

The Word Who Is A Person, He Has Made Him Known

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[0:00] Well, if you are not already there, please open your Bible to John chapter 1. John chapter 1. John's the fourth gospel, fourth book in the New Testament.

And so we're going to be looking at the first five verses of John chapter 1. Well, growing up, I was always a good student.

It was one of those things, I was just good at school, and so that's why I liked it, because I was good at it. Except for one subject, math. Anyone else with me?

I was not the greatest math student. I have vivid memories, in fact, of staying up late with my dad at the kitchen table in eighth grade, agonizing over algebra.

I just kept saying, Dad, I just don't get it. This is supposed to be math. Why are there letters? What's with the X, Y, and the Z? But because I was a good student, I kept trying.

[1:03] But my relationship with my math classes was never very affectionate, and it was always rather complicated. And then I went to college, and I became a history major, hoping I would not have to take any math classes, but I did have to take one, and it was calculus.

I was not looking forward to it. But on the first day of calculus class, something was different. It was my professor.

Dr. Piston made calculus real to me. He was patient. He was patient. He used real-life examples. And not only did he make math understandable to me, but he began to unlock the wonder of it to me.

He showed me the beauty of God's world through the language of mathematics, and I actually started to enjoy it. In short, Dr. Piston made math known to me.

He warmly introduced me to it. And ironically enough, my experience with calculus is very much what Christmas is all about.

[2:08] For many of us, God is a bit like math. He seems distant, maybe boring, cold, unknowable. Perhaps he's kind of mysterious, kind of out there, not close, maybe even vaguely threatening.

Even for those of us who know him and have been in a relationship with him for years, there are seasons when he seems particularly absent or distant or not very real.

I'm sure most everyone in this room has felt that way at one time or another about God. And the Bible explains why that's the case. Each of us is born with a heart that's naturally opposed to God. Because we were born with a nature bent toward ourselves, not toward God and his way. So even if you know about God, maybe you were raised in the church your whole life, it's easy to think about God as distant or unknown, maybe even threatening.

A guy who kind of frowns on us a lot. All this is a perspective problem. We have a bent and fractured understanding of who God is because of our bent and fractured sinful hearts.

[3:25] So if our perspective is so shattered, how do we begin to know God? How can we not just begin to understand him as he truly is, but begin to wonder at him, to enjoy him as he truly is?

Well, we need a Dr. Piston. We need someone to introduce us to him, to make him known to us. And in John 1, we're introduced to just such a person.

Someone who's able to show us exactly who God is. Not only so that we can understand some facts about him, but that we can know him personally.

And have a life-giving relationship with him. And what the Apostle John is going to tell us is that we can only know God through the unique person of Jesus Christ, the Word.

We can only know him through the unique person of Jesus. So for the next few Sundays during Advent, we're going to explore the first 18 verses of John's Gospel together.

[4:31] We're going to mine its depths to understand who this Word person is. His person, which I'm going to talk about today. Next week, his mission. And the week after that, his glory.

This morning, let's look at the first part of this passage. Verses 1 to 5 to discover who this Word is, who is a person. And here, we're going to discover that John makes four claims about this unique person of the Word who makes God known to us.

Four claims. Let's start with the first one. It's found, the very first phrase, it's this claim. He is God's perfect self-expression.

The Word is God's perfect self-expression. In the beginning was the Word. The Word.

Why start with the Word? Well, not all, but many of John's original readers would have had some familiarity with who Jesus of Nazareth was.

[5:35] He seems to have written his gospel to kind of a wide audience, but maybe particularly for believers who already knew and trusted in Jesus, and maybe folks who were curious about who this Jesus was.

So most folks who read this gospel would be coming to these words with an assumption that this book is about Jesus of Nazareth. So it's a little curious why John starts with, in the beginning was the Word.

It's a little curious. He doesn't actually mention Jesus by name until verse 17. But he starts with the Word. Well, it's not really curious. Actually, it's brilliant. Pretend for a moment that you couldn't write or speak or sign or communicate with anyone in any way at all.

Now, people could see you. They could observe your patterns of behavior. They could study your daily rhythms. They could discover a lot of things about you.

But even if they were with you 24-7, would they know you? No. Of course not. We're known by our words. We know others by their words.

[6:48] It's the way we express our feelings, our values, our priorities, who we are. And it's the same with God. God, from the very beginning, has been a talking God.

And amazingly, he's not talking in some heavenly language. No, he's speaking in human languages that we can actually understand. He wants to be known by us. He wants us to understand him.

And he has given us his recorded word written down in human history and preserved through the centuries so that we might understand and have a personal relationship with him.

In the Old Testament, God's word is seen to be the way he expresses himself personally and powerfully to his people, particularly as their creator, as their ruler, and their rescuer.

By his word, God creates something out of nothing. That's how the Bible begins. By his word, God speaks so that his people know how to live well under his rule.

[7:55] He tells Adam and Eve, enjoy the garden. Don't eat from that tree. He rules over them by his word. But also by his word, God rescues his people again and again from their own foolishness and sinfulness.

Just read the prophets. God's speaking his rescuing words to his people. So it's by his word that God expresses himself personally to his people as their creator, their ruler, and their rescuer.

So it's no surprise that John then chooses the word as the title for the one who is God's mirror image. As our creator, ruler, and rescuer.

He is God's perfect self-expression. If you drive up the road a little bit north to the Milwaukee Art Museum, you will probably find some examples of human self-expression.

Through creative mediums like painting or sculpture, photography. You might even find really odd self-expressions. It's like the banana duct taped to a wall that sold for \$120,000 this last week at an art gallery in Miami.

[9:03] Self-expression. But human self-expressions are only partial and they're often corrupt. But this word, this self-expression of God is the one and only pure, full, undiluted, walking and talking expression of who God is.

Later on in John's Gospel in chapter 14, one of Jesus' disciples, Philip, he says to Jesus, Show us the Father and it's enough for us.

And Jesus responds by saying, Philip, have I been with you so long and you still don't know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

So when we look at Jesus, we see exactly who God is like. Not partially, perfectly.

Three-dimensionally. From every angle.

Jesus is God's perfect self-expression in a person. Look down at verse 18. No one has ever seen God.

[10:15] The only God who is at the Father's side. He has made him known. So John is not just saying that Jesus is a qualified messenger on God's behalf.

Rather, he is the full and final revealing of who God is in a body. What is utterly astounding about this word, who is a person, is that this word became human.

Look at verse 14. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. Someone else has said, he is everything that God wanted to say to us in a person.

That's why John starts with the word. He wants us to have very clearly in our minds that Jesus of Nazareth was God's perfect self-expression.

That if we want to know God, we must know Jesus. He's our Dr. Piston. He's going to introduce us to God personally. He is going to help us not only understand who God is, but begin to wonder at who he is and enjoy him through the person of the word.

[11:28] And it is that word that is the infant in the manger. He is God's perfect self-expression. And at Christmas time, we tend to focus on the baby that was born, but we must not separate the baby from the man.

All that he said and did was a mirror image of the mind and will and heart of God. And yet, even as a baby in the manger, not being able to speak or do anything, we see God's perfect self-expression of grace and truth, as God says later on in verse, or as John says in verse 17.

The simple fact of the incarnation, of the mind-numbing thought of God becoming human, is enough to fully express the mercy and faithfulness, the grace and truth of God in the person of Jesus.

So that's, first of all, who he is. He is God's perfect self-expression, the word. That's the first claim.

Well, if we keep reading verses 1 and 2, we'll see John's second claim about the unique person of the word.

It's this. He has the closest possible relationship with God. He has the closest possible relationship with God.

[12:46] In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

Well, John doesn't really mess around here. He just throws us right into the deep end. He doesn't start us off in the shallows. With very simple words and just two short sentences, John paints a beautiful and complex picture about this word's intimate relationship to God.

Look at that first phrase in verse 1. In the beginning. It reminds us of another chapter 1, verse 1, doesn't it? Genesis 1, 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

But here, it's in the beginning, the word was. It doesn't say the word has existed since the beginning or from the beginning, implying that he had some origin.

It's just rather, in the beginning, he was there. Putting him pretty close to God, the creator of all things. And that's where John goes next.

[13:55] Look at the middle part of the verse. With the, and the word was with God. That word translated with isn't the standard word for with that the New Testament uses in its original language.

The word that John uses here not only implies alongside and in the same space as, but nearness, intimacy, closeness.

We could assume that from his previous statement that the word was in the beginning, we could assume that that was true, that the word had to be in some sort of close relationship with God.

But John's making it really explicit here. He wants us to see an intimacy of relationship between the word, God's own self-expression, and God himself. But not only that, since the word is in close relationship to God, this also implies that the word is therefore distinct from God.

We don't have relationship with ourselves. We have relationship with people who are other from us, distinct from us. So here we see that the word is somehow other from God, somehow distinct, having a distinct personhood that is in relationship, close relationship to God.

[15:16] But then John drops a bomb with the next statement. The word was God. If we've been picking up what John's laying down so far, the word has always existed in close relationship with God, then we're all, they're probably thinking, okay, that's a little weird, perhaps, maybe this word is some kind of elevated angel or lesser kind of divine being that is in close relationship with God.

But no, John is making this astounding claim. The word, who is God's perfect self-expression, is not only eternally existing, not only in close relationship with God, but this word shares God's very being.

This word is, by nature, God. He shares in God's godness. And yet, yet, this word is also distinct from God.

He's his own person. And it doesn't just say that the word was somehow partially divine or had divine qualities about him, but that Jesus, the word, is fully God.

There's no other way to translate the phrase. Jehovah's Witnesses might want to try to convince us otherwise, like, oh, he's kind of a God. No, there's no other way to translate it.

[16:32] The word was God. Well, I told you that John throws us right into the deep end. In verse 2, John restates the same claims, just in a different order.

It's as if he's saying, yes, you didn't misunderstand me. I did just say that. That's what I'm claiming about this word. The one who is God, has eternally existed with God, and close relationship with God, and he does share God's very being while being his own person at the same time.

It's almost like you can see the smile on John's face as he's trying to see us work it out. What a person. What a unique person.

Listen, there's just no other person like this. There is no one who has eternally existed in relationship with God as God's perfect self-expression, and shared God's very being as God, and then become a human.

This unique person is the baby in the manger. Don't be fooled by the sentimentality of the season. The baby that Mary birthed is the God-man.

[17:37] Divinity united with humanity in a person. There is no halo around him, no soft glow emanating off his person to mark his uniqueness, but John is helping us see exactly who he is.

The one whose birthday we celebrate this month is the one who had no origin, no beginning. In fact, he existed before the universe existed, before time began.

And people, ever since the first century, ever since Jesus first showed up, we're trying to nail this down. How is this possible that God and man could be together in the same person?

We kind of want to write a recipe for this mystery, figure it out. But the fact is, we're in the deep end of the pool. There's no way we can swim to the bottom and fully explore how this works.

It is beyond us. John doesn't explain it for us. God doesn't want us to go there. We can't. He just wants us to behold it and be in awe. God's perfect self-expression, eternally existing in the closest possible relationship with God, sharing God's very being, became a human.

[18:53] And we're just supposed to have mouths open. This great mystery must lead us not only to the end of our intellectual understanding, but also to our knees.

One cannot celebrate Christmas flippantly if this is what Christmas is about. If we do, we dishonor the God-man. If we do not obey the Christmas hymn's words, Oh, come, let us adore him, then we fail to acknowledge the most momentous event in human history, when God, the author of creation, wrote himself into his own story and became human to show us who he is and to bring us back to him.

And if that weren't enough, if our brains can still handle it, let's look at the third claim. John makes another claim about the unique person of this word.

He is responsible for the creation of all things. He is responsible for the creation of all things. Look at verse 3. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was

made.

Apart from the person of the word, we would not exist. Nothing would exist. Notice how the apostle states it positively, and then just to make sure we get the point, he puts it negatively.

[20:17] All things were made through him, then negatively. Without him, not anything, not one thing would be made. So that means that dragonflies exist because of and through Jesus.

Spiral galaxies exist because of and through Jesus. Music exists because of and through Jesus. Gravity exists because of and through Jesus. Tyrannosaurus rex exists because of and through Jesus. Your next door neighbor exists because of and through Jesus.

Jesus. Your spouse exists because of and through Jesus. You, your life, your body, your thoughts, your past, your present, your future, you exist because of and through Jesus.

And then later on in Colossians 1, Paul will add another preposition to that mix. Not only do all things exist because of and through Jesus, but they exist for him.

[21:26] Not only do all things exist because of him, they exist for him. All of creation, from blue whales to Jupiter to hummingbirds, it all exists for him.

For his glory, for his purposes, for his pleasure. He's the one that gives creation its meaning and its purpose. If we see our own existence as existing somehow apart from him, we're missing the very thing that gives meaning and purpose to our life because we were and all things were created through him.

But like this, is Paul, is John just kind of making this up out of thin air? No. He's just putting his knowledge of the Old Testament together with his knowledge of who Jesus revealed himself to be. You see, the Bible is kind of like a curtain on a stage. It's slowly and steadily pulled back, revealing more and more detail about what has been previously said.

So on the first page of Scripture, we learn that God created everything through his word. By speaking, let there be light. And there was light. Psalm 33, 6 says something similar.

[22:37] By the word of Yahweh, the heavens were made. So we already know that God created all things through his word. But now, John has given that curtain rope an extra tug, revealing that the word by which God created the universe is actually a person.

So this means that the Father and the Son were in divine partnership in the creation of the world. And maybe you're wondering, how? How did that work?

Give me some more specifics here. But he just doesn't go there. And honestly, the rest of Scripture doesn't go that far either. because there are things that the human mind simply can't understand. Again, we're in the deep end of the pool here. We can't swim to the bottom. That's okay. Who would want to worship something that you completely understood? It's right and good for us to come to this and say, I don't know how exactly this works, but I see it.

And then John, in the rest of his gospel, he demonstrates this powerfully about Jesus. Only the co-creator of the world could transform the chemical properties of water into delicious wine just with his word.

[23:49] Only the one through whom all things were made could take a boy's lunch and feed a vast multitude till they were stuffed. Only the author of life could speak a word to a man who was dead for four days and revitalize every decomposing cell in his body so that he walked out of the tomb perfectly whole.

And so it is this awe-inspiring word through whom God made all things who is lying in the manger. He's the co-author of life. He's the co-architect of the universe.

He is the co-creator of every living thing. Without him, we would not only know or experience any good thing in this life, we wouldn't even exist.

We owe him our existence. But John's not done. He has one claim left. It's highly related to this last one, but it gets at something even more marvelous about this word who is a person who is making God known to us.

Here's the fourth thing he wants us to know. His life is our light in the darkness. His life is our light in the darkness.

[25:02] It's right there in verse four. In him was life and the life was the light of men. Verse five, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

So because all things came into being through him, the first part of verse four is just not surprising, right? In him was life. So this absolutely unique person of the word through whom God made the universe who shares God's very being and nature, he has life in him.

Now we shouldn't think of a Genesis 2 kind of life. Of God breathing the breath of life into a lump of dust called Adam and making him a living being. Not that kind of life.

Because that kind of life is a completely different kind of life that the person of the word is said to have here. Our kind of life is a created life.

It's a dependent life. It comes from a source. Our life is dependent on other things for existence. Not only upon food and air and water, but ultimately upon God himself.

[26:13] who is the giver of life. But the one through whom all things were made does not have that kind of dependent life. The life in him is not from anything.

The word has uncreated life that he shares with the father. Later on in John chapter 5 Jesus will say as the father has life in himself so he has granted to the son to have life in himself.

That's the son has the same kind of in himself life that the father has. A self-existent life. It's life that comes from nowhere.

It's uncreated. It's resident in his very person. Theologians from an older generation called this kind of self-existence God's aseity.

It basically means God's from himself-ness. and the son shares that same kind of self-existing life. He always has and he always will.

[27:18] What does John say about this unique self-existing life that the word has? Look at verse 4. That life was the light of men. Well typical of the apostle John there's a surface level meaning here and then there's a deeper meaning.

On the surface it seems that John is just saying that unless we recognize that God the word is the source of all things we can't understand our reality. We don't have the light of understanding if we don't recognize him as the author of life.

So Psalm 36 states something like this with you God is the fountain of life. In your light do we see light.

God being the abundant source of life is like a fountain ceaselessly flowing with water and it is in the light of acknowledging that he is the creator and the source of life do we actually understand what it means for us to be his creatures.

To understand reality as it truly is. And unless we begin to see it that way we're deceived.

Otherwise we begin thinking our life comes from ourselves and we start going off depending upon ourselves.

[28:34] only by believing the truth that all life originated with and is sustained by God himself can we actually understand what's around us. And so all that John is doing in verse 4 is just tying that biblical truth to the word, to the son.

We must understand that everything we see around us came into being through the person of the word, Jesus Christ. He's the light we walk around in. Everything around us has the phrase created by the father through the son written on it.

Everything from supernovas to snails to shoulder joints, it all proclaims the glory of Jesus, the wisdom of Jesus, the beauty of Jesus, the creativity of Jesus, the centrality of Jesus.

So in one sense that's basically what John is saying here. He's saying unless we recognize him as a source of our life we don't have light. We can't see. We don't understand our reality. But I think John is also saying something a little bit deeper about this light.

Look at verse 5. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. And then we get further clues that John's not done talking about this light.

[29:47] He keeps talking about the light in verses 6-13. In verse 7 this light is borne witness to by John the Baptist so that everyone might believe in this light.

And then in verse 9 we see that this light was coming into the world to give light to everyone. And he came to a world in darkness. A world that was made through him and a world that rejected him. So we begin to see this isn't just about God's the sun's life being our light understanding who we are as creatures. It's about he's invading the darkness to bring us light again.

yes he is responsible for our existence and in that way yes he's our light but the plain fact of it is we rejected that light. All of us from way back in the beginning with Adam and Eve to right here with us we ignore the fact that we are creatures dependent upon God.

Adam and Eve freely ate from the tree of life. they were enjoying God's gracious gift of life and existence. They walked in the light of his life enjoying the direct and unshielded glory of his presence as we were meant to.

[31:05] They enjoyed him through his good gifts they walked in his light but then they listened to the one who can disguise himself as an angel of light. He promised that they didn't need God's light they could create their own.

Satan's dismal lie tells us that we don't need the one from whom all life and light come. We can be our own life we can be our own light we can create our own reality where we are like God but that is like telling a branch that it can cut itself off from the trunk and plant itself as its own tree.

It is a self-inflicted sentence of death and so we became creatures of darkness as Paul says in Romans 1 our foolish hearts were darkened as we declared our independence from our source of life and light and we no longer knew him.

Like a rebellious planet breaking free from its orbit around its life giving sun we hurtled into the outer darkness of cold and empty space where only death and destruction lurk.

But just as God in the beginning expressed himself through his word and gave light to banish the darkness he expressed himself again in the person of his word to be our light and to shine again in the midst of our darkness.

[32:36] Jesus' birth was the dawning of another creation work a new creation the light and life giving sun drew near to its rebellious planet the uncreated life and light of the word is not only our only source of existence but also our only hope of redemption and renewed relationship with God.

As Jesus would later say in the gospel of John I am the light of the world all those who follow me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

Look down at verses 12 and 13 to all who did receive him who recognized the light and who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man but of God.

Only those who receive and embrace the light of the unique person of the word by faith can be restored to a new kind of existence a new birth born again into a new life that only the word can bring.

And that light started shining into the darkness and it created a conflict. The darkness would try its best to overcome the light of the person of the word. Even as a baby his life was plotted against by Herod.

[33:59] Satan brought out custom made temptations to bring him down in the desert. Religious leaders planned his downfall that eventually they succeeded in doing.

The light of the world was extinguished in shame and in despair on a Roman crucifixion stake.

Darkness had succeeded. But in the end the only thing that darkness had succeeded in doing was sealing its doom.

For the light that it had extinguished exploded again into a blaze of resurrection brilliance that would never go out. And that light still shines in the darkness.

darkness because the word that was made flesh, the word that gave life, it's his life for his own, is the word that rose bodily from the grave and who can never die again.

All those who recognize his light, who see Jesus for who he truly is, and who embrace him by faith, who draw near to the light and walk in it, they have the promise of eternal life.

[35:02] So this is the baby in the manger. He is our only hope of light and life. He is the person of the word.

He is the one who has made the father known. He's our doctor piston. He has introduced us to God long after we have forgotten him.

He is God's perfect self expression to us because he not only was with God in the beginning but he shares God's very being. And he is the creator himself. He is the one through whom all things came into being.

He is our life, the light who not only gave us created life but offers us eternal life in the light that continues to shine unconquered in the darkness. So how do we respond to this?

We must recognize him first of all. We must recognize that there is no one like him. He is the one and only true word of God, God's perfect communication to us in a person.

[36:11] He is the God man. He is the only way we can truly know God and be rescued from the darkness of our sin. Everything revolves around him.

So do you recognize him today? God's God. You cannot recognize him and receive him with a yawn. He demands our full and undivided attention.

There is no one like him. You must either acknowledge him fully or reject him utterly but you can't ignore him. Secondly, we must embrace him by faith.

it doesn't matter whether you've heard about Jesus all your life or for the first time once you recognize him your only hope is to embrace him fully by faith at the end of John's gospel we read the reason he wrote it he writes I wrote these things down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and by believing you may have life in his name there is no life apart from embracing this unique person by faith the one who became human as God to die for your sins so that you could have life if you have not embraced Jesus by faith move toward him today talk to somebody here whether it's an elder or pastor down here at front at the end of the service or someone next to you but respond he's your only hope of light and life and for the Christians in the room let me remind you that that life that we receive in his name it's not just a future hope it is a present reality it's a dynamic relationship with God in Christ through the spirit's powerful presence at work in us

I don't know about you but it's really easy for me to get up in the morning and to start thinking about God as if he's math class distant boring unknowable maybe even threatening just this last week I had this happen and honestly it was this passage that God used to pull me out of it to behold the fresh wonder of who God has revealed himself to be in the person the unique person of his son so dwell on the person in the manger this week remind yourself of who became flesh for you remind yourself of your utter dependence upon him for life and for light that is how we continue to embrace this unique person who is our light in our life now and he will be forever and lastly we must not only recognize him not only embrace him by faith but we must adore him this is this isn't much different from embracing him by faith because faith leads to adoration behold him in the manger as the incarnated word behold him as the God man

[39:14] God's perfect self-expression when we see him we see God so we must behold him and be in awe of him behold him not only in the manger but also in his work on the cross in the empty tomb the light who gave himself for us and rose again to shine forever as our only hope of life so behold him too as your only true future hope he's the thing we count on church in the heavenly city there's no sun there's no moon the lamb himself is our light both now and forever so come let us adore him let's pray father you revealed yourself to us you made yourself known to us through the person of the word Jesus Christ father would you fill our eyes fresh with faith help us to see again help us not only to recognize him but to embrace him to have life in his name to depend upon him throughout the week as our life and our light help us Lord not to walk in darkness but to walk in the light of life help us Lord to see so we may adore you and have joy in you in Christ's name we pray

Amen haste Have a nice day moment flowers we pray for God who parece to see God who loves you and how are we our light Good we pray we pray them our hope we pray thank you for being helpful folksisches Do me this we pray we pray good ma pa■stwo