

He Has Made Him Known: His Mission

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[0 : 00] Paul writes in Philippians chapter 2 that Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But instead he made himself nothing.

He took on the form of a servant and he was born in the likeness of men. This is Paul's version of the word became flesh.

That's how he describes it. Of course this is amazing, astonishing, mysterious news. The Christian belief that God became a human being.

The incarnation is the fancy word we use. This belief is phenomenal. It's full of wonder and mystery and it's impossible to fully kind of wrap our minds around.

What this means. But it's true. And at the same time as we imagine this truth that God became a human being.

[1 : 13] That the word became flesh. It just begs the question doesn't it? Why in the world would God do that? Why would he come? Why did the eternal son forever in glorious relationship with his father become the human Jesus of Nazareth?

Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Well the goal of this morning's time is to answer that why. See the word became flesh on purpose.

God has. This was a highly calculated and aimed incarnation. God has a mission in entering his creation.

Here it is. Here's why God came. God became a man so that man can know God.

God became a man so that man can know God. The word became flesh so that you and I could truly know who God is.

[2 : 24] And by knowing God receive eternal life. God became a man so that man can know God.

So that's the short answer. Now we get to explore that together from John chapter 1 this morning. If you haven't opened a Bible yet I'd invite you there. If the black hardcover ESV is in the pews.

You can find it I think on 1052. Is the page number? We'll be looking at what David just read for us.

We're going to proceed by looking at three aspects this morning of this mission of Jesus.

Three aspects. The backdrop. The essence. And the climax. First the backdrop.

Before we get too far into this mission. We need to see what John is doing. He's setting the stage for us in chapter 1 of his gospel. And he's making at least two.

[3 : 29] There's more we could say. But two that I want to focus on. Two humongous truth claims. Two audacious, bold, emphatic claims. That set everything else in motion from here.

The first is that there's a hero. He's introduced right in the first verse. And Billy talked about who this person was last week. The word. But then the second truth claim is there's a problem.

There's a really, really, really big, fundamental, universal human problem. So John identifies who the hero is.

And he identifies the problem that the hero has come to solve. This hero, right from the beginning of John's gospel, we see all kinds of amazing things.

He's in the beginning. He's in the beginning with God. Because he is God. Everything that was created was created through the word.

[4 : 35] Through this hero of our story. And he has this intimate and unique and personal loving relationship with the father. Forever. This word in verse 4 we see has life in himself.

He doesn't need anybody to give him life because he himself possesses life. Self-sustaining existence forever and ever and ever. And we see Jesus making these claims throughout the book.

I am the bread of life, he says. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. John chapter 14 verse 6. But not just what the word was like then, but verse 14.

He became flesh. And has dwelt among us. The word comes down. He enters into the creation that he created. And not just comes down, he was sent.

Purposely by the father. So we're in the season of Advent. Advent. This time when we reflect on the baby in the manger.

[5 : 45] That we reflect on the word made flesh. And we do this year after year after year. And if you've been in church a while, you know. Come December, you can guarantee a couple things. Christmas music on the radio.

And in church, you're going to learn about the baby in the manger. So how do we approach this season year after year after year? And have it be fresh.

How can we keep this from being just the thing that we do this time of year? Because there's something so beautiful and wonderful that year by year, we have this opportunity to remember this in a fresh and wonderful and exciting way.

So let me just offer a suggestion about how each of us can do this. I'm stealing an answer from our life group on Thursday night.

Because we were talking about something different. But the help that I received is, I want to pass it on in this same regard. We talked about slowing down.

[6 : 50] We talked about when we're dealing with discouragement or just difficulties in life, that one of the ways that we can kind of snap ourselves out of it is by just slowing down.

Kind of putting the phone on silent, stepping away from life, you know, maybe cutting a thing or two out of the calendar and just slowing down. I think in this season of Advent, that's exactly what each of us need to do in order to have this season fresh and exciting and wonderful.

Let me just encourage all of us this morning to do that. Take some time where you leave your phone in a drawer and maybe instead of going through the drive-thru of Starbucks, you go inside and you find a place to sit and just open to John 1.

And just pray. All you need to do is pray for the Holy Spirit to help you see how wonderful and good Jesus is. There is, I cannot remember a single time when I prayed that, that God didn't answer that prayer.

Because He wants us to know His Son. He wants us to know Jesus in this season of Advent. And marvel anew at the baby in the manger, who is Emmanuel, who is the Savior of the world.

[8 : 14] So that's the hero. That's the person that John is introducing us to. But the other part of the backdrop that I want to make sure we see is that John introduces this fundamental and universal human problem.

No one's exempt from this problem. All of us are facing this problem. And John's way of putting it is, we do not know God. We don't know who He is.

And John just kind of lays this on over and over and over again. If you look at chapter 1, look in verse 5. John talks about darkness.

And he doesn't just mean, oh, we need a light switch to kind of see where we're going in the dark. But he introduces darkness as the spiritual reality, this evil that's against the purposes of God.

And Jesus, being the light, shines into that. And the darkness does not overcome the true light. There's a problem. We're blind. We're in the dark.

[9 : 14] We don't know God. We can't understand who He is. On in verse 10, John continues. He says that this Word created the world.

And He was in the world. And the world didn't know Him. It says that Jesus came and kind of knocked the world upside its head.

And the world didn't know Him. And not just that in verse 11, we see that He came to His own people. And His own people. Those who most clearly should have understood who He was and why He was coming, they did not receive Him.

And John's raising all of this to show the problem. He keeps going. In verse 13, he says that flesh and blood, human will, have no help in becoming children of God.

So, contrary to popular opinion, we don't start out God's children and then just kind of get to heaven simply because we're born into this world. In fact, we have no ability to become God's children, John says in verse 13.

[10 : 31] And this whole thing climaxes in verse 18 where John says, no one has ever seen God. In one sense, he just means God's invisible.

He's spirit. We can't see Him. But we see at the end of that verse that there is one, the only God who is at the Father's side, who has made Him known.

So, it's not just simply that God's invisible. He's not known. He's not comprehended. He's not understood. And this, according to John, is the fundamental human problem.

We don't know God. This plays out over and over again in John's Gospel.

We see a man in chapter 3 named Nicodemus, who's one of the religious leaders of Israel, come to Jesus at night. Jesus says, unless you're born again, you can't see the kingdom of God.

[11:33] In chapter 14, Jesus says, nobody comes to the Father except through me. He goes on to repeatedly explain that the reason why people reject Him is that they don't know the Father.

They don't know God, so they reject Jesus. Over and over in John's Gospel, we see this. One of the clearest places is in chapter 16, verse 2, where Jesus says, hey, a time's coming.

He's talking to His disciples the week before He dies, and He says, the time's coming when whoever kills you will think that he is offering service to God. And they'll do these things because they have not known the Father nor Me.

This adds flavor to our problem, doesn't it? There's something not just that God has to come, but there's something preventing us from understanding who He is.

This light that comes into the world, this Word made flesh, is offensive. That's why His own people don't just not receive Him, they crucify Him. Because He's so offensive to them.

[12:50] And yet, John says, the problem is we don't know God. And He comes, and we don't know Him, and we reject Him. Over and over again, that's the problem that John presents.

Elsewhere in our Bibles, we might see it as talking about, like in Paul, that we're dead in trespasses and sins. There's this sin problem that we have. I'm not denying any of that, but the way John couches it and explores it is through this relationship.

It's broken, it's non-existent, we don't know God. That's why we're in the mess we're in. Well, you can probably guess what Jesus' mission is then, right?

I mean, this is, I feel like I don't even have to say it, but I want to, just so we're all on the same page, right? The essence of Jesus' mission, this is point two, the essence of Jesus' mission is so that man can know God.

That's why Jesus came, to make God known. To reveal the Father. And to mend what is broken by sin. The baby in a manger is making the invisible visible.

[14:07] The unknown, known. The unknowable, knowable. Jesus' mission is to solve our greatest problem.

We do not know God. But Jesus makes him known. In the prologue of John that we're looking at, chapter 1, 1 to 18, John says it in a few different ways.

One, in verse 9, he says that the true light that enlightens everyone, that gives light to everyone, is coming, right? Jesus is illuminating the spiritual realities about who God is and about the condition of our own lives and hearts apart from him.

In verse 12, it says that Jesus alone, not flesh and blood, not the will of man, but Jesus alone gives the right to become children of God.

So apart from Jesus, we're not children of God, it says. Jesus. And then in verse 18 again, it's that Jesus makes God known.

[15:17] Jesus makes God known. And John is very clear. Jesus isn't one of many people who makes God known. He's not one of many ways to know God, but he is the way to know God.

And apart from him, we cannot know God. This is one of the major reasons why John records these seven statements of Jesus about who he is.

Jesus, over and over through John's gospel, one of his main ways of describing his mission is, this is who I am. These are exclusive claims.

Jesus saying, I am the only way to come to a knowledge of and enter into a relationship with God. I'm the bread of life. I'm the light of the world.

I am the door for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

[16:25] I am the true vine. And as a bonus, in chapter 8, before Abraham was, I am. And these statements of Jesus come with this call to receive him as he is and as he claims to be.

to believe that Jesus, when he makes the claim that he is the only way to know God, to say, I believe that and I want to know everything I can about Jesus because to know Jesus is to know

God because Jesus is God.

He alone can make God known. And along with this call to respond in that way, to put our faith and our trust in Jesus, to believe in him for eternal life, is this accompanying promise that all who believe will not perish but have everlasting life.

We see it played out again in these same statements. If you eat the bread of life, you will not die. If you follow the light of the world, you will have the light of life. If you enter by the door, you will be saved and find pasture because the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, for their lives. If you believe the resurrection and the life, you will never die. He is the way, the truth, and the life and if you come to him, you will come to the Father. And in chapter 15, he says, I'm the true vine. [18:04] If you abide in me and I in you, you will have life for apart from me, you can do nothing. Jesus is the only one who can make God known because he is God and he has come in human flesh to make God known.

That's his mission. That's his purpose in taking on flesh. All other people and religions and everyone else who claims that they have another way to know God, they are either thieves or liars. Only Jesus makes God known. John says that, right? No one has ever seen God. No one. But the only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

You can know God through Jesus. That's the claim of John. It's the claim of this book called the Bible. The Word became flesh.

God became a man so that man can know God. So church, let's keep delighting in this truth, this Advent season. We can truly know and understand and be in relationship with God because Jesus has made him known.

[19:20] But we know the story doesn't end there with his birth. Though the incarnation of God, the Word becoming flesh, was certainly costly, certainly amazing and wonderful and a truth that we need to declare and celebrate, it was only a piece of his mission.

We must always remember where Jesus is going. Where his mission climaxes. Jesus' mission to make God known climaxes at the cross.

when the Son of God was crucified in the place of sinners. This seems like such a bizarre statement on the surface.

If you think about it. How in the world can God's Savior be killed on a cross?

how does that save anybody? How can a crucified man be the Messiah, the Savior of the world?

But John's been preparing us for this all along.

[20:41] That he's shown so many examples in this gospel of people who just misunderstand Jesus. That we should get to this point where the full revelation of God at the cross comes into full view in the gospel and we should go I don't need to be I don't need to misunderstand.

I can know that this is truly who God is. Unlike Nicodemus who sits there scratching his head saying how can I be how can I crawl back into my mom's womb and be born again?

Or the Samaritan woman at the well saying sir how can you give me this water of life you don't even have a bucket to drop into the well? Crowds of disciples hearing Jesus say I'm the bread of life saying how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Right? All these people over and over who misunderstand God. And Paul says that the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing. Right? How does this make sense?

That God would die? And yet that's exactly what happens. And it's this very claim in chapter 8 verse 28 that Jesus highlights and points out for his disciples.

[22:03] And for those listening who will end up crucifying him he says this when you have lifted up the son of man so in that same way he's talking about himself and he's talking about the cross when you have lifted up the son of man when you've hung me on the cross then you will know that I am and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak just as the father taught me.

The cross validates everything that Jesus said about himself and if we reduce that down the cross is the place and the conclusion that Jesus makes God known.

as Nicodemus scratches his head Jesus tells him truly truly I say to you it was necessary that the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

It's because the problem goes so deep friends. see the picture that John paints is not of these really God-fearing individuals kind of just sitting going oh if God would just show up and reveal himself we'd love to follow him.

History continues to repeat itself that God sends messengers and says this is what I'm like. People kill his prophets they crucify his son and they continue to martyr his bride.

[23 : 45] Because the problem goes so deep and yet Jesus is the only way that we can know God. In an intimate gathering of disciples chapter 14 one of them Philip says kind of please he pleads with Jesus he says just show us the Father and it's going to be enough for us.

And Jesus says Philip have I been with you so long? If you've seen me you've seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The Son of Man must be lifted up to divine necessity to crucify Jesus. To cast out the ruler of this world to defeat the problem of evil and sin and death put all people on notice.

Believe in God's Messiah or perish in your sins. To showcase God's righteousness in his holy hatred for sin.

And to teach sinners how far reaching his love is. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have everlasting life.

[25 : 19] That's the mission of Jesus isn't it? To secure eternal life for all who believe. And what is this eternal life? eternal life? John 17 verse 3 And this is eternal life that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Eternal life is knowing God. You see how this all connects? Jesus' mission he came to make God known. Knowing God is eternal life.

God became a man and died on a cross so that man could know God and find eternal life.

All who believe in this will not perish in their sin but have eternal life. They will know the one true God because they know Jesus Christ the one God sent.

Jesus says I and the Father am one. I'm in the Father the Father is in me if you've seen me you've seen the Father. Jesus alone makes God known because Jesus alone is God and he's come to make God known.

[26 : 37] That's his mission. That's why he came. So how do we respond? I just want to offer two ways for us to respond to this.

First way is to celebrate him. Celebrate this unique person who alone is able to offer eternal life. Who alone is able to help us know God truly.

So we worship and adore him this season of Advent and every season. I recognize in that it requires different strategies and procedures for different folks in the room.

Right? If you're in the room today and you don't know Jesus you can't celebrate him until you come to him and receive his offer of eternal life and forgiveness of your sins.

He offers this freely. It's why he came as a mission that he had from the beginning. But you must come to him and believe in him.

[27 : 54] He's the only way you can know God. And any other way that you're trying to know God will fail. No one's seen God. The only God at the Father's side has made him known.

But then for the rest of us to celebrate Jesus means we've got to get him before our face. We've got to understand who he is and we've got to get him before our eyes.

The way this has been looking for me this week, I have this fantastic ability to take all of my problems and put them under a microscope and magnify them and just stare through the lens of this microscope and just stare at my problems.

Oh, the problem is so terrible. I'm guessing some of you can relate to this. But that's never going to get me to celebrate Jesus today or any day, is it?

I've got to get my eye from squinting into this little teeny microscopic device and step back and lift my gaze up and see this delightful, glorious, wonderful Savior who dwarfs every problem I have.

[29 : 15] That's the fight of faith I'm engaged in to celebrate him now. So that's the first response, celebrate him. The second way that we respond to this mission of Jesus is to join him.

After Jesus is resurrected in chapter 20 verse 21, he says this to his disciples, As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. See, the mission of Jesus doesn't stop when Jesus goes up to heaven.

Certainly he has died and been raised to offer eternal life and salvation and his mission continues through his people. To gather his sheep, those who will hear his voice and respond to him and come in and find pasture in life.

That mission to continue uniting a people in his name for his glory. He sent us into this time, to this place, for his glory, to be on mission with him.

The season of Advent, when we ponder the baby in the manger, is such a good time to either for the first time kindle, or for the 50th time, rekindle joining Jesus on this mission.

[30 : 44] Chapter 1, verse 14 doesn't say, the word became flesh and dwelt nearby us. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Let us be like that too. Though we acknowledge that mission is hard, it can be messy and scary. I was just talking about it before service.

There was a way we were trying to help somebody and it didn't work out so well. But it requires proximity, it requires risk taking, that face-to-face relationship that Jesus makes God known because he's among the people.

We have one such opportunity coming up on Christmas Eve that Mike announced earlier. We're going to gather in this building as a church and we're going to prepare food and we're going to feed a community of anybody who wants to come.

But more than that, we want to join together to be God's sent ones who are on mission to say, Jesus is the only way to God. He's the only way you can know him.

[31 : 52] And if you know him, then you truly do know God and you have eternal life in him. Let's not just aim all of our energy at that one event and that one time, right?

Let's commit as a church, wherever we're at, whether we've been doing this and you're like, okay, here we go again, or you need this encouragement and this push. Let's continue joining Jesus in this season and every single season.

Joining his mission to make God known by making Jesus known. Declaring to our friends, our neighbors, our family, our coworkers, this glorious news that God became a man so that man can know God.

Let's pray. Father God, I just thank and praise you for your word. Spirit, would you help us grasp this incredible news that Jesus reveals the Father because the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father.

Help us to celebrate our Lord and Savior this Advent season and help us to join him in this mission. God, accomplish much through our efforts and be glorified through our celebration.

[33 : 20] I give you all the thanks, all the praise, all the glory, praying only through Jesus, our Lord, our God. Amen.