

Jesus is the Narrator of God

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Date: 30 April 2006

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[0 : 0 0] I remember very clearly the first time I heard my wife's voice. Some of you might know how I'd seen my wife from a distance and for two years I was trying to figure out some way that I could meet her or get to know, well meet her.

First you meet, then you try to get to know, right? To try to meet her because I just thought she was so lovely and so beautiful from a distance. And finally I screwed up the courage to just walk up to her cold and introduce myself.

And I remember very clearly the first time I actually heard her voice and heard her speak and I just thought it was such a wonderful voice. So beautiful to go with a lady that I thought and still think was so lovely.

I've been thinking about voices a lot this week, not because I'm hearing voices in my head or anything. But actually you've probably all had the experience.

Isn't it so odd that when you hear your voice played back it almost doesn't sound like your voice? Isn't that really odd, eh? That, you know, it's not the same as you hear it in your... Anyway, that's a whole other topic. Not only because it's in...

[1 : 1 8] John the Baptist in our gospel text compares himself to just being a mere voice. But it's really about something which I didn't touch on last week, but I want to talk about for a few minutes today about one of the ways to understand who Jesus is.

And that is that Jesus is described as being the narrator of God. And it's just such a wonderful description. And part of what makes a good narrator a good narrator is the voice.

So if you open your Bibles and turn to page 918, we're going to look at John 1, 18, which is what we read last week.

But last week I really was focusing on verse 14. I was really trying to get us just to meditate upon verse 14 and think about it when the Bible says, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten, the Father full of grace and truth.

And if I could just give that few-word summary of my attempt at a sermon last week, it was that simple phrase, The Word became flesh, which we see the Bible is teaching us.

[2 : 3 5] It means that God became flesh, that God, the Son of God, became flesh, that the Son of God who was in the beginning with God the Father, that he became flesh, that the beginning became flesh.

And I just didn't have time to talk about verse 18, so just very briefly. It's this wonderful sort of the end of the prologue. It says, No one has seen God at any time.

The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. And in Greek, the word which is translated as declared, it means narration.

It's really saying that Jesus is the one who narrates God. Jesus is the one who narrates God. And, you know, today I'm going to really be looking at, I mean, not only giving information, but trying to bring before us, before our eyes and our hearts and our minds, four different titles or images of who Jesus is, so that we not only have that information, but we have that image of who Jesus is, and that we can, our mind can try to process what that means, and that the eyes of our heart and the eyes of our soul can imagine and enter into it imaginatively who this person Jesus is.

And here we have this image that Jesus is one, the one who narrates God. I don't know how many of you have seen the film *The March of the Penguins*. How many people have seen the film *The March of the Penguins*?

[4 : 07] Okay, a good number of you have seen it. One of the things which makes that movie such a good movie is Morgan Freeman. I mean, his voice. I mean, it's deep.

It sounds authoritative. It sounds wise. It sounds believable. It sounds beautiful. It just carries you through a movie all about penguins walking.

You know, you think about it. And millions of people go to see basically a National Geographic-type documentary. But Morgan Freeman's voice and the beauty of the photography just carries us through.

If somebody with a high, irritating, squeaky voice had been the narrator, then the film director, the narrator, and their five best friends would have been the only people on the planet who'd seen the movie.

But Morgan Freeman, with his voice that communicates authority and clarity and wisdom, helped to make that documentary such a huge hit.

[5 : 09] So a good narrator is one who sounds authoritative. They are clear. They make connections. They explain. And they allow us to see and know.

And what verse 18 of chapter 1 is saying is that God chose his son and said, My son will become flesh, and my son will be the one who narrates me.

Jesus is the one who narrates God. So as we come to know Jesus and as we hear the words of Jesus, we are hearing the one who narrates what God is and who God is and makes connection and grants us wisdom and insight.

But here today, there were two images, two of the images in the text of Scripture today which we have before us, are really, you know, that if we really are, in a sense, meditate upon them and listen to them, at first we have to be prepared to be offended because the very two of the first images about God are ones which are offensive to our modern age and to ourselves.

Look, we're going to begin reading at verse 26, this really important delegation of Pharisees. It's in a sense, imagine that the political elite, the cultural elite, the academic elite, the newspaper elite, the fashion elite, you just imagine any type of important elite and you imagine that all of those elites got together and sends a delegation down to see somebody, you know, the money elite.

[6 : 51] And so you're talking to some really important people and they come to see this wild guy out in the desert by the name of John the Baptist who everybody is starting to think is a prophet.

And not only a prophet, but they're starting to wonder if he is the prophet who will indicate that the end of the ages is coming and the Messiah is about to arrive.

And so they ask him, you know, they try to put him into these messianic categories and in verse 23 we'll begin, John the Baptist says, I'm not any of these big fancy people, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now those who were sent included Pharisees and they asked him, why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water.

But there stands one among you whom you do not know. It is he who coming after me is preferred before me, and here's the offensive line, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.

[8 : 01] Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. If Jesus is the one who is the narrator of God, the narration of God, Jesus is here painted as the one whose sandals you and I are unworthy to untie.

You know, if you look at it, John the Baptist was not mentally ill, sort of thing a mentally ill person would maybe say, although mentally ill people are more likely to say that you're not worthy to untie their shoelaces because they often have, you know, these profound senses of how great they are.

But, you know, John the Baptist is not the type of mentally ill person or a person who's so unbelievably lacking in self-esteem that he would say something like this. In fact, in his life, he showed profound courage.

Those of you who are familiar with the story of John the Baptist know the story of how Herod, the ruler, John the Baptist stands up to Herod. He says to Herod, Herod, what you are doing is wrong.

And even though Herod looks at him with murderous intent, and even though his wife looks at him with murderous intent, John the Baptist won't back down. He's not impressed by this.

[9 : 14] He's learned how to stand before a tyrant and proclaim the truth. And he stands before a tyrant. He proclaims the truth. He's sent to jail. And even in jail, he won't recant.

And it eventually leads to him being beheaded, put to death by beheading. And he won't back down at all. And even as John the Baptist is standing in front of some of the members of the elite and the representatives of all of the elites of that Jewish culture, and even as he stands before them, he can look at them and say, there is one standing amongst us whom you do not know, whose sandal you and I are unworthy to even untie.

Like, that's pretty strong stuff. He's in effect modeling a great Christian virtue and strength to be able to stand before tyrants and kneel before God.

Stand before tyrants and kneel before God. We live in an egalitarian age. It grates us to even acknowledge that there are people better than us or greater than us.

We revel in rebellion. We refuse to acknowledge hierarchy and hate it. And John the Baptist, in front of all of these worthy and important people, he says, you and I, you folks, and he's including us in this, we are not even, we are not even worthy, if Jesus was in the room, we wouldn't even be worthy to untie his sandals after he's been walking around in the mall day.

[10 : 50] It's really, really quite astounding, isn't it? If you just think about it for a second. Like, if I said that, you'd think I was joking about myself. And if it appeared that I was serious, that I really believed it, or if you came into this church and found out that other people believed it, you'd say, you'd go out and tell people there's something really sick going on there.

You know, the idea of saying to another person that I'm not even worthy to touch you, it's just, it grates against us on one hand, and the other hand, it also creates maybe within some of us a little bit of longing or yearning, because it opens to us a picture of a depth of goodness, or a depth of greatness, or a depth of otherness, or a depth of purity, or a depth of worth, or a depth of holiness, or a depth of something that in our egalitarian age, we have a hard time maybe even understanding what on earth it's a depth of, but it implies to us that there's a depth of something which is good, that this is not like some kooky movie star, or some kooky rock star, who has a kooky clauses in their contract, that the room has to be painted white, or that nobody can look at them, or nobody can touch them, or nobody can refer to them by name, and we just hear stories about that in the press, and we just think to ourselves, this person is ego-driven, and they are completely and utterly crazy, and it would be terrible to be in that situation, and the thing which is put before us is this, is Jesus one who is demanding these things because he is just as crazy and kooky as the most arrogant and kooky movie star, or rock star, or is he in fact, is John the Baptist saying that there is something about Jesus that is the complete polar opposite of this, which speaks of a depth of goodness, greatness, holiness, purity, reverence, otherness, and we don't have the category, so that to see Jesus, he is the one whose sandals

I am not even worthy to untie. The question then comes, if this is true of Jesus, how would someone like Jesus think?

What would he be like to be around? What would he think of ordinary people? Is he arrogant? Is he full of himself? That's one of the reasons we're to read the Gospels, to see if this is what Jesus is like.

Let's just read and continue on as we get to see more of what John the Baptist says about Jesus after what he said in verse 27. Continue 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.

[13 : 41] Jesus is the one who narrates God. Jesus is the one whose sandals we are not even worthy to untie. And Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You know, if you go down to chapters on Rideau Street and you go to the New Age section or the spirituality section or the religion section or any of those appropriately titled sections, and if you were to start to read the books, almost all of those books, which are very, very popular, will all tell you of your innate goodness, my innate goodness.

In fact, might even talk about your innate divinity or my innate divinity or my innate connectedness to divinity or to goodness. And if you watch the advertising on the television, the heart of a lot of modern advertising is to say, George, you are worth it.

You are worth driving a BMW. You are worth having this watch. You deserve to have these sunglasses or these products. And the more expensive it is, the more money it costs, the more I am worth it or I deserve to have these very, very fine things.

And if there's one thing that we can always count on, whether it's Saturday Night Live or any television show that will get a laugh is when comedians talk about us being sinners and they can put on a fancy voice, they can put on a high voice, they can put on a mocking voice.

And the idea that we are sinners, that we have to be washed from our sins, will always be something which just sounds so inherently hick-like and backwards and foolish that it will always get a laugh.

[15 : 20] And Jesus is the one described as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Later on, if you want, you can read Mark 2, verse 17.

And one of the things which is really interesting about Mark's Gospel is that Mark's Gospel, part of how it works is that there are three times in Mark's Gospel where Jesus is asked, he tells people why he's come.

Like, what is the purpose of his coming? And the first time is towards the end of chapter 1 where he says, I have come to preach. The second, the third purpose statement is he says, I have come to be a ransom for many.

Not to serve, but to serve, not to be served, but to serve and to make my life a ransom for many. That's his third purpose statement. And the in-between purpose statement which is in Mark chapter 2, verse 17, he says, I have come not to call the righteous but sinners.

I have come not to call the righteous but sinners. Jesus came to call sinners to himself. That's because he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[16 : 33] As we run towards books which emphasize our goodness or our inherent divinity or how we deserve the most expensive consumer products that are beyond what we can afford but we're willing to find somebody who will give us the credit so we can buy them.

To run towards a perception of our own inherent goodness or divinity is to run away from the call of Jesus because we are running towards understanding ourselves as righteous and Jesus did not come to call the righteous he came to call sinners.

Jesus is not arrogant. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He came not to be served but to serve.

He came to die. He didn't come just to reveal or to teach he came to die. He came to take away sin. He came to bear in his body and in his person your sin and your rebellion and mine.

He came to be the sacrifice. He dies so that you and I by coming to the one who takes away your sin and mine he dies so that we can be connected to God not by our own arrogance or our own accomplishment or our own technology or techniques but born by adoption and grace.

[18 : 00] He came so that we could be reconciled to God and connect to God when we could not reconcile ourselves to God by our own power or connect to God by our own power but are dependent upon God himself to send the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus came so that you and I might become gods. The very same one who narrates God the very same one who sandals I am not worthy to untie is love himself.

He loves us and died for us. Continue reading very briefly from verse 29. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world this is he of whom I said after me comes a man who is preferred before me it's really saying who existed even before me for he was before me I did not know him but that he should be revealed to Israel therefore I came baptizing with water in other words he's baptizing with water so that Jesus will be revealed to Israel and John the Baptist bore witness of Jesus saying I saw the Holy Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and he remained upon him I did not know him but he sent me he who sent me to baptize with water said to me upon you whom you see the spirit descending and remaining on him this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit

Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit in the ancient world baptism was a sign baptism by water immersion in water was a sign of change a sign of change of ownership a sign of change of direction a sign of change of belonging and Jesus is described as the one who can immerse our bodies and souls not just in the sign you know like the water being a sign and we can be immersed in water our bodies but Jesus is the one who can immerse our bodies and souls in the Holy Spirit he is the only one who can send the Holy Spirit upon us or offer the Holy Spirit in such a way that we can be immersed body and soul in the Holy Spirit Jesus' baptism creates a true change in ownership Jesus' baptism by the Holy Spirit creates a true change in direction it's a change in our soul it creates a change in our souls in earth and in heaven a change in our souls in past in present and in future

Jesus is the one who has this ability to baptize us in the Holy Spirit to send the Holy Spirit of God upon us and within us in such a way who is Jesus?

[21 : 11] who is Jesus? Jesus is the narrator of God Jesus is the one whose sandals we are unworthy to untie Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world Jesus is the one who baptizes those who come to him in the Holy Spirit let's talk with him now in prayer let us pray Jesus we thank and praise you that you willingly set aside your glory and your splendor and your divine prerogatives to set all of these things aside to become flesh and walk among us we thank you for your teaching and your sinless life and all of your good examples but most of all we thank and praise you that you are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world who can take away our sin and reconcile us to God we thank and praise you that you are the one

Jesus who can pour out the Holy Spirit upon us body and soul and past and present and future the length and depth and height and width of our lives so that we can be changed and belong to you and be connected to God the Father loving Jesus we acknowledge that only you narrate God truly and loving Jesus we acknowledge that this mystery about you that you are so full of love and so full of humility and willing to serve and yet we are not even worthy to unloose the thongs of your sandals Jesus we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall afresh upon us and lead us ever closer to yourself and Jesus through you lead us ever closer to the Father in Jesus' name we pray Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen