

Word Made Flesh

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[0:00] Together. Pray with me. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts upon him be pleasing in your sight.

! O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen! This morning we are back in John's prologue, John chapter 1. We'll be covering verse 14 to 18.

That is, I believe, in your pew Bible on page 1053. I encourage you to open to it. This prologue is John's summary introduction to his gospel.

And by way of reminder, two weeks ago we discussed verse 1 to 13. We mentioned that John goes back, all the way back to Genesis.

Genesis 1 to be exact. And he located Jesus right at the beginning, at the origin of the world. He locates Jesus not as first among God's created beings, but he locates Jesus as the creator himself.

[1:14] John's unique title for Jesus is logos, word. That's Greek for word. And in this title, he reveals to us that Jesus is God's self-expression.

He is with God in the beginning. He is God. But he is distinguished from God. This self-expression, this word of God, is the one of whom the author of Hebrews wrote.

In Hebrews 1, 2. He says, Nothing, John tells us, nothing exists from the most microscopic matter to the biggest mountains or the giant creatures in the deep sea.

That does not have a stamp, Jesus' stamp on it. Even beyond the material world, we're told. Even spiritual things, spiritual reality itself, that are presently hidden from our eyes.

The angelic hosts, for example, hold their origin to the word's creative power. E is the ultimate reality by which all other reality exists and derives from.

[2:48] This is the person of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. And based on the beginning of John's Gospel in these verses, we see before us a God who is vast, limitless in power and scope.

He's beyond us. We'll acknowledge that even as we see it. He's incomprehensible to us. We can only really try, in our limited capacity, to approximate who God is.

And you can see, you can see it yourself in the pagan religions of every culture, how left to ourselves, how limited our view of God truly is.

The gods of paganism are puny and inconsequential compared to the God that is revealed to us in the Bible.

And that's precisely the point. To know God as he truly is, we need him to reveal himself to us.

[3:56] Our various approximation of trying to figure out who he is does not measure up. Now while creation itself testifies to God, since his existence and power, as Paul says in Romans, is visible to all by the nature of the fact that we are his creation.

We're created by him. All of this awareness only gives us a sense of who he is. We cannot by ourselves know God. And it's not a matter of intelligence.

It's a matter of revelation. God has to reveal himself to us. Here then is the importance of what John writes. This word, John says, is the light of the world.

He reveals himself to all of mankind in an objective way. By our conscience, he reveals himself to us. By the witness of the world around us, he reveals himself to us.

But especially through the Holy Scriptures, he reveals himself to us. And any of these means, in which God reveals himself to us, leaves us without excuse.

[5:13] So that none of us can blame God because of our ignorance. The Bible tells us we know him. We all know him. By nature of the fact that we are his creation.

So we all stand guilty and condemned based on that alone. Yet God, as ever spoken to us by his prophets, still in these last days, speaks to us by his only begotten son.

The exact imprint of his nature. We confess it in our priests. God from God. Light from light. True God from true God. The three historical creeds that the Anglican Church holds to.

The apostles, the Nicene, and the Acclamation Creed. All clearly declare that Jesus Christ, born of Mary, is in fact the second person of the Trinity.

The one by whom all things were made. Now this doctrine, this is a doctrine that we all do and we receive. This doctrine of the Incarnation.

[6:24] God taking on flesh. That's what Incarnation means. God taking on flesh. It's a difficult one to grasp if we really examine it. If you've received it. And you've come to believe it.

I want you to know this. It is God's kindness to you that it is so. He has opened your eyes and your heart to see his son.

To believe in his name. And by doing so, he has secured your salvation. Just look around you. The very truth that we believe and that we confess that Jesus is both God and man is an offense to people in the world.

It is a stumbling block, even to Jews and Muslims who share the Abrahamic faith. C.S. Lewis puts it like this in mere Christianity.

You're right. Then comes the real shock. There suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if he was God. He claims to forgive sins.

[7:30] He says he has always existed. He says he's coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Lewis continues.

Among pantheists, that is people of the Hindu religion, the Eastern religion, anyone might say that he was a part of a God. Or one with God.

There will be nothing very hard about that. But this man, since he was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God.

God, in the Hebrew language, meant being outside the world. Being outside of creation. He made it and was infinitely different from the rest of creation.

And so when you have grasped this idea of what Jesus is proclaiming about himself and the Bible is proclaiming about him. When you've grasped it. You will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips.

[8:41] Now, I think that he's right here. Lewis is right. The words in this introduction to John's Gospel are shocking.

It should be shocking to our ears. We shouldn't be surprised that it is an offense to people in the world. But, this is a huge but. That's why the fact that it's shocking, they are necessary for salvation. This is how serious it is. This is not a matter in which we can disagree and remain a Christian. You know, there are things we disagree about in Christendom.

We think differently about baptism and the Lord's Supper than some Christians. We can and should still acknowledge that we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Part of God's one family, even though we differ. We have different opinions about that. But, about this, to think differently about the person of Jesus Christ, to think differently as to his divinity and his humanity as revealed in Scripture, to think differently from that is to be outside the faith.

[9:52] It's to be outside what the church has confessed since the beginning. That's a severe thing to say, isn't it? But, it is exactly what the church of Christ has defended, has lived and died for throughout its existence.

It is what one of our creeds says in the Athanasian Creed. It says, furthermore, it is necessary. Look at the word there. It's necessary to everlasting salvation.

That he or she also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is necessary to everlasting salvation to believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And don't be confused by that. It's not saying that the right words saves us. Or the right belief in the right, you know, creed saves us.

What it's saying is that salvation through Christ, as we received it, must be in the Christ that is revealed in the pages of Scripture. That it is both God and man.

[11:05] We must take God at his word. Whether we fully grasp and understand it with our intellect or not, we must receive it by faith. John says in verse 14, The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

That very sentence, that is what saves. That is what saves all of us and nothing else. The word, Jesus Christ, became flesh and dwelt among us.

We've heard it so much that I think the shock of it has worn off. I think. But remember who the word is. Remember that he is God.

Vast. Beyond all measure. Remember how transcendent he is above all of creation. Now John writes that this God.

Uncontainable. Boundless. All powerful. Became flesh. This is the supreme revelation. According to D.A.

[12:16] Carson. He says, God's self-expression donned, put on our humanity. Save only our sin. God chose to make himself known.

Finally and ultimately in a real historical man. God dwelt among us. The Greek verb for dwell here echoes Exodus and God's dwelling among his people.

If you think of Exodus 25 verse 8, God spoke to Moses and he says, have them make a sanctuary for me. And I will tabernacle. I will dwell among them.

It also echoes. This word also echoes God's glory being present in the tabernacle and in the temple. If you remember your Old Testament, the glory cloud that follows the Israelites through their wilderness journey.

And the glory that settled on Solomon's temple. These are visible manifestation of God's presence among his people.

[13:28] The glory of God. But in the word, John tells us, in the word becoming flesh, in that revelation, we have the ultimate manifestation of God.

The ultimate revealing of God's glory. In the most personal way, God has chosen to be present with us. He's taken on our humanity. Except sin.

The almighty one. Whose very utterance spoke all things into existence. Became a helpless babe in a manger.

We shouldn't lose sight of how shocking that is. And John tells us again. He continues. He says, we have seen his glory.

Glory as of the only son from the father. Full of grace and truth. It is this glory that John bore witness about when he said, Ewu came.

[14:31] That's John the Baptist. And he says, Ewu came after me, ranks before me. Because he was before me. He's the pre-existing one.

He's the ancient one. Glory. So the word glory, when used throughout the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the word glory actually means the manifestation of God through a supernatural and miraculous way.

And John has this in mind when he talks about the incarnation. So, for example, in the Old Testament, the word glory often accompanies a display of God's majesty.

For example, his awesome visitation to Israel on Mount Sinai. That is a manifestation of his glory. His signs of deliverance at the Red Sea.

How he parted the Red Sea. And his people were able to walk and dry land through it. And other miraculous signs that he showed in the wilderness. All of these things are manifestations of God's glory.

[15:43] So, I hope right now you're already starting to recognize that God's glory is wrapped up in his display of power.

In his display of his power and his display of his might. They go together. God's glory is wrapped up in the display of his power and might. The incarnation is a display of power in the same way.

It's not readily apparent to us that God, all-powerful, takes up the form of a human being. And a baby.

Like that. A helpless child. But it is a display of God's power and glory. And it is not the sort of incarnation of the pagan gods of the Greek mythology and Norse mythology.

You know, the Jews will often take on the appearance of a man and come and be with humanity. That's not what John is talking about here.

[16:50] Judd didn't say that the Word appeared as flesh. He said he became flesh. That's drastically different.

In the incarnation, God ends forth. From now on, in the incarnation, God identifies himself with his creation. Even now, as risen and exalted Lord and King of the universe, Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father as a man.

Think about it. Think about how glorious that is. The glory of God in the New Testament from the incarnation of the world takes on a new added meaning for us.

God displays his glory through his power and the display of his power and his might. But here in the incarnation, God displays the majesty and power of God.

Think about the person of Jesus Christ in his ministry on earth. He displayed the power of God by his mastery and power over nature. He commanded the seas. He turns bread.

[18:08] He multiplies it. He displays his power over the devil. The demons could not abide him. They fled before him. And he set people free from their bondage.

But, so he's displayed his power over the world and the devil. But, in his power over the flesh, that is a corrupted sinful nature, he had to become one of us.

This is the purpose. This is the purpose of the incarnation. Christ's substitutionary atonement on the cross. The word substitutionary atonement just means, simply means, that he became a substitute. He took your sin and shame upon himself. And he bore the full penalty, the full penalty of your sins and my sins upon the cross.

And there was another exchange taking place there. The account of his perfect, blameless, righteous life as a man before God.

[19:14] He credited to you. To you who believe in his name. Do you see now why believing and confessing that Jesus is God and man is not just some esoteric thing to do.

It's not just something that we discuss in, you know, in seminaries and among theologians. It is a fundamental pillar of our faith as Christians.

It is only faith in this Jesus, who is both God and man, that saves. Because only a man can answer the charge of man's rebellion before God.

And Jesus is the lamb who was slain. Answered that charge on your behalf. By his blood shed for you and for me.

He purchased us for God. From every tribe, language, people and nation. Remember we spoke of glory?

[20:20] Let's go back to that. You remember how God's glory is his mighty acts? Is a manifestation of who he is? Well, here the manifestation of God as man in the person of Jesus Christ is the supreme manifestation of who God is.

That is, this is, John is telling us here, that the manifestation of God, the infinite being as man, is the supreme manifestation of who God is.

And now how does John describe this manifestation? As a primary witness himself. He says, it is the glory as of the Father's only Son.

Full of grace and truth. Are you here this morning really longing to know this God? Maybe for the first time you want to know him.

Maybe life has weighed you down so harshly that you wonder where God is. What kind of a God he truly is. Here.

[21:31] Here. God's self-disclosure of himself. According to John. Here also the echo of it in Exodus 33 and 34. Through the lens of the incarnation.

This is God's response to Moses. When Moses asked to see God's glory. Again, remember. God's glory is the manifestation of himself.

Moses asked to see God's glory. And this is God's response to him. I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you. God says to Moses. And I will proclaim my name to you.

The Lord. In your presence. And I will have mercy. On whom I will have mercy. And I will have compassion. On whom I will have compassion.

The Lord. The Lord. The compassionate and gracious God. Slow to anger. Abounding in love. The Lord.

[22:31] Abounding in love and faithfulness. Maintaining love. To thousands. And forgiving wickedness. Rebellion. And sin. This is God.

Disclosing himself. To Moses. Read this. Through the lens of the incarnation. This is the word made flesh.

This is the one who walks with you. Through life. With his promise. To bring you through. All its dangers. And to present you.

Holy and blameless. Before his father. God. This is our God. This is why. This word from John. In the following verses.

It says. From this fullness. Of grace and truth. We. That is you and I. Those who come to believe in his name. And put in their faith and trust in him.

[23 : 32] We have received. Grace. Upon grace. John is specially saying here.

That in Christ. We have received grace. That supersedes. The grace. Of the law. Through Moses. The covenant.

That God made. The covenant of the law. Is a gracious gift. From God. We often think of the law. As. As. As. You know.

Heavy. But it's a grace. It's a covenant of grace. God reveals. Remember again. We do not know God. Unless he reveals himself to us. We would not know. How to love him. How to serve him. How to live.

Unless he reveals himself to us. That's what God did. In the law. He reveals himself. To his people. His covenant people. The covenant of the law. Is a gracious gift.

[24 : 27] From God. But it was. Always intended. To point us. To the greater. Grace. That is to be found. In Jesus Christ.

That was the point. Of the law. It's to point us. To Jesus. The one who comes. To fulfill. The law. Jesus Christ.

Is the true Israel. He's the second Adam. He's the only one. Who kept the law of God. Perfectly. In the person of Jesus.

Lies. Lies. The fullness. Of the truth. About God. And the grace. And goodness. Of God. That's why. Calvin puts it this way. Not only does. The word. Sustain the universe. By his boundless might. And regulated. By his wisdom. And preserved.

[25 : 21] By his goodness. And especially. Rule mankind. By his righteousness. And judgment. And he bears with it. In his mercy. As well. Watch over it.

By his protection. But no drop. Would be found. Of either wisdom. And light. Or of righteousness. Or power. Or rectitude. Or genuine truth.

Which does not flow. From him. And which is not the cause. The point. Here.

Is that Jesus. The word. Who was the reason. And the means. By which all things exist. Is also the means. By which. Redemption. Is accomplished. Do you want peace with God?

Do you want to be saved? Do you want eternity? With God? There is only one way. That is accomplished. It is through this same. Word. Of God. Who is from eternity past.

[26 : 19] Who has come. And became. Became man. And went to the cross. To die for your sin. Than my sin. So there is a question.

Before us. This morning. Have you come to this Jesus? Have you come to him? Or are you in utter darkness. Without God. In the world? I want to tell you.

Come to him. This morning. If you haven't yet. He is the light of the world. Come to him. And be saved. But maybe you have come to him. But maybe you have drawn back.

And now you are operating under the law. Maybe you are a law keeper. In your own eyes. Hoping to attain peace with God. By your own piety. Or status in the church.

That is a futile. And hopeless. Test. You cannot keep the law. The point of the law. Is to tell you. That you cannot keep.

[27 : 18] The law. But it points you. To the appointed one of God. Who comes. To tabernacle. To dwell. Among mankind.

He has kept the law. He has done what you and I cannot do. All you must do. All you have to do. Is to come to him. Come to him. And believe in his name. Rest. On his work. Which alone can save you. He is the fullness of God's graciousness.

Covenant keeping love. And faithful reliability. And truth. Come to him. Let us pray. Thank you. O merciful and gracious God. For coming to us. In humility. And kindness. And lowliness. So you might lift us up. You could have come to us.

[28 : 24] In your righteous wrath. In your life. But none of us. Will be able to stand before you. Instead. You came as a child. Into our sin plagued world.

So you might rescue us. O Jesus. O Jesus. Our savior. Our savior. Perfect man. And at the same time. Immutable God. No words of man.

Can truly grasp. This divine mystery. We can only praise. Your glorious name. All our days. And so we pray.

O father. That you would give us the grace. To receive. And accept him. Who is the fullness. Of your grace and truth. To confess him.

To a world. In desperate need. Of your redemption. And to continue. To live. Every second. Of every day. In his grace. It is in his matchless name.

[29 : 22] We pray. Amen.