

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”: THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GOD HAS THE FIRST WORD (JOHN 1:1)

I. Why Must All People Trust and Obey Jesus?

II. In the Beginning

- A. The words, “In the beginning” (*En archè*) are the same words that introduce the first book of the Bible, Genesis.
—Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
- B. When we hear “In the beginning” opening the Gospel of John, we realize that John wants us to read his Gospel—and to understand Jesus—in connection with the Old Testament; in this case, alongside the creation account of Genesis.
- C. The implication is that John may have been writing for people who were familiar with the Old Testament. These would include:
 - 1. Jews
 - 2. Those interested in converting to Judaism
 - 3. God-fearing Gentiles who were familiar with the Old Testament.
- D. Somehow John is going to draw a connection between the dawn of creation in Genesis 1 to Jesus of Nazareth.

III. Introducing the Word (John 1:1)

- A. John begins with the familiar phrase, “In the beginning...”
- B. But just when we are expecting John to say “God” as Moses does in Genesis 1, John says, “In the beginning was the Word...” (Köstenberger, *John*, 25). Who is this Word of whom John speaks?

IV. Creative Words (Genesis 1)

- A. To know who John means by the Word, we need to read John 1:1 alongside Genesis 1.
- B. One thing that strikes us in Genesis 1 is the strong emphasis on the speech of God.

1. Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

2. Genesis 1:6-8

⁶And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

C. This patterns repeats itself throughout Genesis 1.

1. God *speaks* and a new component of the universe is formed.
2. God *evaluates* his work.
3. God *pronounces* it good.

D. We notice the tremendous ease with which God goes about creating the universe and the world. God creates the whole universe merely by speaking them into existence. It is all very efficient and effortless.

V. The Word of Words

A. The emphasis on *divine speech* is the common theme that ties the start of John’s Gospel to the start of Genesis.

1. Both take us back to the dawn of space and time.
2. Both refer us to God’s divine speech.
3. Both refer us to God himself.

B. But at the same time, we sense that something does not quite match up.

1. Although the parallel between John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 is certainly there, something remains unaccounted for. John does not say, “In the beginning were the Words,” but “In the beginning was the Word...”
2. When we take into consideration...
 - a. what else John would say in the rest of the chapter

- b. what other authors of Scripture say, particularly Paul in Colossians 1:15-18 and the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 1:2
 - c. —*specifically, the fact that all things were made through this Word*— it seems that this Word in John 1:1 is not just one of many words that God spoke in order to create the universe.
 - 3. This Word was himself the first Word of God!
 - a. He was the supreme Word from whom all the divine words in Genesis 1 flow.
 - b. He is the embodiment of the eternal Counsel and Will of God.
 - c. He is the Blueprint, Template, or Archetype (i.e, supreme pattern) on whom the entire universe is based.
- C. This Word of God in John 1:1 is the Word of words, the Word from whom all reality flows, the very basis of all reality.

VI. The Word Was With God

- A. There is still more that we can say about the Word, without falling into mere speculation.
- B. Since God never had a beginning and is always the same, was there ever a time when God was without his Word? Of course NOT!
 - 1. The Word is God’s eternal Wisdom and Counsel.
 - 2. If we say that God was once without his Wisdom and Counsel, we would have denied key traits of God himself.
 - 3. Since it is inconceivable to imagine a moment when God was less than who he is, there never was a time when God was without his Word. —John Calvin: “If it is wrong to picture God apart from His Wisdom, we must also confess that the origin of the Word is not to be sought anywhere but in the eternal Wisdom of God” (*The Gospel According to St John 1-10*, 8)
 - 4. The first Word of God is as eternal as God himself.
- C. Which brings us to the next point: “the Word was *with* God...”
- D. Dr. R.C. Sproul points out that the word for “with” is significant (*Everyone’s a Theologian*, 54).
 - 1. There are three possible Greek words that can be translated “with.”
 - a. *Syn* (“*synagogue*,” “*synchronize*,”) = “At the same time”
 - b. *Meta* (“*metaphysics*”) = “Being alongside of”
 - c. *Pros*—which suggests “face to face”
 - 2. John 1:1 uses *pros*.
- E. For the Word to be “with” God is not just to say that the Word co-existed with God. The Word was *face-to-face* with God in the closest of intimacies!

- F. It makes sense for us to think of the Word in this way, as sharing the highest of intimacy with God.
1. Before anything else existed, God was everything.
 2. Whoever was in relationship with God at the very beginning (before any thing was made) had to have enjoyed an intensely intimate relationship with God; a relationship so intimate that it can best be described as “face-to-face.”
 3. To say that the Word was *with* God at the very beginning is to imply that the Word enjoyed the highest conceivable level of fellowship with God.
 4. The Word was God’s closest Companion, God’s dearest Friend. He was as close to God as God’s very own thoughts.
—Indeed, the Word was God’s very own Word.

VII. The First Word Is God’s

- A. God has always had and will always have the first Word.
—By this Word, God ordered creation into existence; defined good and evil; and ordains the very flow of history down to the smallest detail.
- B. Since the first Word contains all that God has planned, for God to have the *first* Word is also for God to have the *last* Word.
1. Just as the Word brings about the creation of all things, the Word will also bring about the accomplishment of all that God desires.
 2. Isaiah 55:11 reads:

so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

—God’s Word will accomplish all that God desires to accomplish.
 3. Revelation 19:13—The Word of God will come in all his glory to accomplish our salvation (Rev 19:13).
- C. Just as God’s Word was the Alpha-Word, God’s Word is also the Omega-Word that will finish everything that God has started.

VIII. Life in the Word of God

If the Word of God is the first and last Word...

- A. There is ultimately no such thing as an atheistic or secular universe. We see God in and through all things.
1. The entire universe is filled with the Word of God—the same God whom we call our Abba Father!
 2. Psalm 19:1-4 teaches us to say,
 - ¹ The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
 - ² Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
 - ³ There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
 - ⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
 3. If the Word of God made and sustains all things, all things shout forth the praises of God in one way or another!
 4. If the Word of God is in all things, we are invited to see God in every moment of our lives.
 - a. The good times
 - i. Thank God for every small pleasure and success that he allows you to have.
 - ii. Thank God for your relationships.
 - iii. Thank God for every life-giving moment in those relationship with your friends, or your spouse, or your children.
 - b. The bad times
 - i. Some of the best gifts that God can give us are the gifts of failure and disappointment (!!)
 - ii. These gifts help *purify* us from our worldly attachments.
 - iii. They remind us that real life is not found in our jobs or our dreams being fulfilled. It's in Jesus Christ alone.
 - c. If God's Word created and binds all things together, gives everything its meaning, there is a holy and compassionate Rationality and Wisdom behind our experiences as children of God.
 - d. We can be confident that God is working through all the details of our lives; that every good gift comes from him (Jas 1:17). We live in a God-enclosed universe.
- B. We must frame our lives according to the Word of God.
1. We must be devoted to the good and holy will of God.

- a. Make it the supreme purpose of your existence to see God's will accomplished in every area of your life—especially your relationships.
 - b. Keep your heart open to whatever the will of God might be for you.
 - c. Struggle for the rule of God in every corner of our lives.
2. We can trust that what God wants, God will get (cf. Rom 9:16).
- a. If God's first Word is also his last Word, it means that what God wants, God will get.
 - b. There is nothing that God wants more from his children than their *perfect conformity to him!*
 - c. God's will *will* be done.
 - Philippians 1:6: "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."
 - Romans 8:30: "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."
 - Jude 1:24, 25: "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."
 - d. We can fight on with confidence because we know that as we fight, it is God who works in us by his powerful energy, "both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13)—and God will finish the work he started. He will perfect us.

If God has the first (and therefore the last) Word over all creation and over all our lives, we know that God has all things covered. You and I do not live in an empty, pointless, drab and boring universe. We live in a God-centered, God-directed universe that is alive with the glory of God! As such, we need to live our lives fully conscious of God. We need to devote ourselves completely to God. And we need to be engaged in the great struggle to do so! And yet, we do all those things trusting fully that what God started with his Word, God will also finish by his Word. God will complete us in the end. God's Word is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. God's Word is our creation and re-creation. God's Word is our salvation. From beginning to end, God is God.