

John 1:6-13

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[0 : 00] Good morning. As Kyle just mentioned, we're continuing our series in the book of John, which we started just two weeks ago.

! I invite you to turn with me to chapter one. Last Sunday we began chapter one of this, the Gospel of John, and the first verses introduced us to the Word.

God the Son, the second person of the triune God, the Creator. We read in those verses, in the beginning was the Word.

The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

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

[1 : 01] And that conclusion of that section right there, that the light shining into the darkness, John's saying to us that that Word, that the light didn't stay static, unmoved, but instead He's doing something in the world.

And today we'll read that the Word, the light, verse 9, is coming into the world. And He'll actually make that entrance next Sunday in verse 14.

And that's like, that's Christmas right there, the incarnation. That's a Christmas sermon next Sunday. This passage, today's passage, is an Advent passage. We've been doing these Advent readings leading up to the Christmas season and through it, where we are fostering in our own hearts a longing and an expectation for His coming, preparing the way for the Word, the light, to step into the world that He made.

And that preparation, we're going to see here, begins with a herald, sent by God to announce the coming of the light into the world. And so today's passage begins in verse 6.

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.

[2 : 23] He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 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 own people did not receive Him. 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.

This is God's Word. Let's pray. Lord, in these next moments, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our rock and our Redeemer.

Amen. We're going to break this passage up into three sections today, the first of which is verses 6 through 8. I'll read them again.

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 to bear witness about the light.

[3 : 51] Now, just to stave off any potential confusion, if you have your Bible open, at the top of the page it probably says, the gospel according to John.

And then, verse 6, there was a man sent from God, whose name was John. Not the same John. So, the John in verse 6 is John the Baptist, the son of Zechariah the priest, and of Elizabeth, the relative of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The person at the top of the page, the John who penned this, the fourth gospel, the gospel of John, was John the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' disciples, the apostle John.

And so, verses 6 through 8 are John the apostle and gospel writer introducing John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, so that John the Baptist can introduce and herald the coming of Jesus, the word, the light, the life, coming into the world.

It's an interesting fact, you will notice as we go through the book of John here. John the apostle does not refer to himself by name. Instead, he calls himself, over and over again, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

[5 : 18] And what a wonderful way that is to identify yourself. Not by your gifts, or your role, or your talents, or your achievements, but by the better fact, the wondrous fact, that Jesus loves him.

And you. Okay. So, there was a man sent by God whose name was John the Baptist. And there are two things that John the apostle wants us to know about this forerunner.

of Christ. I'll start in verse 8 and then come back to verse 7. Verse 8. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John was not the light from heaven. He came to bear witness about it. Now, that's pretty straightforward, right? The light was coming, and John was the herald, the messenger, so, of course, he wasn't the light himself.

But sadly, it is easy for us humans to look at other humans, prominent ones, impressive ones, and think that they're, you know, they're kind of the light.

[6 : 32] They're kind of pretty impressive in our own eyes. Think of how much hope some people place in a politician. how much joy some people expect to find in a sports star or in a performing artist.

The worst form of this phenomenon is found in churches, sadly. When one person, because of their gifts or their charisma or whatever it is, begins to kind of become the light in the eyes of that congregation, whether it's by that leader's design or whether it's some other factor that makes that change in the congregation, that is missing the real thing, missing the great thing.

No matter what person we would look to and place that larger-than-life expectation on them, no matter how great that person is, here's what Jesus had to say about John the Baptist so we can kind of compare side by side.

In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus said about John the Baptist, truly I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.

I like how Abraham Kuyper, himself a very impressive person, both a significant theologian and the prime minister of the Netherlands and founder of, pretty incredible guy, he said on Matthew 11 there, on Jesus' words about John the Baptist, he says, thus the Baptist stands above Isaiah and David, above Elijah and above Moses, above Abraham and Noah, no one is his equal, he is greater than all.

[8 : 18] It must be acknowledged only in this manner or we diminish the mighty intent of Jesus' words. For all of these were born of women before John and Jesus emphatically states that all these stood below John the Baptist.

and if John the Baptist was this guy, this privileged great man, the greatest ever born, by Christ's own admission, the climactic prophet of the Old Testament, the one upon whom was bestowed the privilege to declare, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the one who had the awesome privilege of baptizing the Lord Jesus and seeing heaven rent open and hearing the Father speak and the Spirit descending, if John goes out of his way to say here, yeah, this guy, not the light, if John isn't, let us not place our hopes on politicians or performers or pastors or anyone.

There is only one light of the world and his name is Jesus. Let's remember to celebrate the right person.

When the Allies won World War II, the boys selling newspapers on the street corner were yelling, read all about it, read all about it. But no one threw a parade for them, for the Newsies.

They threw a parade for built monuments to the soldiers who won the victory that the newspapers reported. Let's not celebrate the one who makes the report that the light has come.

[10 : 01] Let's celebrate the light who has come. Celebrate him who was, verse four, life. And the life was the light of men. That's the first thing to know about John.

He's pointing to the light. He's worthy of our admiration but not our hopes and not our accolades and not our worship. The second thing to know about John we find in verse seven has to do with why he was proclaiming that light.

Verse seven says, he came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. It's a message of mercy.

We're about to see that believing in him confers upon us the right to be called children of God. right? He came on this gracious this gracious mission.

I'm sorry. But here's the thing John could the message could just as easily have been the light is coming into the world so you are in big trouble.

[11 : 16] And that would have been absolutely just and warranted. In chapter three we're about to hear this troubling news. This is the judgment.

The judgment. The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

The light could rightly have come in vengeance against our darkness darkness. But those are not the tidings that the Lord has entrusted to this herald.

Instead he came witnessing about the light that all might believe through his testimony and as we'll see come to be called the children of God. First how wonderful how wonderful is it that the light came into this world not to exercise judgment but to draw us to himself.

let's celebrate that right? We are in this advent season where we are fostering in ourselves a recognition that the light came into the world.

[12 : 31] Let us remember that he came graciously in mercy this Christmas season. He came as a child not as a conqueror. I hope that isn't old news to us.

Oh that it would constantly amaze us that he came in grace and in mercy. And secondly here in verse seven let's let this thought sink in.

He came as a witness that is John came as a witness to bear witness about the light that is Christ. that all might believe through him. That all might believe through him.

All. Why is that such a big deal? After all don't we believe John 316 whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Whoever right? All. yes but do we really really believe that? What do our lives show about who we think can become a child of God?

[13 : 50] Do our lives show that we believe that Christ is for people like us? Like me? But not really for people like you know that whatever that might be.

Friends John came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all all might believe through him so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

there is no class of people. No kind of person. No ethnicity. No affiliation. No looks. No language. No criminal history. No religious background.

No lack thereof. No neighborhood or family arrangement or anything in all of creation that excludes anyone from receiving this message.

Of needing this message. More than they need oxygen. reconciliation to the light is our greatest need of all.

[14 : 55] John let us not be guilty of looking at any person made in God's image. Made for eternal life with him and think that they aren't worth bothering over with this message.

Functionally thinking that Christ didn't really come for that kind of person. That the message of Christ isn't really for them. That we don't need to bother. That they aren't worth the time.

That it doesn't matter if they become our brother or sister in Christ. John the greatest of all men came so that all might believe in Christ.

And conversely someone may be here today saying you know Jesus came into this world and that's news but it's for some other kind of person.

I'm not part of the recipients of that message. Jesus came for other kinds of people but not for me.

And friend I would say can you see here that the Lord wants you.

[16 : 03] He came for you. Loves you. There is not a single solitary human being for whom this message is not an invitation to your true home.

Come in. Come home to the Lord who made you. And that's what makes the next verse so tragic.

Verse 9. 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. His own people did not receive him. Does that land on you with heartbreak?

I think we're meant to feel that. The veteran turned away once he returns home. The mother rejected by her own children.

[17 : 06] The creator ignored by his own creation. We're meant to weep at this. Let not that sad testimony be true of you.

You belong to the God who made you. So when he came he came to his own you. You owe your life and breath and your very being to him. And he wants to give himself to you.

That's why he came. Don't turn away from that. They did not know him. They did not receive him. And the light came into the world so that you may know him.

The light came into the world so that you may receive him. How great a blessing is that? There is heart break in this passage but there's also glory.

Verse 12 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.

[18 : 22] We see verse 13 that this is not something that we can do to ourselves but that the new life that the Lord gives is the new life that the Lord gives and does in the hearts of his people.

There is something supernatural about what it is to come and become a child of God. There's so much that we can draw out of this passage.

Just as John was a witness so too are we called to be witnesses. If verse 12 you're a child of God and so am I that makes us family.

That has implications on how we treat each other. There are a lot of things that we could draw out of this passage that we could extend our gaze into here but in this last section John focuses on two things most specifically faith and adoption.

So we'll look at them in turn. How does someone become a Christian? How does someone as we're about to look at right become a child of God?

[19 : 31] I hate to break it to you the folk wisdom where all God's children is not true. I guess you could say in a sense we are all God's children because he made us all.

But in a very true sense we are not all God's children until he makes us his children by his son. How does someone get to that point?

How can we be called the children of God? How do you enter into his household? How do we come to receive the benefits of belonging to Christ?

He says verse 12 to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

And so it is by receiving him, by believing in his name, in other words, by faith that we can be called the children of God. Christianity is a religion of faith, that is trust in the Lord.

[20 : 43] We mentioned in our first sermon in this series, we looked at chapter 20, when John gave us his purpose. These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that by believing in his name, you may, by believing, you may have life in his name.

John wants for us, not just to understand all the things of Jesus, but to believe in him. The book of John is full of signs, the miracles, and conversations that Jesus has with people, and nearly all of them.

John concludes with some remark about, some indication about whether the people who saw Jesus do that thing, or spoke with Jesus, whether they believed him, believed in him.

What does the word faith mean, though? Is it blind faith? Is it assent to some certain facts about Jesus?

What is it? What does it mean? John gives us some clues about the kind of faith that the scriptures are talking about. He says those that the saved are those who believed in his name.

[22 : 05] Not that simply he had a name, that that was his name, not just that he existed, not only that the Bible's report about him are true, but that we would believe in his name.

We understand today that in the ancient world it was much more so, that the name represents the person. It's not just a label. One person put it this way, the name is more than a label, it is the character of the person, or even the person himself.

it's not a believing that, it's believing in. John here ties believing to receiving.

When he does that, he makes it a personal thing. Receiving is something very personal. To receive a person, it's almost like hospitality is kind of what almost is the image that's being shown here.

It is a personal receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not just an abstract concept. Biblical faith is a receiving of a person, saying, I trust you.

[23 : 24] This is the trust that parents give when they say, I believe in you, and walk out the door with the babysitter watching the kids. It's the trust that a coach is investing in someone.

They say, I believe in you, and draws up one final play for this player. It's not a believing that, it's a believing in. It's a reliance on, it's not just a belief that Jesus came to save, but entrusting myself to him as my savior.

It's banking on him and nothing else. Now, I don't mean to put up barriers to faith here as if it is some great achievement. D.A.

Carson tells this hypothetical story. Israel is enslaved in, and again, this is hypothetical. Israel is enslaved in Egypt, which is true.

And the plagues are happening, which is true. And the final plague comes. Do any of the kids remember what the final plague was? remember what the final plague was? Indeed, the death of the firstborn.

[24 : 46] And the Lord made a provision that the firstborn in the houses who were covered with the blood of a lamb would be saved.

Now, here comes the hypothetical situation, this story that D.A. Carson tells. There are two men, Israelites, and they look at each other, and one says, you know, big night tonight, huh?

Yeah, yeah, crazy, huh? The Lord's really going to do some stuff here. And this one might be the one. What do you think? What do you think? And he's like, the other one says, dude, I'm not sure about this.

This is really intense. You know, frogs I can deal with, you know, gnats, whatever, but, you know, my son's on the line here. Like, I love him. And the other one says, well, you know, you're going to kill the lamb, right?

Yeah. And you're going to put the blood over the door. Yeah. So you'll be fine, right? Yeah, but I mean, this is a really big deal. And so one was walking into the Passover.

[25 : 58] With great confidence in the Lord. And the other was walking into the Passover with great trepidation and fear and trembling. In the morning, whose son was still alive.

And the answer is, of course, both of them. It is not the degree or the strength of my own faith, but it is the one on whom I place it.

It is not a belief that Jesus can save, but entrusting ourselves to him.

Receiving the Lord, believing in his name is a personal thing. And he is so kind. First off, that this is the offer he makes. And secondly, that it is not up to me and the strength of the faith that I can muster up, but it is in the one in whom I have placed my trust.

Hallelujah, what a Savior. And hallelujah, what a Savior that he saves me into something. Because the salvation that the Bible describes, look at it here, what is the end result?

[27 : 21] Forgiveness doesn't factor into this.

Forgiveness factors into this. But it is not the thing that John is highlighting. Because forgiveness is what gets us to the real blessing.

that we should be called the children of this God. That should be the thing that astonishes us most about the gospel.

That the one who made all things, against him we've rebelled, who came into this world to give himself for us, did so to forgive us so that we might come into his own household.

That we might be called the children of the living God. God above all, eternal, boundless, creator, almighty, calls you my child.

[28 : 36] if you have cast yourself on Christ. The apostle John did not write only the gospel of John.

He also wrote other portions of the New Testament. He wrote three letters that we have. First, second, and third John. In first John chapter three, he reflected on this thought.

This thought that all who received him and believed in his name might be called children of God.

And he reflected on that particular point. In first John chapter three, we read, see what kind of love the father has given to us that we should be called children of God.

And so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now.

And what we will be has not yet appeared. Being a child of the living God has forward momentum to it. But we know that when he appears, that is his second coming, the second advent, we shall be like him.

[30 : 00] Because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. J.I.

Packer in his book, Concise Theology, good little introduction to Christian doctrine, says this of the relationship between justification, that is, our being pardoned by God for the guilt of our sins, and adoption being reckoned his child.

And not just reckoned, but truly brought in and made part of his household. He says, justification is the basic blessing on which adoption is founded.

Adoption is the crowning blessing to which justification clears the way. Adopted status belongs to all who receive Christ.

The adopted status of believers means that in and through Christ, God loves them as he loves his only begotten son, and will share with them all the glory that is Christ's now.

[31 : 14] Here and now, believers are under God's fatherly care and discipline, and are directed, especially by Jesus, to live their whole lives in light of the knowledge that God is their father in heaven.

They are to pray to him as such, imitate him as such, and trust him as such, thus expressing the filial instinct that the Holy Spirit has implanted in them.

Friends, the gospel is not simply, you may have your sins forgiven. Oh, that is wondrous news, but there is even better news. The gospel is not simply, you may live forever, and that is glorious news, and it is true, but there is better news still.

The gospel is not simply, you live forever in the new heavens and the new earth, which is joyous news indeed, but there is still something better. The good news, the best news, is you may have your sins forgiven so that the Holy One, the Creator, the judge, the King, might take you to himself and make you his own, commit himself to you as Father, and you may dwell with him forever in his new heavens and new earth, our home together with him.

That is the good news of the gospel, to be heirs of all things with Christ, to have access always to a father who is attentive and loving, to have a position in his household as he rules and reigns over all things, to be beloved of God, to have a Lord who watches over you in all things, to have a home with him, a place to belong with him, the best of all things, as his beloved child forever.

[33 : 18] Will you receive him? Will you believe in his name? That's right. Lord, truly there is none like you who would make all this available to us who have sinned, who have rebelled.

I thank you that you came not in judgment, but offering this pardon, this redemption, and this fatherly love. And Lord, thank you that even as it costs Christ everything, it costs us only to turn from death to life and cast ourselves on him.

for anyone here who needs to actually do that and find life in his name, I pray that you would draw their heart to that very thing.

And for those of us who have already cast ourselves on Christ, will you help us to live indeed as your sons and daughters, and to glory in that fact above all things.

we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.