

John 1: 1 - 18 // The shining of the light

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[0:00] Thank you. Today we're going to be in John chapter 1 verses 1 to 18. One of my relatives was a writer and he wrote that a line in one of his stories, he disliked emotion, not for emotion's sake, but because he felt deeply.

And I think at this time of year I reflect, I do a lot of reflection. This time of year is when I met Jesus. It was about 40 years ago. And it was actually at a Christmas Eve service.

I had had a wonderful mentor in the pastor of a church that was just about two blocks from high school. And there was a season where I was going to floor hockey, invited by some guys from that church.

And just on Friday nights going out and, you know, playing floor hockey and beating each other up and all kinds of stuff. And they would always have a devotional, much like what Roger and Carol shared very beautifully today.

Thank you. And at one point I walked up to the guy that was leading and I said, why are you doing this, man? Like, why are you spreading your evening, you know, here with us?

[1:46] And he looked at me straight on and said, you know, I said, I really don't know who you are, but I know God loves you. And that's all I need to know. And that hit me like a bag of hammers.

It really did. Nobody had ever said anything like that to me before. So I had to understand. I started walking down the street, skipped out of high school.

Don't anybody do that, but I still was on the honor roll, thankfully. But I would go and I would ask this pastor questions. I don't understand this.

Your Bible says this and this and this. And you know what I appreciate is you never came off and saying, well, this is the answer. Sometimes you'd say, you know what? I don't know, but let's look in the scripture together. And he took that very honest approach.

He invited me to a Christmas Eve service and I went. And it was actually through God rescue Mary gentlemen right in the middle of that.

[2:41] And I gave my heart to the Lord. He had an altar call and I went up and he prayed for me. And it's never been the same since. There's something about the Christmas season that grounds us and reminds us of what it's really about.

The world will either steal it from us or attempt to. The world will either try and change it or put it into a different context. We can only go back to the word for its proper context.

But one thing that always stuck through all of these years has just been the idea that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

We have to remember that when Jesus was born. We have to remember that when Jesus was born. It was at an end of a 400 year period of silence from the prophets.

The people were born and raised and died in desperation. Many of them not knowing where their food would come that day.

[3:44] Under the oppression of an oppressive government. Those people were raised and lived and died in difficulty. This is the world that Jesus was born into. Light of the world.

In so many ways it would have been easier for him just to simply drop down, do the cross on a weekend and leave. The mission would have been accomplished.

But God chose for reasons that we do not yet understand. To send him as a baby into a backwater town that people sneered at.

Into a poor family who knew more money at the end of the month. More month at the end of the money. Thank you. Yes, that's what I meant to say.

They were so wealthy. No, that's... Thank you. Yeah. Anyways, my point is that none of it made sense from a world point of view. None of it whatsoever. And when the light shines in our lives and changes us from the inside out, there's going to be moments where it doesn't really make sense.

[4:51] You'll be called to do things, asked to do things that from a world's point of view don't make a lot of sense. But from God's point of view, it is light in the darkness.

So let's read. I'll start with verses 1 and 2. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. In the beginning. And this takes us back to Genesis 1-1. In the beginning. And in a way that we need to wrap our minds around, John takes us back here and connects the Word with eternity.

Now, from a Jewish mind frame, that was actually quite significant. Because God was associated by His Word. If you said the Word, you'd be saying from God.

It was something attached. And the ancient Greek word logos is a very deep and ancient concept. Because they believed that God was represented by His Word.

[6:00] So to say the Word was in the beginning, God was in the beginning. The ancient Greeks know that what created all things was the logos, the Word of God.

And this is significant. John took something familiar in their culture and used Jesus to explain it. Jesus is the living Word.

There's a way that Jesus can be real and connect with you in your life right here, right now. Then in a way that only God can do.

I can't connect with you that way. The person sitting beside you, married or not, cannot connect with you that way. There's a way that only God can connect with us as individuals.

It's special and it's real. And He'll speak into your life in a way that you need to hear. Just like He did with the wise men in this video.

[7:07] He spoke to them, called them on in a way that they would understand. And they obeyed. Verses 1 and 2 again.

In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. And the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. So John tells us a couple of things here. Logos, the Word, is God.

This God is the Son. He is the Word. And Jesus is with God the Father. We start to see the very basic of the idea of the Trinity.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We start to see that Jesus was in the very beginning. Before the beginning, if you'll accept it. Three distinct persons in one.

This baby being born was God made flesh. The incarnation. But I'll talk about that in a moment. I've heard people try and describe the Trinity. And every time I try and do it myself, I come up a little short.

[8:15] Because it's one of the great mysteries of God. But I think the best we can do without trying to dig too deep. Or maybe a couple of ideas I can throw out. And that's just simply one of them is the egg.

You have a shell. You have the egg white. And you have a yolk. They all make the egg. It's one thing apart from each other. They're not really the same. They're one thing.

Water is another consideration. You have a liquid form. An icy form. A vapor form. And I'm sure there are others.

But let's just stop there for the sake of this. Okay. One thing that exists in three different ways. So. The Trinity. Is spoken of in the Bible.

We see God in Jesus. And he leaves with us the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity. Which I hope is not a forgotten God.

[9:13] I hope we invite the Holy Spirit in our lives. On a regular basis. But this is one God in three persons. Verses three to five. All things were made through him.

And without him was not anything made that was made. 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.

The word created all things. Jesus is light. It is created by him. God is life. It is created by him.

Whatever light and life we see in the world. It all will boil back to be with Jesus. And whenever you see an absence of light and life. When you see death and darkness.

It is something that has absolutely repelled Jesus. If you see light and life. It will be because of him.

[10:13] Jesus is resisted in the dark places. And even though the darkness battles against the light. The light will always overcome. Verses six to eight.

There was a man sent from God. Whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light. That all might believe through him. He was not the light.

But came bear to be witness about the light. John came to bear witness about the light. To share the Messiah with the world. You and I have that same light from Jesus in our lives. We are to share it with the world around us. And I want to dare to say. That there are a lot of times. That we repel that mission.

And you may be thinking. No, I don't. When we spend time tearing one another down. When we spend time assassinating someone's character.

[11:19] We are repelling our mission of the light. Because God is not into that. So my dare today. Be someone constructive in the kingdom. Not destructive to his kingdom. The light shines in you. If Jesus is in your heart.

Tell the world. Tell the world. I became a Christian. Because someone did that. And maybe that's your story too.

I would love to hear about that. In fact. I would love to share that. I'd love you to share that. In front of the church someday. And I know. Well, I've been here a while.

Everybody knows my story. Too bad. Right? There are new people here that haven't. Share the light that Jesus has shone into your life.

[12:13] Help us to be enriched by your story. Please. John was focused on bringing people to faith in Jesus the Messiah.

He wasn't the light. But he witnessed it. He saw it. By the word of our testimony. You are a witness to that light as well. Everyone was to know that John was not the Messiah.

He worked for the king. He was not him. And you know. I think we're all naturally born with a fear of death and darkness.

I don't know about you but I had this laundry room when I was a kid well it wasn't mine it was my parents right obviously I think I was about six years old and I was terrified of that laundry room because it was always dark and I knew there were spiders you know the big wolf spiders the ones that are just like had no business being that big and around the house it was like them and I knew that they were there because every time I'd walk in that laundry room which was access to get to the back door I'm not saying I was a six-year-old that did my laundry or responsible like that not at all but it went to the back door which I could get out to the backyard and I would flick on the light and there was always just like that breath of a moment where all of a sudden you could see this underneath the dishwasher the washer and dryer where you knew stuff was just scattering because the light came on right so I had this thing where I would straddle it I would kind of I would leap put my hands on either thing I would kind of swing over because even in the light I was afraid of the spiders and of course when we're kids we reason like children but light scattered the darkness there was nothing to fear but in my heart I was afraid of the dark that was a natural thing for me

I don't feel that now but that's that's how I was raised we have a natural fear of death and darkness so you'd think Jesus being the light of the world coming as the light of the world people would run to him but that's not what happened he was rejected you'd think the people that were religious would say oh finally he's here it's been centuries we've been so quiet lord and now you've sent your son let's all just see how we can worship and glorify your name by following him but that's not what happened verses 9 to 11 the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world 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 people did not receive him Jesus came to this very world he created and yet when logos came into the world they did not know him would we know Jesus if he came and sat with us today would we know him if he was in our hearts and saying brother sister you gotta change this you need to grow in this way let me heal your heart would we recognize him if he said those things

[15:23] God came to the same world he created to creatures he made in his own image and we did not know him we are made in his image we're attracted to light and life and the embodiment of all these things and we crucified him we did not know him are we any different today we can sometimes get a little lazy with the bible I do too we skip a day we don't read we're going through something we don't look at the bible to help us with God's wisdom how to figure it out and we miss it and sometimes I wonder if we're missing him in the process verses 12 to 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 but to all who did receive him all did you know that you could be a part of that all today and you may be thinking well I am you can continue you can rededicate you can renew your heart toward him every day and be a part of that all to all who did receive him because some days

Jesus is knocking on the door of our hearts and we're either too busy too self-reliant or too self-destructive to let him in and see him we can be a part of that all right now to all who did receive him this is an invitation given out to us we can receive it in Jesus through faith this is how wide open this invitation is he didn't just call the religious he didn't just call people who have been a Christian for a long time he didn't call people because they looked a certain way acted a certain way talked a certain way for all who would receive him that's an uncomfortable all because it may mean people we don't get along with and yet in heaven it's going to be filled with people like you and me praise the Lord and it's going to be filled when crowded with people we wouldn't necessarily have talked to here on this earth but our one commonality is Jesus Christ praise the Lord that he is the light through our darkness he wants all who will come we have the honor of that choice and we all have to choose whether to receive or to reject Jesus and not just initially in the sense of accepting him into your heart as your savior but accepting him in the sense

Lord today I'm not going to go my way I'm going to go your way I'm not going to say that critical and bitter word I'm going to lift someone up and encourage them in your name you see we have the choice to accept and reject Jesus all the time are we builders or are we destroyers the Lord is a builder he created us created us all but we become his children when we put our faith in him and receive him in faith when we do that God can work a transformation in our lives and it is from the inside out little by little step by step day by day the Lord can renew us from the inside out and we become more like him verse 13 who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God God doesn't invite us to a self-help project or at a self-improvement program it's not like that

God says come to me in faith and receive Jesus and he'll do something in you that you could never do yourself we can try and fix ourselves we can try and build good things into our life we can use discipline and even some reasonably good philosophy to help us with the challenges of life but they will never be able to resurrect the dead inside of us that is the Lord's domain and God isn't into transforming the outside of us he's transforming the inside and I don't know about you but the closer that I get to Jesus the more things become uncomfortable and what I mean by that is that all of a sudden this light is shining in the laundry room of my heart and those little spiders are scattering because they can't stand being in the light and the little things little attitudes little petty behaviors all the things that I have that I would hold as a human being and we all do whether we want to admit it or not those things when the light comes on scatters and that's uncomfortable because sometimes we can get very very used to our opinions and very used to holding on to the things that we think are right in our own rightness those have to die we have to surrender them because God is going to work a new work in our hearts from the inside out to become more like him and that's uncomfortable but it is right verse 14 and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory is of the only son from the father full of grace and truth the word came to earth in human form and walked among us

God added humanity to his deity and walked as man among us fully God and fully man this is the incarnation the word dwelt is actually an interesting one because it originally means to pitch your tent the idea was that it was a temporary structure and it actually harkens back and the same word was used to describe the tabernacle in the old testament a meeting place of God Jesus is our meeting place not this church not our homes Jesus is our meeting place Jesus is where we can meet together as one unified body not in our own opinions not in our own ideas but in Jesus Christ we find unity in the body he is our meeting place he's our mediator between God and ourselves he is God he was with us he knows exactly what we go through day in day out he knows the difficulty the toil the struggles the pain he's seen it with his own eyes he knows it with his own heart and he created us to be his children and we have that choice to be his children and maybe for some of you right now

[22:47] Jesus is the meeting place you don't have to struggle to find God he came to you he came to you in the stories that we've heard the songs that we've sung the word that we've been reading he came to you you can receive him today you may think you're not distant at all but look closely at how you're loving other people look closely at how you're loving your brothers and sisters in this church right now are our hearts dividing us or uniting us in Christ who is our meeting place it's not uncommon to go through a season in the Christian life where we know we believe we go to church we go to Sunday school we say prayers we do the things and yet God can feel far away maybe it's hurt maybe it's disappointment maybe it's a whole bunch of things but it's not uncommon for Christians to go through this

I have a really wonderful book actually called The Long Dark Night of the Soul and if you've read it I'd love to talk to you about it it's based on a poem written by a German guy but anyways if you want to borrow it I highly recommend it because if you've been in one of those places it's written by someone who's been that way too you show up you go to church you do the things but there's just something that feels distant you're a little harder edged less forgiving burnt out maybe and maybe in a part of you is wondering God where are you that is a normal thing to go through so much so it's been labeled the long dark night of the soul you're not alone but I have to encourage us to try and put away our feeling for a moment just for a moment because Jesus has come near to you in this Christmas season it is one of the greatest stories of a love letter of the father to his children wanting them to come home so much so that he's going to make a way for us where religion would never do it good works morality would never do it it required a savior and Jesus is our savior put away our feeling of feeling distant from him for a moment and realize that the lord came to you in person wipe away your focus on the distant and focus on Jesus himself and maybe you've found ways to depart from him when he comes near

I've been a pastor a long time and I will say that there are times when people will come to church and they will leave for another church and maybe they'll come back and maybe they'll leave for another they keep searching for God and they keep not finding him and you know I told one guy once I said you know perhaps it's just that you're finding God and you're repelling him because wherever you go you keep hearing the same message of turn and maybe maybe that message is not for you to just keep hopping until you find something you like to hear maybe it's just to settle and to accept the discomfort that Jesus wants to get to know you to build you to renew you to change you from the inside out that's a messy business but it is God's business of renovation and renovating the heart stop running away settle let him do the heavy lifting with you the hard work let him do it stop running from him verses 15 to 18

God sent his son to declare grace and truth and whenever God comes to you and me to make that heavy work to change us from the inside out it is with grace and truth not shame not disappointment not discouragement with grace and with truth and you and I both know we all know sometimes truth is tough I say it like sometimes you got to be the person that tells the kid there's no Santa Claus right it's kind of like that if you're a parent you've had to face that reality at some point you know our household we kind of burst the bubble for another family because we had them over for dinner one night sweet little daughter you know my son of course there is no

Santa Claus and she was like what I look at the dad I was like sorry sometimes sometimes you got to burst that bubble the truth is hard but it's right so let the light shine on you today do not run from him do not close yourself off to him if this is all new to you if this is all new this whole story behind Christmas is new choose Jesus choose life choose the light and if you've been a Christian a while and he feels distant set aside your feelings for just a moment turn to him in his word and even as we close in worship lift your heart to him and ask for a time of renewal with the Holy Spirit he delivers I want to just end with Psalm 1 blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the

[29:16] Lord and on his law he meditates day and night he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither in all that he does he prospers the wicked are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous for the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish choose life choose light choose Jesus today let's pray