

Introducing the real and true God

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and bring your word home to us at a very deep level. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So, where I live, I'm near the part of the Cross Canada Trail, and I run on it when it's not covered in snow.

At least occasionally I run on it. And about a year or so ago, maybe a year and a half ago, I was on the trail going for a run. And as I'm running down the trail, a woman starts waving at me. She's running the opposite way, and she starts to wave at me.

And as she gets close, she says, there's a really big snake on the path up ahead. And there are two places along the path where there must be a nest of snakes or something, because you often see them.

Now, I hate snakes. I am a complete and utter wuss when it comes to snakes. One of the, many of you don't know my oldest son, Tosh. He's really neat in lots of respects.

[1 : 1 0] But one of the things which is about him and me, if we had both been together on that run, Tosh would have said to me, Dad, if we hurry, we'll be able to see the snake. And my reaction was, maybe I should go the other way, because I don't want to see the snake.

And I went, and I never, it must have kept on slithering into the grass. And it was obviously just a garter snake, not some python that had escaped or something like that. But I mention this because, this little while ago, I was in some email correspondence with a friend of mine who lives in Atlanta.

And just on the off, I just happened to mention, it was one of those days where I think when we woke up, it was minus 39. So I said that to him when I woke up, it was minus 39.

He had a couple of comments about it. He can't even imagine that cold. So I said to him via email, I said, well, on the bright side, it keeps the snakes and insects small and the poisonous snakes away.

And he almost instantly emailed back and he said, if you move to Hawaii, there's no poisonous snakes or poisonous spiders. That sounds like a better option than living in Ottawa, to which I could only agree.

[2 : 2 4] Anyway, at that particular time, anyway, I've never been to Hawaii. Here's the thing. We're doing this, going through the Gospel of John.

And when we did this a couple of years ago, a similar thing with 2 Corinthians. There's this church in Vancouver called St. John's Vancouver. And they have this big church, the good staff, and they develop a study guide to go along with the sermons.

And in that church, what they do is they encourage people to read the study guide, either by themselves or with others, before the sermon. And they didn't have one with Galatians, so we didn't do it.

But people who did this with 2 Corinthians, they found it very helpful. And I thought we would do this with John, because I knew they had a study guide for John. But the problem is, it means I have to sort of break up the book the same way that their pastor breaks the book up.

And he's a master at taking very big parts of the Bible and being able to preach through big chunks of the Bible. And I'm not very good at that. I confess that to you right now.

[3 : 31] So today, in theory, I'm going to look at verses 19 to 51. That's 43 verses. I feel a little bit like a python that swallowed something way too big that's going to probably kill the snake.

That's where the snake analogy all came by this way. I've swallowed some huge hippopotamus, and I can't really handle it. So if you just bear with me.

Of course, it's a really, really, really rich text. And so just let's begin this python process of trying to go through John 1.19 to the end of the chapter.

John 1.19, and we'll start reading in a moment. And just in terms of placing how John's written the book, John, in the first 18 verses, we looked at that over the Christmas season.

It's called the prologue. It's very philosophical. You know, the Word was made flesh, and Jesus is the exegesis of God. It's very abstract, very powerful, very deep.

[4 : 31] You can write big, fat, thick books just on those 18 verses. And the interesting thing is that John goes from these very big philosophical ideas. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning, and all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And it's a very profound, simple, deep, just explanation of God.

You know, it's just, before we get into it, I finally watched the movie Wonder Woman on Friday night. And I don't think there's any spoiler here with it, but at the end of the movie, the Wonder Woman gives this, you know, short little speech about the importance of love.

And, you know, as a Christian, I can't disagree with it, but, you know, for non-Christians, and for most people, they have this basic sense that love is, I mean, and it's a true sense, that love is just something fundamental and deep.

But it's a sense that people have that just sort of hangs there in the air. It's not really based on other things, other than that they have this just basic sense, this basic longing, this basic understanding that love is just somehow basic and fundamental.

[6 : 03] But in the Scriptures, that longing is given roots. It's given a basis.

Because when John begins his Gospel, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God, as I talked about when I preached on it a couple of weeks ago. So, it's relational language, it's love language, and the Bible begins by saying that love is deeper and older than creation.

Love is deeper and older than creation, because from all eternity, God the Father has loved the Son. And from all eternity, God the Son has loved the Father.

And the Holy Spirit is in some ways almost as if He Himself is love as a person in this eternal procession between the Father and the Son. And before there were planets, before there were galaxies, before there were human beings, from all eternity, the Father loved the Son, and the Son loved the Father.

And so John, who's going to begin this Gospel and touch on many, many deep things, he begins his Gospel by saying, Listen, listen, the God who really does exist, the God who really does, did create all things, the God who not only created all things, but sustains all things, from all eternity, the Father loved the Son, and the Son loved the Father.

[7 : 30] And John wants to say, whatever you see in the world, and we have this basic sense that love is central and deep, that in fact, that's a true intuition that human beings have.

That love itself really is deeper and older than creation itself. And we were made for love. So John, who wrote this Gospel, he begins with these big ideas, and then in verse 19, and in the original language, well, actually in my version, it says, And all of a sudden, from these big, big ideas, he goes into history.

He enters us into history. In fact, he's going to introduce John the Baptist, and he's going to talk about Pharisees, and he's going to talk about priests, and he's going to talk about Levites.

And it's really, really interesting because, I don't know how many of you know this, but John the Baptist is a known historical figure outside of the Gospels.

There are non-Christian sources that talk about John the Baptist and what he did and how important he was in his followers and his disciples. And Pharisees are a known historical phenomenon in Jerusalem at this time, as are priests and as are Levites.

[8 : 51] And it's very interesting. It's very interesting how God works, that he's going to emphasize that the God who does exist isn't just a distant God, a God far away, but that this God, John's going to talk about how God introduces himself to human beings in space and time and in history.

And that's where we get with verse 19 of chapter 1. And this is the testimony of John the Baptist, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you?

Now we're going to pause right here. This phrase, the Jews, it's a bit of a troubling phrase, isn't it? I remember being at a Christian gathering where somebody did a dramatic reading of a text in John's Gospel.

And if you've read John's Gospel, he uses the phrase, the Jews, time and time and time again. He uses it a lot. And in the history of the world, this phrase has often been part of the basis by which people have justified the murder of Jewish people and discrimination against Jewish people.

In other words, the phrase, the Jews, has been part of how people who've heard the Bible have used it to justify prejudice, hatred, discrimination, and even murderous acts against the Jewish people.

[10 : 22] And I remember being at this Christian gathering where a fellow did a dramatic reading of the text. But the thing which was so bothersome to me is that there were several Jewish people who were there in the room.

In fact, even with their, I can't remember what it is right now, the little head, more Orthodox Jews. And I just thought to myself that the person doing the reading, he probably offended them.

They couldn't get past probably this troublesome text and description. And I'm going to probably say, I'm going to say this several times throughout the John because I know that there's not always the same people here and people I don't expect.

If you remember 10% of what I say today, that's pretty good. But if you could put up the first point, Andrew, here's what you need to understand all the way through reading the Gospel of John.

The Jews, on one hand, it's, of course, literal. But in a sense, and as you're going to see, all the way through John's Gospel, he uses light, bread of life, shepherd.

[11 : 35] He uses words that are like code or a symbol maybe would be a better word. It's a symbol to help you to enter into a bigger world, to think more broadly.

And what John does, because the writer of this Gospel is Jewish, and Jesus is Jewish, and all the apostles are Jewish. And in fact, John, in his Gospel, has Jesus saying one of the most significant phrases in all of the New Testament, salvation is from the Jews.

So, John is not being anti-Semitic. The Jews is code, or symbol might be a better word, for the religious, spiritual, world of meaning, and the moral world, organized and established, apart from faith in Jesus Christ crucified.

That's how he uses the term. In other words, when we read it, if we think, oh boy, those Jewish people are so conniving, and we've completely and utterly missed the point of the Scriptures.

What we should hear when we see this, is we should hear the Anglican Church of Canada. We should hear Christian churches, that have lost their faith and confidence, that Jesus is the Savior, and Lord, and basis of the church.

[12 : 58] They should hear the faculty club, at a major university. They should hear the CBC. They should hear the Green Party, or the NDP caucus.

In other words, the different ways that human beings organize themselves, in spiritual ways, in moral ways, in religious ways, in terms of meaning, or in terms of morals, that John is saying, all the way through this, if you trace it all the way through the book, in every case, he's not actually trying to say something, something so we point our finger at somebody else, he's trying to fashion a mirror, so we can see ourselves.

That what happens, when we try to organize the world of morals, or the world of meaning, or the world of religion, or the world of spirituality, and we try to establish it, completely and utterly separate, from God revealing himself, in the person of Jesus, and in the words and miracles of Jesus, and in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to establish morality, or meaning, or religion, or spirituality, apart from that, read the gospel of John, and every time you see the word, the Jews, that's what we're to think of.

We're to think of our own efforts, to establish morality, and meaning, and spirituality, and religion, apart from God, breaking into human history, in the person of his son.

You see, when I read the Bible, on one level, it's not about me, it's about Jesus, but on the other level, it's always about me. It's never so that I can say, gosh, I wish my wife would learn more about this.

[14 : 59] Then she'd treat me better. My wife treats me fantastic, by the way. I have a wife beyond what I deserve. But it's so that I'll see myself in the text.

That's always what's at work in God's word. So, the Bible here is definitely not encouraging anti-Semitism. It's trying to see, and it's going to show, this is the very beginning of it, is these, as we're going to see in a moment, as I read the next few things, is that there's this phenomenon going on, that John the Baptist, is doing to Jewish people, what Jewish people did to pagans.

And that part of the way that a pagan, who would become, on the path to becoming Jewish, is that they'd be baptized. And John the Baptist, is having Jewish people be baptized.

And for some reason, rather than offending everybody, it's drawing people. And so, the establishment, the establishment, the religious establishment, the spiritual establishment, the moral establishment, the establishment of meaning, sends its representatives to try to figure out what's going on with John the Baptist.

They want to try to put them, John and what he's doing, within some type of category of their thought, so that they can get a handle on it, and manage it. Well, let's continue.

[16 : 16] Verse 19. And this is the testimony of John the Baptist, when the Jews sent priests, and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, who are you?

He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, what then, are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, no.

So they said to him, who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? And he said, I am the voice. I'm just a voice.

I'm God. I'm the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah has said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

They asked John the Baptist, and why are you baptizing if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet? And John the Baptist answered them, I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know.

[17 : 18] Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John the Baptist was baptizing.

And you'll notice on one hand, it's very, I don't know if you caught it, isn't it sort of curious how John the Baptist speaks? That he understands himself as being so unworthy that when they finally know who it is who's present amongst them, that the Lord, because Isaiah is saying about this day when God himself will come to earth.

and John the Baptist on one hand says, I'm just that voice that Isaiah talked about announcing that God himself is about to walk among us. And on one hand, that can sound awfully proud, although it isn't.

And he balances it by saying, I'm not even worthy to touch his sandal. Now just pause here. This is, over the next couple of weeks when we look at the John the Baptist text, in Protestant spirituality and in fact in classical Anglican spirituality, John the Baptist is very important because he's seen as sort of the different things that he says about himself are to be the model for a minister.

And by minister, I don't just mean ordained people. I use the word minister as servant. It's to be the model for Mike who's a host at the door. It's to be a model for the Sunday school teachers.

[18 : 56] It's to be a model for the small group leaders, for the women's ministry, the men's ministry, for our church, our mission on campus, for coffee, for child care.

The word minister just means an attempt, a servant. So if you could put up the next point. Here's just a, pray that the ministers of Messiah will know we are but witnesses and in ourselves we are unworthy to touch the sandals of Jesus' feet.

On Saturday in the paper there was a newspaper report of a funeral that took place in Victoria and it was a very, very, it was a very tragic situation which I guess is why even though it happened in Victoria it made it in a paper that you could read in Ottawa.

and, but in the article it's quoted that the minister at the church, a mainline denomination, she said, I, who am paid to be wise, can't make sense of this.

Now could you please pray that I, neither me, nor Daniel, nor Sean, nor Jonathan, nor your small group leader, or anybody in the church ever thinks that to be a minister is that you are paying me to be wise.

[20 : 33] I'm not. I'm not worthy to touch the sandal of Jesus apart from grace. and neither is Sean and neither is Neil and, uh, the day we start to think that we're paid to be wise is the day we turn our backs on the Bible.

And, uh, some of you who lead small groups and all, you're not paid to do that. You just do it out of the, out of, out of a calling that God has given you. But, John, we'll develop it more over the coming weeks, but John the Baptist is seen as sort of the, a type of model that every minister, all we're doing is to prepare the way of the Lord, is to point to Jesus and to point to Jesus unworthy as we are knowing that apart from grace we're not even worthy to touch Jesus' sandal.

But thanks be to God for grace. So it's a bit of an aside but it's, it's a really important principle to get there and we'll keep going on it as we look at the different things about John the Baptist.

Now, I just was reading something about Ricky Gervais. You know, he's the, I don't know if I'm pronouncing his name correctly, he's the, the British comedian who, who, who was at the Star of The Office, the original UK version and he's done lots of other comedy stuff and he's a well-known atheist.

And, I might get the numbers of this wrong but in an interview with the Wall Street Journal a couple of years ago, he says in that, they ask him about his atheism and, and he jokes and says, you know, people give him a hard time about being atheist but most people who are atheists, they're really not that different from them.

[22 : 17] In fact, he said, the most devout Christian is really not much different than me. And, and the interviewer says, well, how is that, Ricky? And, Ricky says, well, I'll just ask them something like this. You know, in the Roman Empire there were, you know, whatever, 3,000 gods and goddesses.

And, so I say to somebody, do you still believe in Zeus? Do you still believe in Hercules? Do you still believe in Artemis? Do you still believe in Diana? And, of course, he said, my Christian friends will all say, no, no, no, no, no.

And, I say to them, well, you don't believe in 2,999 gods. I've just gone one past you. But, we're all basically on the same journey of just disbelieving in all of the gods.

And, I mention that because what's about to happen, what John is doing here is John in a world with lots and lots and lots of gods.

John is being used by God to introduce himself when he walks around. And, because there's so many gods, and because it's such a natural human tendency for us to extrapolate from our experience, our experience of love, our experience of pain, our experience of suffering, our experience of institutions, it's so natural for us to extrapolate from our experience onto what God must be like.

[23 : 47] John wrote his gospel to record how God introduces himself so we don't misunderstand who God really is.

And, that's what's going on here in John's gospel. It goes on all the way through it, especially in the first half of it before it gets to the crucifixion. But, but look at how God, if you take that as the idea, and that's what John, that's what John is the claim he's making, John the writer of the gospel.

And, if thinking about that, it's very, very interesting how God first has himself introduced. Like, just imagine for a second that you were God's spin doctor, his media consultant.

And, and God said to you, I think I'm going to go send my son down to earth to introduce myself. What do you think I should do?

Well, I don't know. I know, you know, we're all well-instructed Christians, and we'd say, well, you should send them down to be born in a manger and all that.

[24 : 59] But no, just for a second, like, just apart from that, like, how, how would we, well, how do human beings naturally want to think of God? Well, you know, we might think of God as a mountain, as an ocean, as the sky.

We might like to think of God as being everything. We might like to think of God as being something like a force or the force or energy. We might want to try to, we might want to try to emphasize that God is very powerful, so have him be introduced to somebody who's very powerful.

We might want to have him be introduced to somebody who's unbelievably beautiful, that will be attractive to us, that it might be something in terms of melody, that some beautiful melody that will just, you know, because music can be so good and just draw our hearts and our minds, and so we might want to have God introduce himself in that way.

But it's very, very interesting how God chooses to have himself introduced. Look at verse 29.

The next day, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[26 : 21] Now just sort of pause. That's how God chooses to first have Jesus introduced. Not as a mountain, not as a superhero, not as wealthy, not as powerful, not as the ocean, not as energy, not as music, not as an idea, not as a principle, not as an organization, not as an institution, not as a technique, but God introduces himself in the person.

Well, if you could put up the first point, and I had some grammar issues with this. If you smarter grammar people want to help me out later on, I'd preach, and that's going, there we go. The Trinity introduces themselves.

Google doesn't like it when you say that because it should be themselves, but I don't know how to introduce the unity and the Trinity, you get my point. So if you grammar geniuses have a better way to put it, I'd love to hear it, and you'll be better.

But anyway, the Trinity introduces themselves in Jesus of Nazareth. That's what is going on here. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. And John says that there's been these ancient prophecies that someday God himself will come and walk among his people.

[27 : 46] And so John is making the claim that the Trinity introduces themselves in Jesus of Nazareth. If you could put up the next slide, please. And isn't it interesting that God introduces himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?

That's how he introduces himself. This is a very, very powerful phrase.

I was, this week I bumped into an old friend of mine that I hadn't seen in a long time. I used to work for him a long, long, long, long time ago.

And he's a very, very secular Jew. Probably hasn't been to synagogue in decades. Dabbles and a lot of New Age stuff. Really funny guy.

Great guy. And he was just telling me about how he'd been really struck with Jordan Peterson's series of videos not on gender stuff but on God.

[28 : 50] And it was very interesting that he was really struck with this idea of sacrifice. Which Jordan, according to him, Jordan Peterson sees as being central to the idea of a proper idea of God.

And if you were a Jewish person, one of the most important parts of the entire Old Testament is Genesis 22. And in Genesis 22, God asks Abraham, appears to ask Abraham, or asks Abraham to go and kill his son Isaac.

Isaac. And it's a very important story in Jewish thought in Genesis 22. And in that story, and there's a bit of debate about the Hebrew, whether in fact God, whether Abraham actually kills Isaac.

There's some ambiguity in the history in the Hebrew, whether Abraham actually kills Isaac and then God brings Isaac back to life. And Abraham's determined and he goes to kill him a second time or whether he's just about to kill him the first time.

But the main thing is that God stops him. And in that whole story, there's a ram that gets killed. But God says, reveals to Abraham that he will provide the lamb for the sacrifice.

[30 : 10] And it's interesting because it's a ram that's provided right there. And so Jewish people have taken that and ends up becoming so important with the sacrifice of a lamb being somehow far more significant in all of the whole sacrificial system of the Jews.

And the lamb being slain in the Passover. And here, Jesus is introduced by John.

God maneuvers all of the Old Testament, the Tanakh, to prepare people so that when he comes and walks among them, they can start to understand that all of their notions of God are wrong.

And he's going to introduce himself. And he uses John to begin to introduce himself. And he introduces himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If you could put up the next slide. behind this phrase of the sin of the world is this idea that we human beings, by seeking to become like God ourselves, that we have broken and bent ourselves in terms of our relationship to ourself, our relationship to the created order, our relationship socially, our relationship in things like marriage and family, intellectually, that everything is slightly bent.

[31 : 46] And the idea that there is this sin that's present in every human being. I mean, the newspaper bears that out every day when we read it, doesn't it?

But part of the implication of that is that because of human sin, no human being can correctly extrapolate from their experience to God. No human being, not the wisest, not the best, can extrapolate by themselves from their own experience to God.

They'll always be off. They'll make God too passive. They'll make him too active. They'll make him too judgmental. They'll make him moral about certain things and immoral about other types of things.

They'll make him too personal. They'll make him too impersonal. They'll make him too cuddly. They'll make him too angular. Not they, we. Not we, me. That I can't do that.

That I need God to reveal himself to me. And unless God reveals himself to me, I can't really know God.

[33 : 00] I'll end up thinking God's a little bit more like Zeus or a little bit more like Diana or a little bit more like Artemis or a little bit more like the force or a little bit more like the ocean.

That I need God to reveal himself to me because no human being because of sin can extrapolate with their mind or their emotions or their imagination or their memories or their will can extrapolate to know God.

God needs to take the initiative. And the gospel of John, the New Testament, is the story of God coming among us to make himself known. But here's the other problem with sin.

If you could put up the next slide. This is really, really important. True revelation from God needs to include redemption.

revelation. And true redemption from God needs to include revelation from God. You see, because that's the fact of sin.

[34 : 08] It's the fact that, you see, here's the thing that John understood. When John said that salvation is from the Jews, John understood that the Jewish people were the only people listening to God's actual revelation.

They were the one. Isaiah was Jewish. speaking to the Jewish people. It's the Jewish people who understand that God created all things out of nothing.

It's the Jewish people who understand the holiness of God on one hand. Because God reveals these things to them. But even though they've heard it, their hearts are hard. There's sin in their hearts.

They don't get it right. And they take these bits and pieces of the revelation and they make it into bits and pieces and they extrapolate from the sin of their emotions. and the sin of their will and the sin of their mind and the sin of their culture.

And they extrapolate and they bend. And so if there is to be true revelation from God because of sin, if there is to be true revelation from God, there has to be also some means from God that takes away the sin of the world.

[35 : 17] God and in particular takes away the sin of George and the sin of Andrew and the sin of Louise and the sin of Diane and the sin of Jason, if God is going to reveal himself, unless that sin part is dealt with, he can't reveal himself.

And at the same time, if God is just redeeming us without revealing himself, then are we really being redeemed to return to God and to know him?

Or are we just being lost in some fantasy of our own imagination, of our own fallen, rebellious, sinful, willful emotions and mind and will?

And all of this is captured in this spectacular, it's so, you know, the thing about John is that there's time and time and time and time again in John, such a small number of simple words that probably even a three-year-old could be taught, a two-year-old could be taught them.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So simple, so brief. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Why is John the greatest prophet?

[36 : 40] He sees Jesus walking and if Jesus has just had a breakfast of some dried fish and maybe some pita bread and Jesus probably would have had a big, long, good Jewish beard because working class Jewish people wouldn't have been shaving themselves every day, they wouldn't have spent the time on that.

And like anybody with a beard, sorry you folks with beards, there's probably crumbs of bread and dried fish in their beards, sorry, I don't mean to offend you, I'm sure you with beards, looked in the mirror before you came here or you had a wife or somebody else say, you've got stuff all over here.

Jesus was single, he might very well have been walking with stuff in his beard and it would have been dusty from walking and there would have been sand on his feet and on his legs and you would have seen the sweat of his brow and Isaiah had words from God and Ezekiel had words from God and Moses had words from God and people had maybe seen God's back or heard his silence but only John the Baptist, he is the end and the final of all of the prophets and John alone sees this man with dried fish and dried pita bread in his beard walking along in the day with the sweat on his brow and the dust on his feet and he says behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and God is introduced not as thunder, not as lightning, not as ocean, not as energy, not as a tyrant, not as a rich man, not as a superhero but as the lamb who comes from God who will take away the sin of the world, the one who comes to be like a lamb by which human beings like ourselves can put our hands in his hands, in a sense put our hands on his precious face and so that when he dies, he dies to take my doom and I die to take his he gives me his purity and I give him my doom,

I give him my sin, I give all of those things to him and he is the one who comes from God and the fundamental image, the first image is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, God is revealing and redeeming at the same time, he redeems and reveals at the same time, if there is in fact the sin of the world, it is the only way that the true God can make himself known, is to redeem and reveal and reveal and redeem.

Let's just wrap this up. Just two more, let's just read a few more verses and then we'll all stand and we're going to spend some time praying.

[39 : 21] Because you see, this story involves you and me and I don't have time to go into it more but I want to show you how this story all involves you and me after this profound revelation and he's going to reveal more.

Look how he continues on in verse 30. This is he of whom I said, after me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me. John is here affirming the preexistence of God, the son of God.

I myself did not know him. In other words, by my natural ability, he would have known that Jesus was related to him but he didn't know who he was.

It wasn't that his mind was able to grasp this by itself. But for this purpose I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel. And John the Baptist bore witness, I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on him.

I myself did not know him. But he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, he on whom you see the Holy Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

[40 : 30] And I have seen and bore witness that this is the Son of God. This image of the baptizing of the Holy Spirit means that Jesus is the one, the Holy Spirit will work in and through Jesus to wash me.

Water can wash my skin, but only God can go beneath my skin and have the Holy Spirit start to wash and penetrate my mind and my emotions and my affections and my will and my memory and my fears, my shame.

Only God can do that. The next day, verse 35, John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples and he looked at Jesus as Jesus walked by and John again says, Behold the Lamb of God.

The two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, Now here folks, if you have this version of the Bible I have is called a red letter Bible and it has this idea that whenever Jesus speaks you put the writing in red, whether it's a good idea or not, it's a separate discussion.

But what you'll notice is it's so cool, the first words of Jesus recorded aren't, gosh, you're a terrible person, get down on your knees and repent, or give me some money, or don't you think I'm great, or don't you think I'm beautiful?

[42 : 08] No, what are the first words of Jesus? It's a question. What are you seeking? What are you seeking? That's a question for the rest of your life. Like in a sense, if you're having some marital problems, you can almost ask each person, okay, you're having problems, like what are you seeking?

What are you seeking? like what's going on in your life? What are you seeking that's helping to cause this discord? In terms of career, like it's such a profound, open-ended question for the rest of your life.

And Jesus' first words are a profound, open-ended question, what are you seeking? They don't know how to answer. They said, Rabbi, where are you staying?

like, I think this is so brilliant, because, you know, if we were just inventing this, we'd say, we'd give them some deep thing to say, but instead, they're just working-class guys.

They go, um, um, where are you staying tonight? I mean, like that has to be historical, because it just, where are you staying?

[43 : 26] like, it's not profound, where are you staying? And then Jesus says, come and you will see, which is loaded with all this other meaning.

And then later on, and you see, and here's, here's part of the thing, is Jesus doesn't want us to trail after him, he wants us to follow him. And if we want to know what we're seeking, we've got to follow Jesus, and he will start to reveal how so often much of my unhappiness and so much of my pain and so much of my trouble comes from what I'm seeking, and why I need Jesus who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and who can baptize me with the Holy Spirit and begin to write his word on the inside of who I am.

And he can do that for you. Let's stand. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would do a deep work in our hearts and have our hearts not be hardened.

Father, may your Holy Spirit soften our hearts, that we might hear you, introduce yourself, and we might meet you afresh or meet you even more deeply.

And thank you, Father, for Jesus. Thank you that he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Father, thank you that this is shown and vindicated by his resurrection from the dead.

[45 : 13] Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped with who he is and what he's done for us. And make us disciples of Jesus who follow him, Father, throughout our day to learn from him, to be clarified about what we're seeking, and to learn to live in a way redeemed in him that is filled with grace and mercy and bears witness to you truly.

So, Father, may your Holy Spirit move and work deep within us. and if there are any here, Father, who have not yet given their lives to Jesus, may your Holy Spirit help them to take that step over the threshold.

Father, help them to even now open the door as your son knocks on the door of their heart, to open the door and to let Jesus come into their lives. Father, may that happen this morning if there are those here who need it.

But for all of us, Father, make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, learning to live for your glory. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.