

Our Prayer for 2020

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning is the first Sunday in 2020. The chapter of our lives called 2019 has been written and it is complete.

We no longer have the opportunity to add anything to it. And we cannot change what has happened in the past. It's in the past. Just as I wondered if you've taken time to reflect on 2019, I wonder if you've taken time to think about this year ahead.

Some of you may or may not be into making resolutions and that kind of thing. Have you taken time to think about not only how the past year went, but how you'd like this next whole year to go? What are the things that you hope to see in 2020? What are your greatest longings for this year ahead?

My hope and my prayer is that as we come to the Lord's word this morning, that he will give us a bit of a vision for what we can long for and pray for and strive for in this coming year.

[1 : 16] We ended last year, 2019, by looking at the glorious truth of who this baby was in the manger.

He was the son who was with God and was God at the very beginning. He became flesh. He became one of us.

And he lived among us. He was in our world. And even though the world was made through him, John says the world did not recognize him.

We're at the beginning of the story here, as we look at John's account of the story of Jesus. And there's a couple of things that John wants to make clear, just as if you were asked to tell someone about something, before you tell them the story, there's a couple of things that I just want to say here at the beginning and make clear before we get into it.

That's what John is doing here. And he's already made clear for us that the story of Jesus did not begin in the womb of Mary. No, Jesus is the word who was with God and was God even before everything in our world was made.

[2 : 43] And he became flesh. He came, he lived among us. And there's more that John wants to make clear. There's a couple other things that John wants to say before he gets into telling the story of Jesus.

And one of those things is that comes to us in verse 14. And I'll read it for us this morning. Verse 14 to 18.

If you have your Bible, feel free to open it up to John chapter 1. If you're in the pew Bibles, the black hardcover in front of you, that's page 860.

John 1 verses 14. John writes, The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory.

The glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father. Full of grace and truth. John testified concerning him.

[3 : 52] He cried out saying, This is the one I spoke about when I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.

Out of his fullness, we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father has made him known.

So what else does John want to make clear to us before he gets into telling the story of Jesus? This one, the word, the light, the life, the one who became flesh, he was in the world.

He came into our world and he lived among us. But the world on the whole did not recognize him, says John. But even though on the whole the world did not recognize him, John says this in verse

14.

[5 : 03] He says, we have seen his glory. We have seen his glory. It's past tense.

Literally, we saw his glory. I want you to imagine for a moment that John is here with us this morning, that he's the guest speaker. You can kind of do it up in your imagination however you want.

And whether we go back in time to his time where he kind of appears to us here in the future and he's here today to tell us the story of Jesus, to tell us what he saw.

And he looks you in the face and he says to you, we saw his glory. To which we're all thinking, well, tell us, John.

What did you see? What did you see of his glory? Tell me. Tell me the story. You claim to have seen it. What did you see?

[6 : 09] What is John doing here? He's whetting our appetites for what's to come. He's about to tell us the story. But he wants us to listen closely because there is something to see here that is amazing, that many missed about Jesus, about this one.

We saw his glory. We didn't just see a guy who was just another man. We saw his glory. The glory of the one and only son who came from the Father, says John.

And he gives us a bit of a trailer, a bit of a teaser as to some of what he saw. He said, we saw his glory, the glory of the one and only son who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

We saw how he was full of grace and full of truth. And I hope right now what we're thinking is, John, tell me, how was he full of grace?

How was he full of truth? What did you see? What did he say? What did he do that brought you to write this? John's going to tell us as he goes on in the gospel.

[7 : 35] He's going to tell us what he saw of Jesus' glory and how he was full of grace and truth. Those two words, grace and truth, John, he picks them up again down in verse 17.

The last half of verse 17, John says this. He says, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. He's making a little bit of a different point here using the same two words.

The first point he made was that Jesus is full of grace and truth. He has these qualities. But now here in verse 17, he's saying grace and truth come through Jesus Christ.

And we're not going to get into all the details of this verse here, but he's comparing Jesus to Moses in verse 17. For the law was given through Moses. The law, God's law, was given, and this is implied, to people through Moses.

Grace, however, grace and truth, God's grace and God's truth came and again implied to people through Jesus Christ.

[8 : 54] So it's both. He is full of grace and truth in himself as a person. The Lord Jesus is. But he has also come into our world to offer us something.

To give us something. To give us God's grace and God's truth. What does John say in verse 16?

He says, out of his fullness we have all received grace. This is not just grace and truth for us to see and look at.

This is grace and truth for us to receive and to take for ourselves. Just as the law was given through Moses so that the people could have it in the same way.

God is giving his grace his generosity his gift his blessing his truth to people and it's coming through his son Jesus Christ.

[10 : 00] How does it work? How do we get it? How do we receive it for ourselves? Again, John is whetting our appetite so that as we go on in the story we can look for that.

How do we get this grace from God and this truth? The last thing that John wants to make clear before he gets into the story of Jesus comes in verse 18.

He says this no one has ever seen God but the one and only son who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the father has made him known.

No one has ever seen God says John and the way he says this is quite emphatic it's no one has seen God ever.

Now those of you who know your Bible well might be a little puzzled by that expression. Maybe you can think of a time or two back in the Old Testament where it seems as though someone saw God.

[11 : 12] One of those times was Jacob. Jacob a man appeared to him one night and he wrestled with that man and at the end of this wrestling with this man the man said you have wrestled with God and Jacob at the end of that whole encounter he named the place and he said this he said

because I saw God face to face and yet my life was spared.

So it seems as though Jacob saw God in one sense though it was in the appearance of a man. Abraham also if we remember back to our last series he had an encounter with God like this the three visitors came to him and one of them was the Lord himself in human form.

Abraham spoke to him face to face like he would to any other person. He offered him hospitality food to eat and drink and he bartered with him about Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham, Jacob and others had encounters with God like this where they saw God and God I guess appeared to them made himself known to them in human form took on the form of a human being and spoke to them.

Moses also in a sense saw God when he was kind of in the region of Sinai and during that time before they had entered the promised land it says this in Exodus 33 now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away and he called it the tent of meeting and he basically tells us that Moses would go out to this tent to meet with God and it says this in verse 11 of chapter 33 the Lord would speak to Moses face to face as one speaks to a friend so it seems from these examples that in at least some sense some people have seen God but in another sense in the sense that John means no one has ever seen

[13:52] God and I think one of the best examples of this is with Moses and it comes right after this it says that he spoke to Moses face to face as one speaks to a friend and then in the very next section the very next encounter that's described that Moses has with God this is what it says it says Moses he asked God for something he said show me your glory and the Lord agreed to his request the Lord said I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you and I will proclaim my name the Lord in your presence but the Lord said you cannot see my face for no one may see me and live so even though Moses had spoken to the

Lord face to face in one sense there was still a sense in which he had not seen the Lord's face not in not the Lord in the fullness of his glory the Lord said you can't see my face in the fullness of my glory and live and so what does the Lord do we kind of sang a song already that really ties in with this he hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock the Lord comes up with this arrangement so that he can show some of his glory to Moses the Lord said there's a place near me where you may stand on a rock when my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by then I will remove my hand and you will see my back but my face says the Lord must not be seen so there is a sense in which no one has ever seen God not in the fullness of his glory and there's two reasons at least why the first is owing to our own sinfulness we are sinners we are rebels God is holy he is righteous he is eager to bring justice and to do good and so we can only get so close you cannot see my face for no one may see me and live the second reason that we cannot see God is is owing to what one preacher referred to as our creaturely weakness we lack the capacity to do it

Jesus will tell us just a couple chapters later in John that God is spirit in Paul's letter to the Colossians he says for the sun is the image of the invisible God and again in 1st Timothy 1 verse 17 he is the invisible God God is spirit he is invisible we can't see him with our physical human eyes they don't have the capacity to see spirits and so in that sense no one has ever seen God and we might perhaps speculate a little bit that even if God was to make himself known in the fullness of his glory right in front of our faces we just we couldn't handle it the analogy that I kept thinking of as I was thinking through this was when we look at the sun maybe you have seen a sunrise or sunset or two with the short days that we have been having and you try to look at it and just take in the beauty of it but then you can only look so long before you start to see funny as you look around at everything else if you stare too long at the sun it will do permanent damage to your eyes we weren't meant to look right at it our eyes aren't made for that they're made to see everything else in the light of the sun in the same way if we were to come face to face with the fullness of God's glory he would be too bright dare I say we'd be incinerated we weren't made to handle to take in all of who he is right there face to face not with these bodies not as we are and so in those senses in the sense of the fullness of

[18:59] God's glory no one has ever seen God we can't because of our sin because of our creaturely weakness and incapacity but here's the good news that John writes he says but the one and only son has made him known this is the good news that John wants us to know even before we get going in the story this one this guy Jesus the Christ he has come into our world to make the unseeable one known to us so that in a sense we might see him so that we might know him in a

way that we otherwise couldn't the prophets they were only so good what they were able to communicate and reveal about

God but the son is able to make God known in a way that the prophets couldn't even hold a candle to what does John say the one and only son who is himself God he's not just a man he is himself God and is in closest relationship with the father because of that close relationship the son has with the father he's able to make known who God is to us in a way that we never could have before and so again John is whetting our appetites as we're about to move forward and work through the gospel of John and the weeks and months ahead what are we looking to see what are we hoping to find there we're hoping to see as John did the glory of the son we're hoping to know

God better because that's why he's come to make God known and so as we journey through the gospel of John in the weeks ahead I want you to imagine that these words are in one sense the same as having John with us here as a guest speaker if you were to ask him so what did you see this is what he would say and as we ask those questions tell me more tell me more this is what he would say and I hope and I pray that as we work through this series that we will see the glory of Jesus in a way that's deeper than we ever have before that we'll get to know God better as I was thinking about this started to think that's really a good desire to have not just for

Sunday mornings when we come to listen to the word but perhaps that could be our desire our longing our big resolution our big hope and dream for this year we've just crossed the threshold from 2019 into 2020 I don't know about you but I have hopes for this year ahead I have dreams I have things that I'm longing for in my own life and in our church in this community and my family in my relationships with people but what is that thing that I should long for most what's that one thing that I should ask God for more than anything else the thing that is supremely valuable that will make all the difference in this year what's the thing that I want to look back on 2020 as being the year that that happened I want to look back on 2020 and remember it is the year that

I saw just as John did the glory of Jesus in a deeper way than I ever had before I want to remember 2020 is the year that I got to know God in sweeter deeper more precious ways than I had known him before and I'm crazy enough to believe that if we make that our great longing our great prayer request for the year that every other area of our lives will be affected as well our marriages will be changed our parenting will be affected our relationships with other people that are broken that are struggling will be affected our work will be affected when we catch a glimpse of God's beauty of his glory

[24 : 16] I'm crazy enough to believe that every area of our lives will change for the better in all those little resolutions and ways that we hope as well so I want to invite you along with myself to make this your prayer for the whole year for 2020 this this that this would be our church prayer the prayer that Moses prayed Lord show me your glory this year 2020 help me know you better I want to know you I want to see your glory let's pray that now Lord Jesus we read these pages some of us many times we don't want to read them again and just see nothing just see the same old story that we've read

Lord we want to see your glory we want to be captivated by your beauty by your grace by your truth we want to know what we otherwise couldn't about God because of what you said and did and so we pray and ask that this would be a year that we would be captivated by you Lord we don't want to be as the story of this year captivated by the light that comes out of our phone screens or televisions we want to be captivated by the light that comes out of your glorious radiance and presence the light that we see through your son Jesus the image of you the invisible so work in our hearts give us eyes to see give us ears to hear help us to to be faithful in those those good habits that you have given us in order to be able to see and know you more to be in our our Bibles to be in prayer this year to be in fellowship with one another this year we have great longings and great hopes but we do believe that they will all be met in you Lord we dedicate this year to you to knowing you to seeing your glory for the glory of your name and for the glory of Jesus Amen me you you you