

John 1:1-2

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[0:00] Well, as Will was saying with the children, welcome to this day of new beginnings. I guess according to what Will is saying, we can say Happy New Year to each other after this service and welcome each other.

I especially am very glad that you are here if you are new with us this morning as well. It's wonderful for you to be here in this first season of the church calendar.

It is a season that is filled with the glory of Jesus. And you hear that in the singing that we have been hearing and will hear and in the Bible readings as well and in our prayers.

It's a season where we think that no matter what is happening in the world, whether it is fires or floods or pandemics or anxieties in our hearts, we begin each season, each year with the greatness of Jesus.

We prepare for his coming at Christmas, but more than that, we prepare for his coming again in great glory to come on the last day, to make all things right and to judge all that is wrong in the world.

[1:13] And that greatness that we think about in this season is not often recognized in the culture that we live in, as you well know.

You can hear the name of Jesus as a swear word, expressing the strong feelings a person might have. Or if you were in the shopping mall and went up to somebody and asked them about what this season is about and who Jesus is, they might say Jesus is a good man, but not with a lot of relevance to my life.

Many would say that Jesus is central to a religion among many other religions. And there may be some other ideas that come to your mind when you think of the name of Jesus.

But those two sentences that we heard read, that very short reading that Alita read to us, tell us some very powerful things about Jesus.

That you might not have thought about before. It was written by Jesus' very close friend. His name was John. And he began his book with these two sentences that we heard.

[2:22] And it's well worth reading not only those two sentences, but the whole book of John, because you will see more about Jesus revealed in a way that you never would have known otherwise.

And it is written in a way to be relevant to your life. And John says it's a book that is life changing.

And I want to tell you, I did a little procrastination during my sermon.

I found out on the internet that it takes two hours to read John. And so if you read 20 minutes a day, you'll be done by next Sunday. But John begins by these words.

He says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. There are three extraordinary things about Jesus that you might not have thought of before here.

The first thing is, is that anyone reading those words in the beginning, when John wrote this, would immediately have their mind turned to creation.

[3:24] John is saying Jesus, who is the Word, was at the beginning of the creation of the universe. That is an amazing thing to say about Jesus.

Because it means he existed from before the foundation of time, and that his power is vast. Now, scientists say that the universe is unimaginably large.

There are, I don't know if you know this, I found this out this week, there are 200 billion to 2 trillion galaxies of very different sizes. As of last year, that's the latest count.

That's quite a range. 200 billion to 2 trillion. And Earth is in one of the medium galaxies called the Milky Way, which has 100 billion stars, and at least that many planets.

And John is saying to those scientists that Jesus existed before this beginning. That he stands beyond this space and time.

[4 : 28] And in fact, the verses 3 and 4, which David's going to preach on next week, follow our reading. And they say Jesus was the one through whom this was all created. That he sustains this universe.

Now, I read a very clear explanation of what scientists say about in the beginning. And I want you to hear it. It's from the BBC science reporter. She says this, All the matter in the universe emerged from a single minute point or singularity in a violent burst.

This expanded at an astonishingly high rate in temperature, doubling in size every 10 to 34 seconds. How did they know that? Creating space as it rapidly inflated.

Within a tiny fraction of a second, gravity and all the other forces were formed. Energy changed into particles. Protons and neutrons started to form within the first second.

And within minutes, these protons and neutrons could fuse and form hydrogen and helium nuclei. After 300,000 years, nuclei finally captured electrons to form atoms, filling the universe with clouds of hydrogen and helium gas.

[5 : 40] And after 380,000 years, it left behind a bath of photons. And within this were tiny ripples of matter that were stretched to enormous size during inflation.

And in turn, these became the seeds of galaxies and galactic structures we see today. There you go. Very clear. And this is the most recent way that science observes in the beginning.

But there is an uncomfortable silence when you ask the question, why did this happen? What's behind it all? What existed before that big bang?

That extraordinarily powerful thing. That power is beyond our ability to really comprehend. Yet the Bible says it happened by a simple word from God.

Let it be so. Let it be so. And John says Jesus was there. That he is the author of that creation. And he sustains it by his word.

[6 : 47] Here is the vastness of Jesus that John begins his extraordinary book with. Now, the second amazing thing about Jesus, besides claiming that he is in the beginning, is that John calls Jesus the word.

Why is this? In the original, the Greek is logos. And it means two things. It can mean inner thoughts or science or language. That's why we have these ologies like psychology or geology.

It's the study of the mind. It's the study of earth. But it also means outward expression. So, this word is found in 1 Corinthians 1.18.

And it says, For the word of the cross is foolish to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved, it is the power of God.

Now, it doesn't say that that word, cross, is foolish. It is saying that the message of the cross, what it means to be reconciled to God by it, the outward expression of it, that is the word.

[7 : 52] That is foolishness to some, but the power of God for salvation. So, here, in the beginning of all things, God's very self is being expressed in Jesus himself.

Jesus is the message. The message of God to that universe. And here's where you and I come in. Because the living God is a speaking God.

This is the amazing, unique thing about Christianity. The Bible is God's words to us, right from creation, expressing himself in human language so that anyone can know him.

And it is an open secret to everyone, whether you come to church or not. And that's why the Bible is the most translated book in the world, by far.

I don't know if you know this, but the other top ten are almost all children's books. The second and third, Pinocchio is the second most translated. I don't know if you know that. But 300 languages, and about the same is the little prince.

[9 : 06] But you know how many languages the Bible is translated into? At least one of the book is translated into 3,000 languages. And the whole book has been translated into over 700 languages now.

And that is growing. We have two missionaries at our church who work in worldwide linguistic groups that translate the Bible. And you know what they say?

They say when a book of the Bible is finished in a local language group, there is incredible joy among the people who receive it. There is a celebration in these villages or towns or cities because the author of the universe is speaking to me in my language.

I want to celebrate. So why is Jesus called the Word as the way to begin this whole thing of John? Well, in the rest of John, we're going to see that there are different titles for Jesus. The Son of God, the Son of Man, Rabbi, King of Israel, the Lamb of God, Jesus the Christ. But here John wants a title to sum everything up.

[10:18] And what we see is the best title is the Word. Because in the Bible, the Word of God is primarily connected to three things.

And we heard these in our readings today. The first thing is creation. So, for example, Psalm 33 says, God spoke and the worlds came to be. And Jesus is the agent of that creation.

And he brings God's new creation into our hearts. Secondly, the Bible's theme is revelation. It is God revealing himself. So the prophets who say God's words say, The Word of God came to me. And you hear God's will, his thoughts, his promises, his character. Well, Jesus perfectly discloses God. All his promises are fulfilled in Jesus.

He is revelation. And finally, a third part of the Bible has to do with always deliverance or salvation. Deliverance when people get themselves into trouble, his people.

[11:25] Deliverance from God's judgment. Psalm 107 says about his people who time and time again wander from God. He sends out his word and he heals them and delivers them from their destruction.

And you see, Jesus, at the heart of what he is all about, is he is bringing God's salvation. Forgiving and freeing people.

Forgiving your sins. Adopting you by his grace. Making you alive in God and to God. Healing your soul. So how can Jesus, the Word, do these things?

Well, this is the last part that we heard in these two short verses. It is that Jesus, the Word, is in relationship to God. And so there's two things about his relationship with God that John says. First of all, the Word was with God from the very beginning. Literally, it says that the Word was continually drawing close to God. That Jesus was in a living relationship.

[12:35] Growing, constantly being together from the very beginning. And this shows us that the deepest reality in all of the universe, before the universe began, is relationship.

And you and I know this. That's why we crave acceptance. We desire love so much. Togetherness is the critical thing in our life.

And the reason God creates us, all of this, is so that we might share in the glorious fellowship that is within God himself. The Word was with God.

And he wants us to be part of that. And secondly, this extraordinary thing that comes like a bombshell. It says that Jesus is God.

That's the center of the Christian faith. There is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons. And it is because Jesus is God, that he is the power not only to create us, but to perfectly reveal God to us.

[13:46] And by his power, bring us and reconcile us into a relationship with him forever. Jesus himself is God's relationship, God's revelation to us.

And that's why Hebrews 1 is so important for us this morning. I want to read it to you. It speaks about God speaking. Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us literally in his son, in son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. So you see, when we see Jesus, we see God himself in all his glory, perfectly revealing God's very nature and character to us.

We see God's power that he upholds the universe simply by his word. And it is only because the word is God that Jesus can save you and give you new life.

[15:03] This is the one to entrust your life to and all your future in the midst of a tumultuous and uncertain world. So the things that Jesus does, the things that he says about himself in the gospel of John only make sense if he is God.

And because he is God, he is not only great in his power and glory, but his word is personal. And I want to end with this because it is such a glorious gift, but a challenge to us as well.

It means that you and I have incredible significance to God. At the end of the gospel of John, if you get that far, you'll find this.

One of Jesus' dearest friends was at the empty tomb of Jesus crying because she didn't know he had risen from the dead. Jesus came to her. She didn't recognize him in her grief. Until he said to her with great love and tenderness, Mary. And immediately she recognized the risen Lord Jesus.

[16:09] And she hugged him. A little later on, Thomas, who doubted the word of his friends that Jesus had truly risen from the dead in the days after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus came to him.

And he said, Thomas, his name. Put your finger here. See my hands. Put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.

Thomas said, my Lord and my God. And then the very end of John, chapter 21, Jesus says three times to Simon Peter, who denied him, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Do you love me? Do you love me? And Peter said, yes, Lord, I love you. Now, why did Jesus speak this way?

He who is greater than all the power of the universe, why does he speak that way? It is because he died for their sin and for yours and mine.

[17:10] He offers to them and to us grace to be reconciled to God. He offers you by name the same thing today. He is the author of life and he makes you alive to God.

He speaks your name today with great tenderness and love as he did with Mary. He reveals himself to you as he did to Thomas as well.

And he says, do not disbelieve, but believe. And Jesus' question for us this morning is, do you love me? Do you love me?

Do you love me? That is all Jesus' invitation to us. The risen Jesus invites you to speak to him.

That's why he's asking the question, just as you would to a person that you trust. And so I want to close by praying. And I hope that you will pray with me and speak to the God who is speaking to you.

[18:16] Let us pray. Almighty God, thank you for Jesus, who is the Word, who is God.

Thank you for revealing yourself to us in that Word. Thank you for creating me and for Jesus' immense power to forgive my sin.

I ask that you will give me new life in you. I receive you now. Give me the power to believe in you.

Please make me your child and bring me into the family of God, the relationship with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever.

Amen. Amen.