

## John 1: 14-18 "Grace and Truth"

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### Introduction

As we enter our final worship gathering of the year, what can you be thankful to God for? You might say, "No way, because of this pandemic there isn't anything to be thankful for." I've also felt frustrated and anxious not being able to meet together for worship, and feeling like the work of the gospel is being hindered. I bet you all are experiencing a lot of stress at work and in your relationships, too. It's being said that 80,000 people have lost their jobs because of Covid-19.

However, during last week's staff meeting, we counted the ways that, even in the midst of circumstances we can't control, God has been at work. We have seen people baptized, and people come to Christ who are preparing to be baptized now. We are also about to start some new community groups.

Grace City ministries like our worship service and community groups, Grace Kids and Youth, have all been developing online. There are people who are able to be reached with the gospel precisely because we have moved online. Even though we've been socially (or physically) distancing, I've been able to meet new people and build into relationships.

Our lives and our society are so weak and fragile. They are broken by sin, so we struggle and we suffer. But, right in the middle of it all, our God, Immanuel, is at work. In our last worship service of the year, I'd like to look at the ways Jesus, full of grace and truth, is living and working among us.

### John 1: 14 -18

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son[d] from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup> (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.'")

<sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

<sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

In this passage, I'd like to focus first on the mystery of the incarnation, that the eternal Word of God became human, and bring to light the intimacy of our relationship with God. Second, I'd like us to see that in the man, Christ, we can know the invisible God, and I want us to rediscover the joy of the revelation of knowing God. And third, what is this glory that is 'full of grace and truth?' When we

encounter this glory, we are humbled and our lives are made new. So our three points I'd like to look at are 1. the incarnation of God, 2. rich revelation, and 3. glory full of grace and truth.

## 1. God's Incarnation

The theme verse we'll be focusing on today is John 1:14. It says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Verses 1-3 have already established that Christ, who is called 'the Word (logos),' was with God, is himself God, and created all things.

In Greek, it says literally that the creator God became 'flesh.' The author chose 'flesh' instead of 'human,' a phrase that causes us to think of a fragile, weak body that can get hurt and sick and eventually die. Furthermore, when the Bible refers to 'the flesh' in a moral sense, it refers to our sinful nature, which is pregnant with lust that gives birth to sin.

So, here, 'the Word became flesh' is an astonishing expression of God's humility. When we talk to a child, we bend down to look them in the eye, and speak kindly and simply so they can understand. But God literally became a child!

Furthermore, it's written in Scripture that a man cannot see God and live, which verse 18 affirms when it says 'no one has ever seen God.' God said this to Moses in Exodus 33:18 and 20.

33:18 Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

And the prophet Isaiah, who saw the cherubim in God's throne room, said this.

5 And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

So, in John, we discover, not only God's humility, but also his deep love and affection toward us. God did not judge us, but came and lived near us. The Creator God put on our flesh. If this is true, won't we, who have souls and bodies that ought to perish, be healed and experience God's everlasting life? Praise the incarnate Christ!

This term 'dwelt' means to set up a tent, however it is not by any means a temporary dwelling. This 'dwelling' is a Bible term that refers to the tabernacle (or tent of meeting).

Exodus 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

Throughout the whole Bible, God is a God who has lived among us. All the way back, from the beginning of creation in the Garden of Eden, God was with the humans he created, walking about the garden and talking with them. Even after man was separated from God by sin, God dwelt among his people in a sanctuary, in the tabernacle, in the temple, and then once again after the Israelites returned from Babylon and rebuilt the temple. And, at last, in Jesus, he came to dwell with us forever. So it follows that when God's salvation is complete...Revelation 21:3-4.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Please don't forget that, especially in the midst of our suffering this year, God is dwelling with us in Jesus. The creator of the universe became our neighbor.

## 2. Rich Revelation

During this pandemic, what has been the biggest, most consistent obstacle we've faced? I think it's the fact that we can't meet together in person. Of course, due to our excellent technology, we are still able to communicate as necessary. We can work from home and do things like Bible study online.

But I really don't think that's enough. We can't visit the sick and the elderly, and in times of crisis you can't hold their hand or comfort them at their bedside. Very human forms of communication like holding hands and embracing have dramatically decreased. Truly nothing beats real, face-to-face communication.

According to John, because the Word of God became flesh and lived on earth, 'we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.' It says 'seen,' which means a face-to-face, real encounter with abundant amounts of communication.

So God chose the most effective means to reveal himself to us. He showed himself and spoke to us. By becoming flesh, the Word manifested himself to the utmost. Hebrews 1:1-2.

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.

Jesus is God's ultimate, supreme, and essential communication to us. According to Scripture we are gravely ill and on the verge of death because of our sin. We're sinners on our deathbed, without the ability to understand God correctly, so we can't comprehend him unless he comes and shows himself to us. The eyes and ears of our hearts must be healed.

Preaching the Word of God like this is my livelihood, so I am particularly aware of the beauty and love and glory and power and splendor of God's revelation in Christ. But this is actually because I am very aware of the gap between what I preach and the way I act. I don't always practice what I preach. I preach love, but I don't love people. I have a skilled double tongue and I'm great at self-justification. I need the incarnate Christ.

There are probably a lot of people who think, if there is a god, he is probably in some far off place using Wifi or something to work from home and communicate remotely. I think 'the teleworking god' or 'the working-from-home god' is a pretty common view of what God is like.

But according to this passage, God became a human and came to us. Throughout his entire life, Jesus revealed God to us in both his words and his actions. Jesus's words and actions were in perfect alignment, he was consistent and fair with everyone, and he spoke and lived with integrity. With overwhelming reality, he showed us what God is like, because he is God himself.

We need integrity too, especially our leaders. When leaders' words and actions line up, when they're honest even when it costs them, and when they treat everyone with a fair attitude, we trust them and follow them with confidence.

So, even now, when you encounter Christ in Scripture, your heart and your life will be searched by what you read. Let's reflect on our year in light of the revelation of Christ. Were we not self-centered? Did we practice what we preached? Did we look down on people, were we driven by jealousy to despise people? What was the root cause of your anger? Please look at the heart of God in Christ Jesus.

### **3. Grace and Truth**

When we see the heart of God, we will be disappointed to discover that we do not have integrity. But we must be illuminated by God's light to know our true, sinful condition. In a few days, we will begin a new year, if you want to enter that new year with hope, please humble yourself today, confess your sin and repent. Even the prophet John the Baptist didn't rely on his position, his job, or his ministry. He humbled himself and acknowledged that Jesus was greater than him (verse 15).

Jesus is full of grace and truth, so he will forgive you and bless your new walk when you repent. "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (16). 'Grace upon grace' is an interesting phrase that means grace that is practically overflowing. However, a more precise meaning can be understood in verses 17-18.

1:17 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.

God's law, given through Moses, showed us God's grace and truth. It revealed God's love and grace because it showed how sin could be forgiven. At the same time, it also showed how people who have received God's grace ought to walk in his truth. When God gave the law, he said this (Exodus 34:5-7):

Exodus 34:5 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."

The Lord God came down from heaven and passed before Moses and gave the law, but Moses was not able to look at him. However, now, God has not just temporarily passed in front of us, but, in Christ, he became a man, dwelt among us, and showed himself to us.

While God revealed that he was rich in grace and truth through the Mosaic Law, as well, the grace and truth that Christ has revealed leads to even more grace poured out on us. What does this mean?

Many people think that the God of the Old Testament is full of judgement, and the God of the New Testament is full of love. This is probably because God's judgement really stands out to us when we read the Old Testament, and we may have a harder time identifying God's love and grace. It seems like we finally see God's love when we meet Jesus in the New Testament.

In the gospel, the reality of God's grace and truth are perfectly revealed and accomplished in Christ. In other words, we discover God's eternal love in Christ giving up even his own life, sacrificing himself on the cross. And at the same time, the cross accomplishes God's truth, which perfectly judges sin and evil. Because

the grace and truth of the gospel, which surpasses the law, are abundantly poured out on us, those who trust in Christ will not be forsaken.

This week, as you wrap up your work for the year, please count the ways you have experienced God's grace in Christ in 2020. Thank God for the ways you have experienced Christ's truth. Let's change our hearts, repent, and welcome a brand new year.

**John 1:14-18**

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