

John 1:14-18

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[0 : 0 0] we hardly ever say anything about them but thank you james and the mercy worship team for that song i can't tell you how much it's a blessing to me the call particularly during this christmas season to come and worship come and worship christ the newborn king when my wife and i were overseas that album actually was a significant one we used to take some of the songs and sing together in our small group home church that we were part of we'd sing that song and and it filled us with with just a sense of awe and wonder that about the christmas season um and uh so thank you james and worship team for doing that i so appreciate you helping us this morning um let me pray for our time together as we look into god's word this morning oh lord we have come here from the busyness of many things in life uh some have traveled to come to be here for this holiday weekend some have uh been frantically finishing up last minute tasks of preparation for family celebrations for gift giving for um for various ways in which we recognize and honor this uh celebration of the birth of jesus christ god i pray now this morning that you would um lord quiet lord our hearts quiet our hearts from all of that busyness from all of that noise um lord that we might as we just sung lord that we might come and worship you that i might see you and all in your glory lord that you'd fill our hearts with awe and wonder again we pray these things in jesus name amen well some of you know that i have a great interest in the country of china and in the people of china um my interest in china began when i was at university um i took a class uh in uh in college uh on ancient asian history i think it was called back then and uh i um i started reading histories reading biographies reading missionary biographies about what god was doing uh in the country of china in the past um and i was i was captured i i didn't know much about it before i went to college but i was fascinated i felt that it was a majestic and complex mystical and sometimes tragic but wonderful country and so much so that i ended up majoring in history with a concentration modern east asian history so that i could study china more excuse me even after i graduated every couple years i'd browse through the uh the new history section in the barn local barnes and noble pick up another book on the modern life of this great country and you know i read all that i could i tried everything that i could to understand what this great country and what the people of china were like i even finally had a chance to go there in the in the year 2000 and so i read travel guides i i grabbed my fromers and my and and i said i want to learn everything that i can about this place but you know i really didn't know much about china really until i went there in person when i went in person and i

walked the streets and i ate the food with my friends when i got to smell the smells and hear the sounds and see the signs the sights of life in china when i got to understand the hearts of the people that i met there then with that personal experience i began to truly understand a little bit of what china is really like and what china really is all about maybe you felt that way about something maybe it's not china maybe it's a different country that you've been fascinated by maybe it's a person that you've heard of maybe it's your grandmother who lives far far away and you've never met her and finally you had this experience of actually meeting her when you see that you realize how hard it is for us to understand or really know something without having a personal encounter a personal experience with it well how much more true is that of our relationship or our knowledge of god i remember when i was in high school i had grown up going to a church uh but god was an abstraction to me he was a bunch of ideas and maybe a few ethics thrown in there um and it wasn't until in high school i met some friends and and they they had a had something that i didn't understand they they knew god they prayed to him they talked to him they expressed their love for him they listened to him they looked for him to lead them and i didn't understand it but all i knew is i looked at them and i saw they know something they know god in a way that i don't and it made me curious i'd read books about god but i didn't really know much about god just like my experience of china before i went i couldn't really understand god until i encountered him in person in person and this is what makes christmas so very special this is what makes christmas such a rich celebration for christians for at christmas the question of what god has done for us so that we can have a personal encounter with him is answer today we're finishing a series of sermons that we've been doing for a while um in the book of john uh chapter one so if you want to turn in your pew bibles to 886 we're looking at the gospel of john chapter one uh verses one through 18 uh and our focus this morning is going to be on verses 14 through 18 but i will read the whole passage just so we get it in context john one in the beginning was the word and 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 the life was the light of men the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it there was a man sent from god whose name was john he came as a witness to bear witness to about the light that all might believe through him he was not the light but came to bear witness about the light the true light which enlightens 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 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 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 john bore witness about him and cried out this is he whom i said he who comes before comes after me ranks before me because he was before me and from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace for the law was given through mooses 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 what has god done so that we can personally encounter him i want to ask two questions this morning as we see that what god has done is he has revealed himself he has made himself known to us he has come to us and what i want to ask the question this morning is one how did god do that how did god reveal himself and then two what did he say about himself when he did that so let's look at the text together starting in verse 14 is where we're going to start how did god reveal himself he revealed himself by becoming human now this is so important to get right because if you have any interest in knowing god and i'm assuming that you're here this morning because at least at some level you have some interest of knowing god we must know him properly we must not get caught up in trying to imagine what god must be like or what god could be like or what god should be like in our estimation god has taken the initiative to show us what he is like by the incredible reality that we see in the first few words of verse 14 the word became flesh now john has been talking about the word all through verses 1 through 13 even though we haven't seen it since verse 1 he is the subject of almost every sentence in verses 1 through 13 and he's saying that he is god he was with god he was the creator of all things he was the light of men and the and the light the life of men and the light of the world he came to bestow to all who believed in him the right to become the children of god and yet all of this language up through verse 13 is incredibly abstract is it not it's the word and it's life and it's light these tremendously powerful but ultimately abstract words and in verse 14 the abstraction becomes intensely concrete the word becomes flesh he became a human being walking among human beings we and john the apostle is saying we the first apostles even john the baptist who bears witness witness to him we have seen him we've eaten with him we've touched him we've been able to see this word this transcendent word in real space time history in the person of jesus christ now you all probably know this but the theological word for this is the incarnation god becoming human in the person of jesus christ incarnation comes from the latin means into flesh it's not very you know creative is it into flesh that's what it meant that this god who was spirit entered into the flesh of a human being

which is an incredibly short sentence that is an incredibly profound truth the second person of the trinity the word or the son has taken on human form and nature and so becomes a unique person in history the god man jesus christ how are we to express all that this means well we could be here all day there are huge tomes of theology written about it let me read from a confession of the church of the history of the church listen carefully because the language is really dense from the london baptist convention of 1689 this is what we hear about the incarnation the son of god the second person in the holy trinity being very and eternal god the brightness of the father's glory of one substance and equal with him who made the world who upholds and governs all things he made that's all qualifying the son of god he did take upon him man's nature with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof yet without sin being conceived by this holy spirit in the womb of the virgin mary so that two whole perfect and distinct natures one human one divine were inseparably joined together in one person without conversion that is one didn't become the other without composition that is melding them together without confusion which person is very god and very man yet one christ the only mediator between god and man this incredibly dense definition is trying to lay the boundaries around this truth god became a human being what does that mean how do we understand this without avoiding the mistakes because when we logically press into that into that formulation we almost always get it wrong and church history is littered with people who in pressing through the logic got it wrong but as one of my seminary professors d.a carson said recently in a podcast he said the second person that trinity became what he was not that is god became human which he was not before he did not just indwell the flesh that is come and be in it nor did he put it on as a dress or did he take the appearance of humanity nor did he fake being a human but he actually became a human being in the definition did you hear two natures in one person the internal son enfleshed himself became flesh became present with us becomes one with us in flesh and blood why is this theology so important some of you are already drooping you're thinking okay what are we doing here um why is this theology because in john the word made flesh is how we are able to see and therefore know know god rightly this is why verses 17 or 18 or verse 18 is there says no one has seen god you can't see god but but god who is at the father's right hand that is the son the word

he has made god known to us how has he made god known to us because he came and he took on human form so that we could see him we have beheld him this is why the apostle john writes in his first letter the very beginning chapter 1 verse 1 that which was from the beginning what we've heard what we've seen with our eyes what we've looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life the life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the father and was made manifest to us that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also so that you may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the father and with his son jesus christ the apostle john says we've been able to touch god in human form we've been able to see him and that is how we know god that is why there's a reference to john the baptist being a witness saying this is the one don't look at me i'm not the one you're looking for but this one who's coming after me he's the one you're looking for because if you want to know god he's the one you have to see look at him look at jesus and friends when we are in those points of life when we wonder where is god what is god doing in my life how do i know what god looks like god feels like an abstraction to me i don't have any sense of you know john the baptist and john the apostle and the writers of the new testament consistently say look at jesus because jesus the word made flesh is how god has revealed himself to us and friends i want you to see how intensely personal this is jesus didn't come as a great teacher to give us great thoughts and ideas and descriptions of who god is jesus didn't come to give us an ethical system so that we know how to behave in certain ways in certain situations to try to please god jesus didn't come to create rituals and rites so that we could have some mystical spiritual experience jesus came so that we could personally encounter god so that we can know him this is the significance of the word become flesh god has come in human form to us well how are we to respond to this what are we to think of this well i have two thoughts this morning one is that you may be here this morning you may be trying to figure out what this christianity thing is all about you may be thinking how do i know god i'm not even sure well the word became flesh so that you can know god and we have incredibly in this book four biographies not just one but four biographies that give us the richness of four different eyewitness accounts or records of eyewitness accounts of people who saw the word become flesh as he was born in a stable as he grew in stature as he walked the earth as he ate fish by the sea of galilee you can read in here the story of the reality of god become a person a human being so that you can know him so i urge you

[20 : 24] explore these accounts look at them read them because this is where you will know what god is like the second thought that i have for you is that as i've been thinking about this passage for myself it's been pretty convicting i've seen as i've been thinking about this message this week how easily my heart and how easily my christian life becomes a kind of disembodied application of spiritual principles i don't know if any of you struggle like i do but i can just sort of think of what are the thoughts that i have about god and how should i live my life according to them and i lose in the midst of it an actual ability to connect with the person of god and so i have been challenged by this to consider to consider again that god has called me not just to know him in an intellectual way or to serve him in an active way but to relate to him as a personal god that i'm like my friends that i saw so long ago that i'm to love him that i'm to talk with him that i'm to ask him to lead me that i'm to relate to him as a person god comes and reveals himself to us in this intensely personal way in the incarnation but then he says something more about himself in the incarnation does he look back in verse 14 with me the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory the glory as of the only son of the father full of grace and truth this is what we are to know most preeminently about god from this passage said he is a god of grace and truth and you see it picked up again in verse 17 don't you he says the law came through moises but in jesus christ comes grace and truth and you might have asked like i did this week why moises why is moises suddenly get dragged into this conversation well there's there's a special place that moises has in the history of god's work in the world if you would ask yourself when did god show up most evidently most profoundly most strikingly in history and you read through the account of the bible you would say well probably in the account of the deliverance of e of israel from slavery to egypt and meeting god and meeting moises on the mount mountain sinai the revelation of god by giving the law to moises and this is the place and so moises then takes this place in history of being he was the guy who was up on the mountain with god he got to see the revelation of god as we read in that passage earlier he spoke with god as a man speaks to a man in the tent of meeting he had a glory in his face that was reflected because he was with god and god gave him the law god gave him the words of god to bring to god's people into the world so that people would know who he is and this then is the most extensive revelation of god in the history of the bible until jesus for what john is saying is that as great as that revelation was a greater revelation has come a revelation that has fulfilled and explained and superseded in every way

what happened with moses this is what he means when he says from his fullness we have received grace upon grace the first grace was the grace of god's revelation to moses but the second grace is a greater grace it's a fuller grace it's a richer grace that in jesus christ we have grace and truth hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 through 3 puts it this way long ago at many times and in many ways god spoke to our fathers by the prophets including moses but he but in these last days he has spoken to us by his 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 after making purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of majesty on high moses in the passage read earlier pled with god show me your glory and god said you can't see my glory and live you cannot look on my face and live but you remember what he says he says i will hide you in the cleft of the rock and i will pass by and i will i will proclaim who i am to you the lord the lord a god merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving the iniquity and transgressions of sin but who will by no means clear the guilty but visiting iniquity of the fathers and the children and the children's children of the third and the fourth generation moses could not see the glory of god he had to be hidden from the glory of god but god proclaimed himself in his word and now the word has become flesh and in jesus we have beheld his glory the glory as of the only son of the father moses was called to speak the words of god to people but now god speaks his word to all people the revelation was no longer mediated but it was incarnated if you want to know who god is look at jesus if you want to connect with god look to jesus for that is where we have gloriously where he has gloriously revealed himself and this revelation is full grace and truth grace god's undeserved favor for people like you and me who in our hearts daily reject and refuse god's grace given as unmerited love acceptance to his people truth in this context refers to god's faithfulness god will be faithful to his purposes god will come and will redeem a people for himself and when we look for how god will do that we see it's in the person of jesus christ if you were to read through the rest of the gospel of john which i highly recommend it's a great book um in in the next day or weeks um one of the things you would see is that this theme of glory comes up over and over again um in fact the whole book the first 12 chapters are the acts of jesus in history as he's doing his ministry and and it keeps saying over and over again uh jesus keeps saying over and over again my time has not yet come my hour has not yet come the hour has not yet come for the son of man

to be glorified and then in chapter 12 jesus says now now is the time for the son of man to be glorified now and he actually interacts with god the father says father now glorify me and father says i have i will and then jesus says and now i'm going to die for you and now i'm going to die on the cross for your sins and friends we cannot understand the glory of the word became flesh if we do not see the end of the story the incarnation is the beginning of something that for god is all one piece the incarnation and the death of christ and the resurrection of christ is the fullness of how we see grace and truth coming to us the word became flesh so that jesus could be a deliverer by identifying with us think with me for a minute about this god cannot die because he is the source of life man post adam cannot die for another because he must die for himself because he's a child of adam and therefore under death jesus the god man jesus is fully human but not of adam so that he might identify with us so that he can die for us do you see how important the incarnation is god can't die man can't die for someone else only a god man could come and die in our place for our sins and this is the glory of the incarnation this is what john wants us to see this is how the light comes into the world so that by believing in him we might become children of god and this at christmas or this brings us full circle god's self-disclosure his revelation in the end is an intensely personal one so we can talk about having a personal relationship with with god through jesus christ because the word became flesh and displayed his glory through his life and his death and his resurrection so that we could know god so because the word became flesh we can celebrate christmas i hope a little bit more richly this year i have three thoughts in closing three ways that i think this will change my christmas celebration this year the first thing is that in the incarnation jesus identified with me so that he could die for me the same album from that that that version of come and worship that we sang a little earlier there's a great song in there talks about the angels sitting in heaven watching the baby jesus being born and saying and and the angels filled the sky and and they wondered why why this baby would be born to die why would he come to die for me and so the first thing that this christmas will be special for for me is that i pray that i would be renewed in my wonder that jesus became flesh so that he could die for me the second implication which we haven't explored theologically much this morning but that

jesus entered jesus became flesh so that he could identify with us in suffering and in grief i know there are some of you this morning for whom christmas is an intensely hard time whether it's because of past losses or because of present trials or suffering what a good news it is that our savior is someone who took on flesh and blood so that he can empathize with us because he understands he has suffered just as we have so he is able to bring us comfort and so we look to this savior not simply crying out god why did it have to be this way but god thank you that you know thank you that you took on the pain of grief and trial for me so that's the second way in which the incarnation will change my celebration of christmas this year and thirdly the incarnation reminds me that jesus came as a person so that i can know god personally it challenges me to not be satisfied with simply having correct theology it challenges me with not being satisfied with simply being a relatively good christian in my morality and in my ethics it challenges me to not simply go through the motions the rituals of church life of private devotions it challenges me to meet with god and to encounter him in jesus christ because god came not as an idea or a message but ultimately the word became flesh so that i could relate to him as a person he wants me to engage with all of my affective being my word my will my emotions my mind my heart my hands all that i am is meant to be engaged with god as a personal god and that's why my prayer is that as these truths come home to me and to you that we will worship and we will worship with joy this christmas listen to the to the song to the words of a well-known hymn as i close christ by highest heaven adored christ the everlasting lord laid in tight behold him come offspring of the virgin's womb veiled in flesh the godhead see hail the incarnate deity pleased with us in flesh to dwell jesus our emmanuel hark the herald angels sing glory to the newborn king let's pray god we pray that you would fill our hearts with this song of worship this morning that as we see what you have done for us in the word becoming flesh god that you would richly richly deepen our worship that we would see what a wonderful thing you have done for us in christ lord that you would move us lord move us out of cold ritualism move us out of skepticism move us out of the places of distance from you draw us near god that we may see you personally that we may know you personally that we may be redeemed by you personally this morning

we pray these things in jesus name amen