was only an apparition, it was only a phantom, only a kind of ghost humanity. They were called docetists because they were drawn from the Greek verb *dokan* which means to seem to be. Docetism is a famous heresy that was debunked very early on. In fact, John even writes against it, that's how early it was. Even in New Testament times at the end of the first century in the nineties, John is writing in 1 John 4:2 and 3 and saying this, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, truly human, is of God. And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God." Fully God, fully man and John is speaking against that docetic heresy already developed.

The apostle Paul addresses it in a brief line in that hymn in Timothy 3 when he speaks of Christ, the mystery of godliness, "He who was revealed in the flesh." The marvel remains that this is true and so beautifully and simply stated the Word became flesh. The Word—fully God. Flesh meaning fully human.

And then John says, "And dwelt among us." And that is so important. The Greek verb *sknosend* means to tent, or literally tented, tented, pitched his tent. Had Christ ever appeared before, had the second member of the Trinity ever appeared before the incarnation? That's a very good question and starting in January when we do our Old Testament series on looking for Christ in the Old Testament, we're going to find out that He did appear in the Old Testament in what are called Christophanies, appearances of Christ before the incarnation. There are occasions when an angelic being called the angel of the Lord appears in a human form and these are Christophanies, these are pre-incarnate appearances of Christ. They are marvelous to behold, but wherever you see them, and they're scattered throughout the Old Testament period, they are brief...they are here and gone immediately, momentarily, fleeting appearances. But this time He dwelt among us, 33 years. The Christophanies of the Old Testament, and there are many, there are some that we're going to be looking at in more detail, they were very brief and only previews, only preliminary. Now we see the Word and He stays 33 years, 33 years He dwelt among us.

And then John says this, "And we saw His glory." John never got over this. We saw His glory. What do you mean, John? Well, if you went to the Old Testament the glory of God came down in Exodus chapter 40 into the tabernacle as light, remember that? And it led the children of Israel as a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. When the temple was finished in 1Kings 8, the glory of the Lord came down and it filled the temple to such a degree that people couldn't even function in there. So the glory of God had shown up.

There was one occasion in the ministry in the life of Jesus Christ recorded by Matthew and by Luke where Jesus took Peter, James and John up into a mountain and He revealed His glory. You remember that? It's called the Transfiguration, He pulled back the veil of His flesh and they saw the glory in light, they saw manifest glory reduced to light and that was to let them know that He is the same glory that appeared in the glory, the *Shekinah* that walked with Adam in the Garden, the same glory that came into the tabernacle in the fortieth chapter of Exodus and filled it, the same glory that came into the temple in 1 Kings 8 and filled it, the presence of God.

So when Jesus showed His glory, they were seeing His glory. And, of course, they were immediately literally knocked to the ground and went into a semi-coma under the fiery fury of that blazing light. Peter, James and John were there. Is that what John's talking about? Peter made reference to that. Peter said, "When we were with Him in the holy mount, we beheld His glory." We saw His glory. Is that what John is referring to here?

I don't think so. I don't think so. We saw His glory, John says. What kind of glory, John? Glory as of the only begotten from the Father. Glory has an only begotten from the Father? Yes, glory that is connected to God. Glory that is connected to God. Glory that is possessed by one who must have the same life as God. Only begotten is a word that needs an explanation because from our viewpoint when we would look at that word, we would say well that seems to sound like there was a time when He didn't exist, right? And He's the only begotten. That's not what the word means. The word is the word in the Greek *monogenes...monogenes*. The emphasis is two-fold. First of all, shared life...shared life. What John is saying is that He possessed the life of the Father...the life of the Father. But what about the *monogenes*? What exactly does it mean only begotten?

I'll give you an illustration of it. This word cannot mean simply that God brought Him to life and He's the only one that God ever brought into life because I'll demonstrate that in Hebrews 11:17...Hebrews 11:17. Talking about Abraham, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac." And we remember the story, don't we? Genesis 22, he offered up Isaac and he who had received the promises, that's Abraham, was offering up his and the NAS says the same thing, his only begotten son. Now let me ask you a question. Was Isaac Abraham's only begotten son in the sense that he had no other sons? No. He had another son named Ishmael. Ishmael was born before Isaac was born and was a son of Abraham. Here is evidence that this term, *monogenes* means the son of privilege, the son of inheritance, the son of right. Not only the possessor of the nature of the father, but the one who possesses all the inheritance of the father. Jesus Christ then is called *monogenes* one, because he bears the nature of the father; two, because the Father has given Him all that He possesses. He is the *monogenes*, eternally the Son and eternally the heir. That is why Jesus Himself said, "All authorities in heaven and earth have been given to Me. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me." John 5 He says, "All judgment has been given to Me." All the kingdoms of this world are Mine. He is the heir to the Father. He bears the Father's nature and He is the only heir to the Father.

So John is saying, "We saw His glory and it was the same glory that would belong to one who possessed everything that was true of God." You say, "Well was he talking about the light that he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration?" No, because he goes on to say this, "Full of grace and truth." He moves away from sort of manifest glory, manifest glory to moral glory, one way to say it. What's the glory of God? Is it just light? Isn't light just a representation, kind of a symbol?

If you go back to the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, Moses says to God, "Show me Your glory. I want to see Your glory." He says it in chapter thirty-three, he asks God to show him His glory. Moses is afraid to go ahead without God and to be sure that God is there he says, "I want You to show me Your glory." And God is gracious and God responds. Verse 18:33, Exodus 33:18, Moses said, "Show me Your glory." And what did God do? He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, I'll proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I'll be gracious, I'll show compassion on whom I will show compassion." And then you go down in to chapter 34, "The Lord, the Lord God as the Lord passes in front of him to show him His glory, He identifies Himself as compassionate, gracious, show to anger, abounding in loving kindness and truth, who keeps loving kindness for thousands, forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, will by no means leave the guilty unpunished," etc., etc.

What are these? These are all attributes of God. They're all attributes of God. The glory of God is His love, His grace, His mercy, His wisdom, His knowledge, His power, His justice, His holiness, His immutability, His compassion, His omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, anger, wrath, kindness, patience, all of His attributes. And when John says we saw His glory, that's what John saw. Those three years that John was with Christ, we saw His glory, the very glory that belongs only to God and therefore proves Him to be the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. Why out of all the panoply of attributes does he pick grace and truth? Because they're related to salvation. They're related to salvation. John says we saw it.

In fact, he never really got over that. Turn to 1 John, he introduces that to us in the beginning of his gospel, and he does the same thing in the beginning of his epistles. He wrote three epistles, 1, 2, 3 John, but notice the similarity in how he begins. First John 1, again he refers to the Son of God as the Word, the Word of life, the same as he does in chapter 1 of the gospel, 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 and the life was manifested and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us, what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also.

This is such an important passage of Scripture; I memorized it years ago in Greek, just to familiarize myself with it. John never got over this. We saw His glory. We heard, we saw, we stared at, we touched, it was manifest, we saw full grace on display, full truth on display. That's what he's referring

to. Those things which were known to them to be attributes of the eternal God were manifest in Christ. Grace and truth relate to salvation. They saw grace in Him. They saw grace, that's a big category. His message was grace which encompassed compassion, mercy, kindness, patience, tenderness, but more importantly, forgiveness of sins, transgressions and iniquities as Exodus 33 describes God. They saw grace in Him, the grace that they were familiar with as belonging to God and they heard truth from Him. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

In John chapter 8 he said, very simply, "When you find Me, you find the truth. You'll know the truth and the truth will...what?...set you free...from what?...from the search for the truth...the search is over." They saw not just grace and truth in Him, as sort of over-arching attributes, but he was full of grace and truth, no half measures, no fractions, perfection.

When John has an opportunity to pull two attributes for the sake of illustration, he pulls two most wonderful attributes, always truthful, always gracious, full truth, full grace. That is in the sense that it is consistent with all that God is. Let me demonstrate that to you from Colossians chapter 1, Colossians chapter 1 and verse 19 says, referring to Christ, and this is a great text on Christ, Colossians 1, verse 15, "He's the image of the invisible God," again He is the first born, the *monogenes*. "By Him all things were created, in heaven on earth, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him, He's before all things, in Him all things hold together. He's the head of the body, the church. He's the beginning, the first-born from the dead." Again the *prototokos* of all that have ever been raised, He's the premier one, He Himself comes to have first place in everything. And then this, "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, all the fullness to dwell in Him." Everything that God is, dwells in Him. When the incarnation happened and Christ came, God was not diminished in Him at all. He was fully God as He had eternally been and fully man, no less God.

To show you even more deeply the reality of this, verse 19 again, the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him. Then you go to chapter 2 verse 3, "Therefore in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." If all fullness dwells in Him, then all wisdom and all knowledge is part of that all fullness. And then verse 9, "In Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." And then here's the most amazing truth, "In Him you have been made complete. All the fullness of God dwells in Him, He dwells in you and all the fullness of God dwells in you and you're complete. That's just a stunning reality. Follow it in this passage. John testified about Him and cried out, John the Baptist, saying, "This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me." Even John the Baptist that everybody recognized to be a prophet, all men perceived John as a prophet, said, "He came after me."

What did he mean by that? When it came to birth? John the Baptist was born Jesus, right? Elizabeth was pregnant long before Mary, months. John the Baptist in regard to birth, born before Jesus. Regard to ministry, John begins his ministry before Jesus, so in terms of birth John comes first. In

terms of ministry, John comes first. But John says, "In terms of existence," he says, "He existed before me." He ranks higher than me because He existed before me. If He existed before he was born, then He's the eternal one.

Here's the testimony of the prophet that everybody recognized to be a prophet of the eternality of Christ, the full deity of Jesus Christ. So you have not only the testimony of John the apostle writing this, but John the apostle borrows from his namesake, John the Baptist, to make the same testimony. And then this wonderful news, verse 16 of His fullness, as I said a moment ago, we have all received. Just think of it, all the fullness of deity dwells in Him, He dwells in us, therefore of all that fullness we receive. Just think of it. And grace upon grace, grace upon grace. That verse...that verse has almost infinite possibilities of discussion. There's a book in that verse, maybe several.

What do you mean grace upon grace? What does he mean? He means grace literally grace in the place of grace. That's the Greek. Grace in the place of grace. Grace in the place of grace. Grace just keeps replacing itself. It's overlapping. It's like waves. If you go down to the beach, and you watch the waves, you don't know where one ends and one begins, they just roll on top of each other. That's the notion expressed in the way this is framed. Waves of grace rolling on us. Romans 5:2 says, "We stand in grace, we literally are engulfed in waves of grace." You don't live on past grace, you don't live on stale grace, you live on grace replacing grace replacing grace, replacing grace. Grace on top of grace, His mercies are new every morning. There are no gaps in His grace. This is an amazing, amazing statement.

You as a believer in Jesus Christ not only have received the authority to become the children of God, but you have been given eternal life and you will be the recipient of endless grace without any break, without any gaps, there's just grace and more grace. Grace is like a stream flowing constantly every moment of every hour, no moment, no split second is ever apart from the satisfying overwhelming goodness of God in giving grace to sinners such as we are.

And then verse 17, he says, "It came through Christ," the Law was given through Moses, there's no grace in the Law, the Law will kill you, the Law will hold you guilty, the Law will hold you accountable, the Law will render a judgment and a verdict on you and the verdict of the Law is death. Kill the sinner, the soul that sins, it shall die. The wages of sin is death. Hebrews 10:28 says it this way, "The one who despised Moses' Law died without mercy. There's no mercy in the Law, there's no grace in the Law, the Law is the Law. Paul calls the Law the ministration of death.

So if you're going to try to live under the Law, you're going to live Santa Clause way, you're going to be good, you're going to end up eternally dead cause the Law will only kill. But grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. This is the good news of the gospel, isn't it?

We come then to the final verse in John's prologue where he kind of sums everything that he said up. No one has seen God at any time. The Old Testament says no one can see me and live. No one has seen God at any time. And by the way, that's one of the reasons why many Bible scholars believe that the appearances of God in visible form in the Old Testament were appearances of Christ rather than the Father, preincarnate appearances of Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The *monogenes*, God, there's another way to say that, the only begotten God. Well God isn't born, there wasn't a time when God wasn't, so if you compare the only begotten from the Father, with this designation, the only begotten God, both of which refer to Christ, then you know that *monogenes* isn't talking about something that brought Him into existence. It's talking about the fact that He bears the same nature and possesses all the inheritance, all the goodness, all the greatness and all the gifts and all the possessions that belong to His Father, the one who is called the *monogenes* God, the one who is in the bosom of the Father, the one who is wrapped up in the Father. Again this emphasis of Trinitarian unity, He has explained it.

You want an explanation of God? I'll give you one. Read the four gospels. That's the best explanation of God you'll ever have. You want to know what God is like? John says we'll tell you, we saw Him, we heard Him, we looked at Him, we touched Him, we walked with Him, we were there every day 24/7 for three years, we saw His glory. And it wasn't human glory, it was the glory of one who bore the same life as God and it was full of the things that characterize God, grace and truth. Moses saw the back parts. We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4. We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God showed Moses His back parts. God showed us His face. And His face is the face of Jesus Christ. You read John's gospel and he never gets over the wonder of the fact that He is seeing God every day. The whole gospel of John focuses on the things that reveal that Jesus is God. And that's how he ends the gospel. Chapter 20 verse 31, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name."

The eternal, incarnate, omnipotent, glorious Christ, and wonder of wonders of His fullness, we have all received, and grace, upon grace, upon grace. It would be one thing for Christ to come into the world and reveal Himself, it's quite another for Him to take up residence in us, isn't it? But that's the truth. When we come together like this to worship Christ, we do not worship a Christ who is above us, or apart from us, or outside of us, but we worship a Christ who is inside of us. And we are the recipients of grace upon grace upon grace. As Christians, we never get to the place where God can stop giving us grace because we can make it on our own, right? We need grace until that day when we enter into the heavens and are made perfect. Until then we need what He gives, grace upon grace, upon grace, grace for all our sins as He keeps us by the power of the Holy Spirit to eternal glory.

This is why we celebrate. This is why we honor the Lord on this occasion. Let's bow in prayer.

We are deeply grateful for the clarity with which the Word of God speaks to us on these matters and so thankful, Lord, that You have given us such revelation so that we don't have endless questions that are unanswered, speculations, fears. That You have revealed Yourself in words that are simple enough for a child to understand, clear to us, and yet beyond comprehension. How could we ever understand that You would step inside Your creation, pure eternal being would make Himself a part of those who are becoming, that You, the Creator, become part of Your creation. How could we ever comprehend that in Christ would be all the fullness of deity, bodily and Christ would come to live in us and we would be complete in Him and receive from Him all the fullness and grace upon grace. This is the wonder of our salvation. This is the motivation for our worship. And may we lift up our hearts in true worship as we celebrate this day, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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