

God made visible in Christ

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's a great privilege to open the Word of God to you this morning.

It's also an awesome responsibility. But before we open God's Word, why don't we just commit this time in prayer to the Lord? Our dear, gracious and heavenly Father, we are so grateful to have the opportunity to gather together here in your presence.

I pray that you would soften our hearts, give us eyes to see and ears to hear what you want to say to us this morning.

And help us, Lord, to know, to take action, to know what to do about it. I pray that we would bring our burdens before you this morning. I pray that you would ultimately be honored and glorified.

In your name, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I'd like to open with a question this morning, asking you simply this.

[1 : 15] How would you describe what God is like? If I were to ask you individually, what would you say? How would you describe what God is like?

Some of you might begin by describing God as you relate to Him personally, by describing His characteristics. You may say God is love and how love is central to who He is.

You may describe how faithful God is and how He has always been your refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, as the psalmist says.

And you can go on and on describing God, describing His characteristics, as it relates to you personally. Some of you here today are watching or will be watching online, may not have any idea how to describe what God is like.

You believe in a higher power, but you're not sure how to describe this higher power. Or you believe God is relative to the individual.

[2 : 33] God is whoever one wants Him to be. Or you may know people who think and feel this way. The good news is that God did not leave us to wonder what He is really like.

For it is in Jesus Christ that God is most fully revealed and known. And this morning I have the great privilege of calling your attention to John 1, verse 18, where it describes how, in John Stott's words, the invisible God has been made visible in Christ.

The invisible God has been made visible in Christ. And we're going to see how Jesus reveals God in two ways. First, the invisible God has been made visible in the life of Christ.

Secondly, God's character was made visible in the death of Christ. In this sermon series, we've been looking at what the cross of Christ has accomplished and what this means for you and I.

Today we're going to explore about how God is revealed in the life and death of Jesus and what this means for you and I.

[3 : 56] But before this, let me just provide you with a little bit of background to our verse this morning. Also, when reading John's Gospel, we want to keep in mind that John gives us an eyewitness account to the life of Jesus.

John, the beloved disciple, an eyewitness to Jesus' death and resurrection, introduces us to Jesus in the first chapter known as the prologue. Here, John presents Jesus as the eternal, preexistent, incarnate word, who became flesh and dwelt among his people.

Jesus, whom the world was made, is the true light who gives light to everyone. So just as John begins chapter 1, so he concludes in chapter 1 in verse 18, where he describes how the invisible God has been made visible in Jesus Christ.

Speaking of Jesus, John says in 1 verse 18, No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John begins by saying, No one has ever seen God. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself partially to some, but never in a complete and full way.

[5 : 29] To Moses, God says, You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, speaks of God dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

In his book, *The Living Church*, John Stott asks the question, How has God solved the problem of his invisibility?

First, he has revealed himself in the world he has made, for both the heavens and the earth reveal and declare his glory.

Second, and supremely, God has revealed himself by sending his Son into the world. John 1 speaks of Jesus, the Logos, the Word, through whom all things were made, who took on human flesh and reveals God to us.

This is why, in verse 18, John tells us, No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

[6 : 46] This is why Jesus says to Philip, Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. This is why Paul could describe Jesus as the image of the invisible God in his letter to the Colossians.

The invisible God being made visible in Jesus Christ is a conviction that separates Christianity from all other faiths.

In early church history, God's revelation of himself came under fierce attack. Arius, a 4th century bishop from Alexandria of Egypt, taught that Jesus was semi-divine and was something like the angels.

In response, defender of the faith, a deacon by the name of Athanasius, held fast to the truth of Jesus' full divinity, eventually affirmed at the Council of Nicaea, and captured in the Nicene Creed where we confess that Jesus is God, a very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.

even so, Arius' views trickled down into our world today in the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example.

[8 : 14] Having been raised as a Jehovah's Witness, I was spiritually blind to the revelation of God taking on human flesh. In 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, Paul says that the God of this age the devil has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the glory of Christ who is in the image of God.

And several people have asked me, what was the tipping point for you to go from unbelief to belief? The short story is it was through the faithful, persistent, constant, and continuous witness of a dear friend pointing me to the Scriptures where I began to see Jesus vividly, where God Himself removed the veil, as it were, and shunned the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ on my heart. It was like being behind a curtain. I think this stage is a good illustration for this. And imagine I'm behind this curtain and God, through the faithful Christian witness of another, pulls back the curtain and shines the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ on my heart, granting me spiritual sight to know Him as He is revealed in Christ.

That's what Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 4. I pray that this would encourage you, those of you who have loved ones who don't know Christ, as you bear witness to the love of Jesus and pray for them that God would shine the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ on their hearts.

Because the only way to know God is as He has revealed Himself in Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God who was at the Father's side.

[10 : 22] He has made Him known. In what ways? Well, first, God was made visible in the life of Christ. God was made visible in the life of Christ.

God was made visible in the life of Christ through the performing of many miracles, demonstrating that He Himself is sovereign creator and ruler of the universe, who shows mercy and provides for His people.

John gives us a number of examples. God was made visible in the life of Christ at a wedding in Cana in Galilee, where Jesus turned water into wine, after which His disciples believed in Him. God was made visible in the life of Christ when Jesus healed a royal official's sick son. for only the Lord of all creation, by the sheer power of His Word, can heal the sick from such a long distance away.

God was made visible in the life of Christ when Jesus healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. Only a person who shares the same divine nature as God has such power and can

demonstrate such infinite mercy.

[11 : 42] God was made visible in the life of Christ when Jesus fed 5,000 people, demonstrating God's provision. For only the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything can feed a multitude and claim to be the only one who can satisfy the deep spiritual longings of our heart as the bread of life.

God was made visible in the life of Christ when Jesus walked on water, John 6, healed a man from lifelong blindness and raised Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb.

For only the God through whom the world was made, who became flesh, can walk on water, calm the sea, heal the sick and raise the dead.

John tells us that there were many other things that Jesus did which, if they were written one by one, that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

But these miracles were recorded. Why? so that you would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name.

[13 : 10] So not only was God made visible in the life of Christ through all the miracles, but Jesus came in the flesh to bring us back into a relationship with God through His death and resurrection.

resurrection. It's very sad to see what's happening in the world around us today. And I think we can all agree that this world is broken, disordered, and sinful.

But what we see around us is really a reflection of our broken, disordered, and sinful nature. Tim Keller reminds us that when we open the Bible and see ourselves in light of a holy God, we see that we are sinners, enslaved to sin, to idols and the prince of power of the air.

And yet, the God of the universe comes to you and I as broken as we are.

poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore, as that old hymn says. The promised Messiah of the Old Testament, the eternal Son of God, came in human flesh, lived in perfect obedience, died the death that we deserved, and was raised on the third day so that He could rescue us, free us from the grip of sin, give us a new heart, and grant us eternal life.

[14 : 58] If you look again at verse 18, the phrase, who is at the Father's side, literally means in the bosom of the Father.

Early church father, John Chrysostom, points out how this phrase paints a picture of an intimate union of oneness between the Father and the Son.

The Bible teaches that there is one true living God who exists in an eternal loving unity of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In love, the triune God created you and I to be in relationship with Him. The phrase, in the bosom, shows up again in John 13 where it speaks of John, the beloved disciple, reclining on Jesus' bosom.

Again, speaking of that relationship he had with Christ. and when you put your trust and faith in Jesus, you enter into a relationship of love that had existed before the world began.

[16 : 20] So not only was God made visible in the life of Christ through all those miracles whom John was eyewitness to, but Jesus came in the flesh for the purpose of bringing us back into relationship with God.

Secondly, God's character was made visible in the death of Christ. God's character was made visible in the death of Christ.

At the cross, we see God's character of justice and mercy. Reverend George spoke about this last week and I think it's worth reviewing again here.

As fully God and fully man, Jesus died in our place, paid the debt that we owed for our own sin, and conquered sin and death. At the cross, God in His justice did not allow the horror of sin to go unpunished.

At the cross, God in His mercy met the demand of justice through the death of His Son, Jesus.

Webster's dictionary defines injustice as an absence of justice, violation of right or of the rights of another.

[17 : 42] Because we live in a broken, disordered, and sinful world, because of our sin nature, the reality is that all kinds of injustices occur on a daily basis all around us.

we live in an unjust world, with unjust societies, unjust systems, unjust people.

Perhaps some of you have been victims of some form of injustice. But when we reflect on the cross and see Jesus, we see a just and holy God, who won't allow sin to go unpunished.

God will have the final say. Hebrews 4, 13, for no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Now, as I said this morning, we must make no mistake that as Christ followers, we are all called to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God.

[19 : 04] We're all called. But at the end of the day, we also know that God will have the final say. And yet, on this side of eternity and judgment day, there is hope for the hopeless.

When we see Jesus on the cross, we also see a God who shows mercy and grants those who put their trust in him newness of life, adopting them as sons and daughters, where they become a part of the family of God.

Secondly, at the cross, we see God's love. God doesn't meet us when we try to be a good person. He doesn't meet us when we have everything together. He meets us in our mess and rebellion, following the devices of our own heart.

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This is love, John says, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation of our sins.

[20 : 30] Presbyterian minister and the late Bible, radio Bible teacher, J. Vernon McGee, once said, the cross tells the greatest story. It sings the sweetest music.

It brings the best news and the most glorious truth, and it whispers the infinite love of God to your heart and to my heart. Look into the heavens tonight and you'll see something of the glory of God. Look at the mighty mountains that are around us and you can see something of his greatness. Look into the fragile little flower and it will tell you something about God.

But listen, McGee says, if you're going to know about the love of God, you will have to look at the cross of Christ. God's love was made visible at the cross.

As COVID-19 continues to disrupt lives, societies, and nations alike, many of us are left wondering if life will ever be the same.

[21 : 43] Some of you may be feeling pandemic weariness or Zoom exhaustion or Zoomed out or cabin fever where you're tired of being stuck at home.

Some of you have been also, some of you, not all of you, but experiencing an increase of isolation, loneliness, depression, and anxiety like never before as you deal with a number of question marks of uncertainty.

uncertainty. If this is you, I want to encourage you to focus not what is uncertain, but what is certain. Christian counselor Edward T. Welch reminds us that there are all kinds of things every single day that we do not know. There are mysteries galore in life.

And in the midst of that and what we anticipate, there is plenty that we do know. In the midst of life's uncertainties, focus on the certainty of God's love.

[23 : 00] Dear friends, should there ever be a time when in moments of despair or wherever you're at in your walk with God, where you begin to doubt the certainty of God's love.

Then look to the cross. Lean on God's word and the promises of his word. Consider him who loved you with immeasurable love and pursued you even to death on the cross.

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, pure, lovely, commendable, if there's any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, think, meditate on these things.

Focus on the certainty of God's love. God's love and love and love. If you don't know Christ, my prayer is that you will put your trust and faith in the living God, the Lord of all creation, the Redeemer and risen Savior, who is good and forgiving, abounding in love to all who call upon him. God's love and God's love and hope. God's love and hope and guarantee, our only certainty in this life.

[24 : 29] John 1, 18 has great practical implications for the church. Just as God, just as the invisible God has been made visible in Jesus, those who trust in Jesus, we have been called to make him visible.

Because Jesus is Lord over all creation, because he is our Redeemer, the Christian life is a life of submission to Jesus.

Our sole purpose in life is to know Christ and to make him known. It is to make, as we've heard so many times, disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, living for God's glory.

And I think this begins with love for one another, right here in our church. Jesus said, by this, all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

So, I just want to leave us with this simple challenge, that we, during this week, starting today, would pursue ways where we can glorify God and make Christ visible to one another, by loving one another.

[26 : 05] you may want to look for one person in our church, who you can call up and encourage, or one person or family who you can pray for, one person to comfort with the comfort which we ourselves are comforted by God, one person who you can love in the name of our Lord Jesus.

The invisible God was made visible in Jesus Christ, God was made visible in the life of Christ, God's character was made visible in the death of Christ. Let's pray. Lord, just thank you that you were not left to wonder what you're really like.

And it's because of your grace that we are gathered here this morning. I pray that your blessing would be upon every person here and those who are watching and that we, too, in the power of your spirit would make you visible each and every day from moment to moment living for your glory. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.