The Abundant Grace Of God: The Incarnation

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0:00] I'll open up to Titus 2 as well as John 1. We'll be spending a significant portion of our time together in the Gospel of John.

So for several weeks, we have focused on the character of a healthy church, the need for older saints to lead through their example, the need for older saints to be helping equip and build up the younger saints, the need for social distinctions to be disregarded as it relates to the way we live our lives to the glory of God.
It does not matter who you are, what you do, you are called to live your life to honor and glorify God.
For the month of December, we'll be focusing on the reason for the character of a healthy church to be so distinct. This reason is found in the final verses of Titus 2 and relates to the abundant grace of God.
As I was considering what to share today, I found that I had outlined and outlined far too deep to go through in one sermon.
[1:27] And as I was discussing it with my wife the other day, I decided that there is enough to actually give you four sermons.

So we will be taking the next four weeks. And as I like to focus on an area, like focus on something particular for the Christmas season, the Advent season, it's only appropriate that God has led us to the book of Titus the last 16 times we've been together.
And we'll continue for the next four and beyond that, because we're only going to get to the end of chapter 2, the end of this, by the time Christmas rolls around.
But I'm thankful for God's timing, because of the passage that we're going to be dissecting and looking at in depth the next few weeks is so important and is so appropriate for this time of year.
So today we'll focus on the abundant grace of God in the incarnation. So let's read verses 11 through 14 together from Titus 2.
[2:39] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.

Father, I thank you for this passage of Scripture. Lord, help us to understand the depth and richness that it contains. Amen.
As we look at the abundant grace of God in the incarnation, I want to kind of take it a couple phrases here to focus on this morning, or one phrase, well, two phrases, I guess.
First is this. The grace of God. The grace of God. Grace is, by definition, God's unmerited favor towards sinners.
It is to receive what we do not deserve. In 2 Samuel 9, there's the account of Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, who could not walk right because he was lame, but he was invited to eat at the king's table.
[4:14] That is grace. It's being invited to a banquet with no reservations needed, simply because of who you are to the king.

Mephibosheth would rightly be considered an enemy of David, being a descendant of Saul and a potential threat to the throne. Yet he was lame. He was living in a household that was not his father's house.
And David, on account of Jonathan and his friendship with Jonathan, extended kindness to Mephibosheth. He restored to him all the land of his grandfather Saul, and he invited him to always eat at David's table.

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That is a tremendous invitation and an act of grace by David toward Jonathan's son. And in much the same way, God's grace is extended to us.
I turn your attention to Romans 5. I didn't tell you to turn there. It would be helpful if you did. But Romans 5, verses 6 through 10, keeping in mind the example of David and Mephibosheth Mephibosheth and the idea of grace, come to Romans 5, verse 6.
[5:38] Paul writes, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
Notice, as Mephibosheth could have been seen as an enemy of David and a threat to his throne, David was still gracious and loving and inviting him to eat at his table and giving him all the land of his grandfather.
In much the same way, God, as we are enemies to him, sent his Son to die on our behalf in order to stretch a hand of reconciliation to us, to pay the penalty for our sin, that we may be reconciled with him.
[7:01] And we cannot forget the fact that by nature we are enemies of God. James 4.4 says, Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

By nature, we are friends of the world. That is what we are born into and how we live our lives. Ephesians 2 verses 1 through 3 says, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
Paul writing to the church at Ephesus says, This is who you were. Before you came to Christ, you were of the world, you walked in the world, and you did what pleased yourself and your flesh.
You were a friend of the world, you were an enemy of God. And as the enemy of God, we are deserving of death and punishment. We are children of wrath, Ephesians tells us.
But, God's mercy, and by God's mercy, he held back what is deserved. That is what mercy is. It is withholding the rightful punishment.
[8:34] It is withholding what you rightly deserve, and grace is giving you what you don't deserve. And by God's mercy and grace, we have been turned from being enemies of God to now being children of God.

The greatest expression of God's grace is made known in the next phrase of Titus 2, 11, where it says, The grace of God has appeared.
It has appeared. That phrase moves us from the divine attribute of God's grace to the divine person of God's grace, Jesus Christ.
It says that he has appeared. That is a reference to the incarnation. That is a reference to Bethlehem and being born to Mary. As I've already asked you to do, I hope you're already prepared to turn to John 1, because now we're going to spend a lot of time in the Gospel of John.
John 1, we read in verse 14. So the prologue to the Gospel of John is chock full of a lot of information. We'll get to it ourselves sometime.
[9:59] There's a lot there, so we have to skip the first 13 verses, not because they're not important or applicable, but just because there's so much there. And I want to get to the point here. John 1, verse 14, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word. As a phrase, that's a title given in John 1, 1 for Jesus. In the beginning was the Word. And the Apostle John, in his writing here of the Gospel, makes his case that Jesus is God. And as the Word, He became flesh and He dwelt among us.
What an amazing concept. God choosing to take on human flesh. The One who created mankind and provided the most perfect of environments for Him to live in the Garden of Eden.

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The One who gave the opportunity for mankind to show love to God by living in obedience. The One who stood by and watched as His once perfect creation became corrupt through an act of disobedience.
[11:22] The One who watched His creation become increasingly more sinful through acts of evil and constantly rejecting their Creator. That One, who was there from the beginning and witnessed this all, chose to take on human flesh and dwell among His creation.

And what an account of His coming. We get the next several weeks to focus on it particularly. But Luke 1.31, And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus.
The announcement given to Mary by the angel. Or Matthew 1.20 and 21, An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
She will bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins. What an account. What an experience.
experience. And as miraculous and warm, fuzzy-ish as the Christmas story is in showing just how the Word became flesh, there's a simple fact that remains.
[12:48] One verse, I think, that may stand head and shoulders above the rest as we consider the incarnation of Jesus. And that is Colossians 2.9.

For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. Jesus is 100% God.
He is the Creator God. He is our Redeemer God. He is the Just Judge God. He is the one to whom we must give an account of ourselves at the end of our lives when we stand before Him.
So back to John 1. Why did He take on flesh? Well, let's read verses 17 and 18. It says, For the law was given through Moses.
Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.
[14:05] So why did He take on flesh? Verse 17 tells us to deliver grace and truth. Well, to deliver grace. That's what we read about in Titus, right?

Titus chapter 2. Verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared. And that's what we're told here in John 1. That He was, that Jesus, the Word, took on flesh to deliver grace and truth.
As we know, Israel, God's people, through whom the Messiah came, Jesus, Jesus was a Jew. Israel had been under the law for over 1,400 years when God gave it to Moses on Mount Sinai.
He gave it to Moses on Mount Sinai. 1,400 years they had the law of Moses. And while these were His, God's expected rules for His, for His people, they still didn't carry Him out.
They still didn't live by the law. And that was the point, really, was to show that they couldn't do it. But there was still the expectation to strive to do it.
[15:18] But Jesus, in John 7, verse 19, He sets the people straight. He says, Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law.

He points it out. He says, You've had the law 1,400 years, but none of you have kept it. And because they couldn't keep it, because they couldn't keep God's laws and live in obedience to Him, they became enslaved to sin.
Galatians 3, 22, the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin. I'm going to mention that again because that word sticks out. The Scripture imprisoned everything under sin.
So it is not just the Jewish people who, as sinners, are now imprisoned and enslaved to sin. No, no. We are all held guilty and accountable for our transactions against God, for our disobedience.
Romans 3, 23 says, All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And since the law is only good to render people helpless and showing their hopelessness in obtaining righteousness, it was necessary for the word to take on flesh, to dwell among His people, to deliver grace and truth, and to establish the new covenant.
[16:52] Which, as we were reading earlier, as we were taking communion, we read there in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 24 or 25, this cup is my blood of the new covenant, or this cup is the cup of the new covenant which is in my blood.

That's what Jesus says. And Hebrews 8, verse 13 says, In speaking of a new covenant, He, God, makes the first one obsolete.
And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. So the new covenant replaces the old covenant, and the old covenant is the law of Moses given on Mount Sinai, which

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Israel had for 1400 years, which Jesus by being born and living among men, His own creation, could then go to the cross and be the propitiation, the redeemer, the sacrifice.
He paid the penalty for our sin by taking on flesh. So He took on flesh to bring grace and truth to us. to establish a new covenant with God.
Verse 18 of John 1 tells us that no one has ever seen God, the only God, another variant there in the text might say the only son or the only one who is God, who is at the Father's side, He's made Him known.
[18:22] So Jesus took on flesh and lived among His creation to explain the Father, to make Him known. That phrase, He is made known, it comes from the Greek word exerkemi, which means nothing to you, but it's very, very important when you understand that it means to expound or to present.

We get our word, our English word exegesis from it, and that is what a good Bible teacher does with the text of Scripture. They exegete it.
They expound it. If you go to a church and they say, no, we practice exegesis here, not that anyone has ever said that to anyone who's walked through the doors here, but let's just pretend that happens.
That's good. That's a church you want to be a part of, hopefully, because what exegesis is, it's explaining the text of Scripture. It's drawing from the text of Scripture truth and application, whereas if you go to other, there are other churches that practice exegesis, and exegesis you just want to leave because their hearts are cold ice, far from God because what they're doing is they're imposing on the text of Scripture.
They're putting onto the text of Scripture what they think it means, and so the meaning of Scripture is whatever you think it means, whatever you feel it means, and please, if you ever find yourself in a Bible study and they say, well, how do you feel about this?
[19:54] What does this mean to you? Please stand up and walk out because it's not what it doesn't mean to you, it's what God intended to mean for you. What is its intention? What does it mean?

So Jesus exegetes the Father. I'm going to go back to John 14, verses 8-11, as that gives even more depth to understanding that.
John 14, verse 8, Philip, I love Philip. Philip. Philip said to him, said to Jesus, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.
And Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? whoever has seen me has seen the Father.
How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.
[21:06] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Philip wanted to see the Father.

And Jesus explained to him that anyone who has seen him has already seen the Father because that was his job. That was his duty by taking on flesh and dwelling among his creation.
It was to exegete the Father. It was to explain him. It was to make him known to his people and to his creation. And finally, one more thing that he does by taking on flesh and dwelling among his creation, one thing that the incarnation does is it offers a choice.
Jesus came to offer a choice back in John 1 verse 10 and 11. And he was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.
He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. So the world did not know Jesus and his own people did not receive him.
[22:25] They were ignorant. They were blind and in darkness. John 3 verse 19 says that the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

people. They didn't love Jesus because they loved what they were doing. They loved their evil works. They loved their world. They loved what their flesh desired and what they fed to it.
They loved doing whatever they wanted to do so long as it wasn't having to please God and give up what they want to do. And it was not that they did not have enough proof of who Jesus was.
It was that they rejected what was offered to them. In John 12 verse 37 though he had done so many signs before them they still did not believe in him.

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When you have conversations with people today they might say oh well if only I could see him or if I could see him heal this person and do this tremendous miracle I would believe.
[23:27] And the fact is there were people there who saw it all. Jesus' own half brothers saw everything he did and up until the time of the cross they didn't believe.

So it's not that people didn't have enough proof it's that that proof isn't the issue. It's the heart of man. Choosing to reject and not believe because the proof is abundant.
The evidence is significantly abundant. but men love darkness rather than light. So they reject him.
And if it came down to having to see the resurrected Jesus well there were a bunch who saw him and still didn't believe. Matthew 28 16. So it's not about what you see because seeing is not believing.
So there are those who rejected him. But John 1 12 and 13 But to all who did receive him 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 of the will of man but of God.
[24:55] They were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God. We have no say in it.

In the new birth it's all of God. Salvation is all his. Those who chose to come to the light and let their evil deeds be exposed were given the opportunity to be the children of God.
And he gave them new life. Galatians 3 26 For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. Through faith in Christ you are a child.
You are a son or daughter of God. 1 John 3 verse 23 And this is his commandment that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he has commanded us.
So when we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ we are also to love one another. Now we are getting back into the distinctives. We are talking about the character of a healthy church.
[26:01] That is one aspect, major aspect of the character of a healthy church. The love the church has for one another. That there is no fighting and bickering and arguing and getting under each other's skin and trying to, you know, I don't know, have a revolt or whatever.

It's that we are a body of Christ. We are united together. There is mutual love and agreement in Christ. 1 John 5 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.
The abundant grace of God is made evident through the incarnation. it is made evident to us as Titus 2 11 says for the grace of God has appeared in Christ.
Imagine a great king who loved his people so much that he decided to leave his palace and live among them. He experienced their pain, their joys, and their struggles firsthand.
That is what Jesus did through the incarnation. He stepped down from his throne in heaven to walk side by side with humanity, understanding our plight and ultimately offering us salvation.
[27:26] There is nothing we go through in this life that Jesus does not identify with. Oh, it may not be the particular situation, but I guarantee you the depth of pain and hurt that is there.

God knows intimately well because he has lived among us. The importance of the incarnation lies in God's willingness to relate intimately with us, providing a bridge between our brokenness and his holiness.
So the word took on flesh. He dwelt among the people. He rubbed shoulders with his creation. He lived to make a difference. He exemplified the glory of God the Father to the people.
And he did so in order to offer us the opportunity to believe in his name for the forgiveness of our sins and the receiving of eternal life. If you have not made that decision for yourself, you are ready to call on the creator who made you and took on flesh in order to provide you life, do not hesitate to talk to me today.
Do not put it off one more minute. There is a God who has shown his extravagant love for you by stepping down out of heaven to endure pain and suffering and loss that we may be reconciled to our creator.
[28:55] Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your life that you lived, the death that you died on our behalf. Lord, thank you for showing us the abundance of your grace through the incarnation.

And I pray, Lord, especially this time of year as we consider the coming of the Christ child, Lord, we realize the depth and reason for it.
And Lord, I just pray that we would be drawn closer to you. Lord, we'd be more committed to you than we have been before.

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In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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