

# PM John 1:1-18

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Date: 03 January 2021

Preacher: Rev David Parker

[ 0 : 00 ] Well I'm sure you've remembered that my name is David Parker conducting the service for you this evening and we want to welcome everyone to our service and to say that Wednesday prayer meeting will be at seven o'clock led by Mr William Kenyon and it will be a missionary prayer meeting and the missionary prayer notes for January 2021 have been forwarded by email if anyone cannot access email and would like to have a copy copy please mention it to Norman as mentioned last week the deacons court felt that it would be appropriate for the congregation to be given opportunity to make donations towards the costs of eradication of dry rot please put any gifts in the collection box in an envelope marked fabric fund a brief summary financial statement for the year ended 31st of December 2020 is available on the central table and the next Lord's Day service service at 11am usual times 6pm and Mr Thompson Mackenzie will be presiding God willing over that service we're going to begin our service then by listening to Psalm 119 it's from Sing Psalms service and it's part 14 it's on page 163 your words a lamp that shines before my feet it is a light that guides me on my way it is a light that guides me on my way it is a light that guides me on my way it is a light that guides me on my way

The life that I see on my grid, the hope that I have taken I confer, that for your righteousness I will give.

O how you know that my unsuffered blood, preserve my life according to your birth, and set the way, raises all my heart.

In South King, your righteous loss, O Lord. I will not disdain my true holy Lord, though constantly I'm like this in my hands.

Although the wicked send us there for me, I have not left the path of your romance.

[ 4 : 00 ] Your statutes are my heritage always, and every day in my heart rejoice.

My heart is set on keeping your degrees, so to the very end they are my choice.

Let's say, come before God. Heavenly Father, we pray that we would have a heart for you.

That we would have a heart for your word and your holy laws. Help us, Lord, and give us the strength to embrace you, to trust in you, and to follow you.

Lord, we thank you that we are able to come before you, Lord. Lord, you're a God who is near at hand, not a God who is afar off. Because, Lord, through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, you've drawn near to us.

[ 5 : 39 ] Truly God with us. And, Lord, you come and dwell in our hearts. So, Lord, you're not far from us, and yet you are the glorious God.

The everlasting. The God who is past finding out. The God that no one has seen, as John mentions in the first chapter of his gospel.

But Jesus Christ has declared him. Jesus could say, he that has seen me, has seen the Father.

Lord God, we bow before you.

We offer up our worship to you. We seek to follow the sentiments of the carol. Oh, come, let us adore him. You cannot be likened to anything or anyone, Lord.

You are not part of this created order or creation. You alone are the holy other.

[ 7 : 05 ] And the great God. And so, Heavenly Father, we bow before you. We come to you, Lord, and we say, our greatest need is that you might give us your grace and your spirit.

Lord, Lord, and that you might be the people that you would love us to be. And that you might, Lord, enable us to respond to that great work.

My child, give me your heart. And as C.S. Lewis once said, help it be the real me that comes before God in prayer.

And also help me come to the real God. Deliver us, Lord, from having a form of godliness. But may your spirit, Lord, be transforming us from within.

Lord, remember all those in need. We think of Jack who has been diagnosed with the coronavirus. [ 8 : 34 ] And we just bring him before you, Lord. And Lord, we pray that your will would be done in his life.

And we pray for his wife and perhaps any other family that he has. We pray, O God, that whatever the outcome of this virus in his life, that you would be with him at this time.

And that he would know your presence and your comfort and your healing. And Lord, for those that are unable to join with us this evening, but would love to be here, but cannot because of valid reasons, we just remember them before you as well, Lord.

And we thank you that you're not limited, Lord, in any way to a building. But all of us who have fled for refuge to the hope in Jesus Christ are part of your body, the body of Christ.

Minister then, Lord, to all those, whether in this building or in their home or in some other place.

Therefore, Lord, we just look to you and we pray that your spirit might be among us, guiding us and drawing near to us and teaching us from that word for your glory.

[ 10 : 27 ] We ask all these things with the forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Originally, I had thought of reading from Genesis, but I'm going to read from the book of Proverbs first, in chapter 8.

And I don't know if you've got this Bible the same as mine, but if you do have it, it's on page 641.

And what I want you to notice as we're reading Proverbs 8 is how wisdom is personified.

I want you to notice that as we read some verses from Proverbs chapter 8.

Picking up the reading at verse 12, and there's the personification instantly. I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.

The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil, pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. I have counsel and sound wisdom.

[ 11 : 57 ] I have insight. I have strength. By me, kings reign and rulers decree what is just. By me, princes rule and nobles, all who govern justly.

I love those who love me. And those who seek me diligently find me. Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness.

My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness and the paths of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me and filling their treasuries.

And now as we read from verse 22, notice that this personified wisdom now takes us to another dimension in suggesting to us that they have been with the Lord.

The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

[ 13 : 12 ] When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth.

Before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there.

When he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him, always rejoicing in his inhabited world, and delighting in the children of men.

So, keeping that in mind for this evening, and then we move to the New Testament, John's Gospel, and we're just going to read verses 1 to 5.

John's Gospel, chapter 1, verses 1 to 5, on page 1068. In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[ 14 : 59 ] He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him, wasn't anything made, that was made, or that has come into existence.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Amen. May the Lord add his own blessing, then, to the reading of his Word. Now, if we now listen to our second psalm, from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 19, verses 1 to 6, and I think that's on page



not only for our redemption, but pastorally for our pilgrimage. Remember, it says that Jesus was touched in all points like as we are.

He's not only a faithful high priest, but a sympathetic high priest. And that's why Luke and Matthew have made sure that we get the picture, we get the message.

[ 24 : 50 ] He was a real human being. We could smelly sweat had we been there with him. We could see him tiring. We could see him being thirsty and dry.

We could observe him growing in wisdom. We have to, I believe anyway, get out of our heads that he's a trick.

What is, he's not really like us because he's God as well. Well, it's true that he's God as well, but every second of his life on this earth was a life that trusted in God and looked to God and got his, he said, the words I speak are not mine, they're God's.

I listened to the Father. He says, the works that I do, they're not mine, they're God's. Don't think that he had some sort of advantage. He didn't.

Certainly as a subject, as a person, he could not cease to be God even although he mysteriously became flesh. People have noticed how different John's Gospel is to the other three Gospels and how it starts so differently.

[ 26 : 20 ] And they've noted that John's ideas here, our English translates this word, the Greek word, and you'll have heard of it, is logos.

That's the Greek word. There used to be a ship that came to, when we lived in Edinburgh, that came to the Leith area. And I remember our daughter, I've got three daughters, and I remember Sarah with her friend in Edinburgh.

going to this ship and they were going to be missionaries and so on and so on. But it hasn't happened yet, but who knows. But, yeah. So, this is the word that John is using, logos.

Now, we don't really know the date of this Gospel, but it's probably between something like very late 60s and right up to nearly the end of the century.

we don't really have a precise date. But what we do know is that since Alexander the Great in 330 BC, since he put Greek into all of that Mediterranean basin, that Greek ideas were in the air all the time.

[ 27 : 39 ] and certainly there's nothing surer than this, that the Stoics, a group of philosophers called Stoics, very much used that idea of logos.

and they used the idea of logos to say that it was the rational principle that was pervaded throughout the world and that people had to try and order their life in accordance with this rational principle.

So, some people wonder, you know, did John get his idea from these currents of Greek thought? and is he trying to address partly an audience that is familiar with those concepts?

Other Greek thinkers would argue that John did not need those to draw and use those Greek concepts.

I've just read Proverbs 8 to you and I've just said to you that wisdom is personified and I've just said to you that wisdom there, read it again when you go home in chapter 8, I've just said to you that the wisdom speaks there in this personified way as the entity or whatever you want to say that was with God at the beginning and that was involved in creation and so there are other books that are not within our Bible or within our canon called apocryphal books and some of these other books also go down the road of that theme that we read in Proverbs 8 so people say ah probably we don't need to go to any

[ 29 : 53 ] Greek ideas he got his ideas right out of the Old Testament literature now nobody can be absolutely certain I obviously would lean to the he got from the Old Testament corpus of literature that was around at that time but what I will say to you is this if there's any truth in the idea that he uses this concept to try and make his gospel a bit more intelligible to his audience then there's a lesson that we can learn from them we don't live in the 16th century or the 18th or the 19th or the 20th we live in the 21st century and not only do we need to use language that is easily digestible and intelligible to people but we need to understand the language that people use what I mean by that is we need to understand what matters to those people out there what is the bread and butter of their thinking and of their priorities values and of their values and so on because it's just like going out to fight a battle if you don't know anything about the enemy you're sure to lose so we need to know who we're trying to reach

Paul said I became all things to all people that I might save some to the Jew he says I became a Jew to the Gentile I became a Gentile missionaries that go out predicate their whole vision on think of Hudson Taylor what did he do he ate like the Chinese he dressed like the Chinese he lived like the Chinese and we read that book and say that's wonderful that's wonderful but we wouldn't be willing to change anything in our own town in our own church in our own setting okay these believe believe it or not were my introductory comments I now want to move forward and talk about the remote origins of

Jesus Christ because the creeds not only tell us that he was a human being but they tell us that he was also God have we got any good reason for believing that and there is no more explicit statement for the deity of Christ than what is found before you this evening in John's gospel chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 and I want to go through it with you I want you to notice in framing those profound truths by the way let me just say this to all of us here tonight anybody who thinks they understand the truths I'm about to share with you tonight doesn't really understand anything these are mysteries these are paradoxes these are truths that are too massive for the greatest brain that has ever lived on the planet whether that's

Einstein Mozart or anybody else but I want you to notice this in framing the profound truths that we're going to look at John uses nouns simple verbs conjunction definite article and prepositions to convey the most profound thought and ideas concerning God and concerning Jesus Christ John takes us back to the beginning not simply the beginning of creation as in Genesis that's the first thing I want you to notice when we read the opening sentence the line in the first page of the Bible in the beginning God created that's about the origin of the universe of creation clearly John probably has that statement in mind but he's not talking about the creation his in the beginning is about something rather different in the beginning he says was the word he means the word already was there the word already existed so John takes us beyond space and time in this sentence in the beginning was the word it's interesting that this is his first utterance of this majestic gospel you may have thought he might have said in the beginning was

[ 35 : 48 ] God but he doesn't he says in the beginning was the word and I want you to notice that he repeats this thought in verse 2 he was in the beginning with God in other words as he reaches beyond space and time as he reaches into the mists of eternity he says the word was always there and I want you to notice this in verse 2 it's actually what's called a demonstrative pronoun sorry for getting technical there but I want you to notice this this business of he was in the beginning with

God another way you could put it because the pronoun is right at the beginning of that line in the original language what it's saying is this one this word that I'm talking about make no mistake about it it's emphatic he was in the beginning with God that's the force of that demonstrative pronoun there he was in the beginning with God the word like God has always existed there was a man in the third or fourth century we all learned about it when we went to do our theology well it's not called the free church college now but it was called the free church college when I was there in the 90s and when you do your church history we learned about this man called

Arius and a famous saying of Arius regarding Jesus Christ was this there was when he was not there was when he was not now that was a heresy and a heretical statement especially in the light of John 1 verses 1 to 2 the truth is that there never was when he was not because he has always existed from the beginning here is a fundamental of Christology and indeed of Christianity Jesus Christ's roots transcend both history and time and space but the truth is even more amazing Jesus isn't a second God that's not what John says is it he says and the word was God I remember a professor of theology when we were at the Free Church College in one of his lectures saying this to his students and I was there obviously as a student if we think of the Trinity not that we understand it or comprehend it never mind about that but if we think of the Trinity there's a great statement in the Old Testament and the Orthodox Jews have a thing on their head and in that little leather purse thing in their head is a quote from Deuteronomy what's the quote here Israel the Lord your God is one John is not saying that there's more than one God John is actually in a sense not just telling us something about Jesus Christ he's telling us something about God the being of God the God heads itself here therefore we have the real origin of our Saviour the remote origin of our Saviour is this not the carpenter's son yes do we not know his brothers and sisters yes but have

[ 41 : 13 ] I and if you look at the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are they genealogies of this real human being that stood on the sands of Galilee yes but have we exhausted his remote origins no

but the second point I want to explore with you is the relationship of the world within the being of God and notice what John says here in verse one and the word was with God how can the word be with God which suggests if I say to you my life is with me

I can't say I'm the wife as well you know or if you say my neighbour is with me the word with suggests a distinction and a difference and yet at the same time John says not only is the word with God but the word was God is your mind getting dizzy minds us but anyway we're asking the question what is the relationship of the world within the being of God and the relationship of the world is conveyed in that simple preposition I said at the beginning that the most profound truths John frames in simple nouns and verbs and prepositions and so on well here's one of them that word with means towards or beside but I do like

I like both but I think I like the meaning by the way language you know yourself words have what they call a range of meanings they don't just necessarily have one meaning but not only do words have a range of meaning they mean what they are used to mean language is not static it's dynamic the word was towards God isn't that beautiful in other words the being of God is a being that has diversity in unity within his being the son is not the father the father is not the son the picture is of two lovers gazing into each other's face and I think that is beautiful what we have here is that the word who is also the son is towards the father in a it's like a picture of

I'm absolutely enthralled by your will by your character and by your being and so equally is the father to the son and there is this dynamic of infinite love within the Godhead that is not inward but outward and I would say that in this vision that John gives us in chapter one we have a hint and more of a God that so loves that he wants to reach beyond his own being and to those who are lost and hopeless so that what binds those distinctions within the being of

God is the circle of eternal love a love that is always mutual and reciprocal and out flowing John tells us in his letters does he not God is love he that doesn't love his brother John says cannot love God how can you love God whom you how can you love God that you cannot see if you cannot even love your brother that you can see says John the love of God is the nucleus of our entire redemption the hymn writer could say do you know that hymn the wonderful hymn oh love that will not let me go

[ 47 : 27 ] I rest my weary head in thee I give thee back the life I owe so we've been trying to take a little glimpse at the remote origins of Jesus Christ and we've secondly tried to look at his relationship back there in eternity with the father and thirdly and finally I want to explore with you what I call the revelatory role of the word I've already quoted that if you're thinking what does he mean by that the revelatory role of the word right what I mean is this only to the extent that God is willing to reveal something about himself can we know anything about only if he's willing to engage if you like in self disclosure it's like we reveal something about ourselves when we begin to talk and we certainly reveal something about ourselves by our actions and inactions and we certainly reveal something about ourselves by the direction of our life and the idea of logos has within it revelation

John at the beginning of this gospel actually announces the themes that he further develops in the rest of the gospel such as life such as light such as the unique relationship of Jesus Christ to the father not least the revelatory role of Jesus he that has seen me has seen the father why Philip do you ask show us the father have I not been with you all those years Philip the entire life of Jesus is the revelation of God I'll say that again it's quite important the entire life of

Jesus is the revelation of God and there's no greater revelation that anyone on this planet will ever get that's it it's the full and final revelation necessary for us to know what we need to know in respect to our destiny and to God somebody once said there is nothing on Christ like in God and that's certainly true I want you to keep dwelling on that statement of Jesus he that has seen me has seen the father there's a well known philosopher called Wittgenstein Ludwig Wittgenstein I studied him that was my major at university the thing about Wittgenstein is he had three philosophies during his lifetime he was another genius and he came up with three seminal ideas that nobody had ever come up with before but here's the thing in one of his later philosophies instead of trying to rack one's brain and try to engage in the most incisive analysis here's what he said he had changed his mind look he said look he that has seen me have seen the father he he he has seen as we look at

Jesus we can say this is God this is the supreme love of God God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that one that looked towards him that whoever believes might not perish God didn't start loving us when Jesus came Jesus came because he loved us this is God supreme love

supreme sacrifice and supreme solidarity all people say you know these scholastic theologians oh God can't change he's impassable and all this sort of stuff oh the word and it's so powerful in the Greek *eginete* is the word became flesh and John he could have used he uses the word earlier on in this chapter before we get to verse 14 you know the word anthropology it's the study of human beings anthropology you can go and study it at university *anthropos* John could have said and the word became *anthropos* he had the word there he used it earlier on he didn't why he wants to get it into your heads that that word that looked toward God became flesh supreme mystery tis mystery all the immortal dies you see the paradox the immortal dies who can explore his strange design in vain the firstborn seraph tries to plumb the depths of love divine i am the way said Jesus the truth and the life no man comes unto the father but by me that's the verse that

[ 55 : 30 ] God used to bring me to Christ we've explored the remote origins of Jesus Christ the relationship that he had within the being of God and the revelatory role i finish with this his revelatory role i think can be summed up under two headings i've already mentioned one God this is God as we look on the cross this is God this is how far he's willing to go to bring the prodigals home but the second thing that Jesus is revealing is you and i and he's saying people today aren't they they're much concerned about their identity and there's a flurry of stuff at one point not so well a couple of months ago maybe or something like that i can't remember about all this stuff about gender there's something we shouldn't we shouldn't be too quick you know to immediately say oh look at that's mad isn't it and all this sort of stuff what we could maybe do is turn that to something positive and constructive and say it's normal to be wondering these are time immemorial great great questions who am i why do i exist is there a point to life is there any ultimate meaning or does death have the last laugh in all of us there's a story in the old testament i will finish with this i think it was it to Jacob and he he wanted a wife for his son Isaac and he sent his servant because he didn't want to Isaac to get a wife from the Canaanites he wanted Isaac to get a wife from his own kith and kin his own country and so on and he sent this servant to look for a wife and you'll know the story i'm sure and he found Rebecca and Laban i think might have posed the question but the question was to Rebecca will you go with this man and we heard this morning that we need to go to Jesus and i

finish my evening message in a sense with the same question will you go with this man whose remote origins are with God and the being of God and who has revealed him as the God that wants to draw us in to his everlasting warmth and everlasting love love will you go with him or will you ignore him may the Lord then bless these thoughts to each one of us for his own glory and our eternal good love so we are going to finish with the hymn loved with everlasting love love love with everlasting love let thy grace that love turn home gracious spirit from above thou hast taught me this song all this full and perfect peace all this transformed all divine in a love which cannot cease cease

I am his and he is mine in a love which cannot cease I am his and he is mine things that once swore wild alarms cannot now disturb thy rest closed in everlasting arms pillowed on his loving breast all to thee forever here doubt and cared and self resigned while he whispers in my ear

I am his and he is mine while he whispers in my ear I am his and he is mine his forever only his who the Lord and we shall part now with what rest on bliss Christ can fill the loving heart heaven and earth may fade and flee first born light in blue decline but will come and I shall be

I am his and he is mine but when God and I shall be I am his and he is love heavenly father we pray that you will help us Lord not to spurn that love that everlasting love a love that we would never have believed had we not been told and had you not come Lord to this earth in the person of

[ 64 : 41 ] Jesus Christ and told us about that love I have come to lay down my life a ransom for many how we thank you Lord for the hope of the gospel for the good news how we thank you that we are offered to come in to that eternal love of God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit one God may he be with us and may his love and grace and peace be upon each one of us both now and forever more Amen