

Sermon Outline

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

ADORING THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD, PART ONE (JOHN 1:9-13)

I. YHWH the Eternal Word

II. The Incarnation (John 1:14)

- A. But as glorious as all that information is, it does not prepare us for the stunning truth that we are now about to read in verse 14: “And the Word”—this Word who created the world, who existed beyond time and space—“became flesh and dwelt among us...”
- B. This is a simple statement. Yet, it communicates some very important truths for us.
 - 1. The Word took on human nature. That’s what “became flesh” means.
 - a. The Word did not simply pretend or appear to be human.
 - b. He actually assumed human physiology and psychology—without discarding his divine nature.
 - 2. The Word “dwelt among us...”
 - a. The Word who dwelled in the presence of God has become a fellow human being.
 - b. “Dwelt” (*eskēnōsen*) is a very interesting word choice because of its relation to “tent” (*skēnē*). The Word “pitched his tent” amongst us.
 - c. “Tent” reminds us of the great tent in which the Lord God dwelled while he was journeying with Israel in the wilderness.
 - d. The God-Word who created the universe was the same Lord who dwelled with Israel during their wilderness journeys.
 - e. Now, the God-Word has chosen a new tent for himself—a tent of human nature.
 - f. The human form of the Word—*Jesus*—is God’s new tent/tabernacle/temple in the world.

III. The Glory of the Son (John 1:14)

- A. As a result of becoming flesh, the Creator Word of God becomes visible and tangible.
- B. Even in this form, his glory, his real identity, could be discerned by those who followed him: “we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- C. The word “glory” (*doxa*) can have at least two meanings.
 - 1. The (inherent) worth or the value of something.
 - 2. The beauty or majesty of something.
- D. When it comes to God, we need not separate the two meanings too much, because...
 - 1. God’s worth is precisely in his absolute majesty

2. God's majesty is rooted in his infinite value—his infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Substance.

—The glory of God is all these wonderful things.

- E. In the case of verse 14, John talks about *seeing* the glory of the Word. So it is more likely that the majesty and beauty of the Word are in view.
1. Calvin: “the majesty of God was not annihilated though clothed in flesh. It was indeed hidden under the lowliness of the flesh, yet so that it still sent forth its glory” (*The Gospel According to St. John 1-10, 21*).
 2. Without denying that the infinite worth of the Son is in view, the word “glory” here may be taken to mean the radiant majesty and beauty of the God-Word.

IV. The Glory of the Only (-Begotten) Son (John 1:14)

- A. First: *This glory is “as of the only Son from the Father...”*
- B. This is the first time the Word is specifically identified as the Son of God in John's Gospel.
- C. To say that the Word is “the only Son from the Father” might seem odd at first, given that there are many persons/beings that are called “sons of God” in Scripture.
- D. One verse earlier, we saw that those who believe in the Word are given the right to be called “children of God.”
- E. The Word is “the only Son from the Father” in that he is the only one of his kind. He is the special, unique, one-of-a-kind-Son.
1. Unlike other sons of God, the Word is the only Son who shares God's own being, God's own nature.
 2. Unlike the other beings who become sons of God by creation and adoption, the Word is God's only “flesh-and-blood” Son.
 3. To use the luminous words of the Nicene Creed, the Word is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”
 4. It may be far better to translate the Greek word *monogenous* not as “only” (RSV, ESV, HCSB) but as “only-begotten” (GB, KJV, D-R, NKJV, NASB).
- F. Summary: The Word is God's only-begotten Son.
1. It is not that God has only one son. The Bible says he has many.
 2. It is not that God loves only the Word and not his other sons. That would be monstrous!
 3. It is this: The Word is the special, one and only Son who was begotten from God—“the only Son of God by nature” (Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John 1-10, 21*).
 4. When people looked at Jesus, when they followed him, spent time with him, listened to his teachings, they could see that he was indeed God himself in the flesh, at work to reconcile the world to himself.

V. Glory Full of Grace and Truth (John 1:14)

- A. Second: *This glory is “full of grace and truth.”*
- B. Consider *grace*.

1. Grace is “a kindness, a manifestation of good will, a gift, an unexpected favor” (Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 45).
 2. Grace explains so much of what Jesus represents.
 - a. Jesus is the steadfast, unwavering, life-giving love that God has for his people—a love that showed itself when God entered into covenant with sinful human beings, a love that now shows itself in redeeming those human beings from final condemnation.
 3. This love of God is not to be understood merely in soft, sentimental terms, but in strong, eschatological terms:

—Jesus is “full of grace” because he is YHWH God, coming to his own creation, with the precise intention of accomplishing the ultimate, comprehensive forgiveness of sins—a forgiveness so great that it completely eradicates mankind’s sins once and for all, and ushers them into the future of God’s eternal life.
- C. Consider *truth*.
1. Some considerations to discern the meaning of “truth.”
 - a. How does grace relate to truth in this particular instance? In what sense does Jesus bring truth?
 - b. A danger in seeking too precise definitions is that we end up becoming too minimalist in our understanding. We start thinking that “truth” must only be this one thing and not others.
 - c. But as the eternal Word and Son of God, Jesus can bear the full weight of truth and all its awesome connotations.
 2. Jesus is full of truth because...
 - a. He is the eternal Word of God, from whom all other divine words flow.
 - i. Since it is impossible for God to lie, Jesus is absolute integrity, honesty, and faithfulness.
 - ii. Jesus is truth in human flesh.
 - b. He is the ultimate and final Reality of God’s fulfilled will.
 - i. Truth is not just an ethical category. It is also an eschatological category.
 - ii. Jesus is full of truth because he contains within himself the fullness of God’s intentions for all of creation—he is the embodiment of perfect Reality.
 - iii. Calvin: “I simply understand it as meaning that Christ was to be acknowledged the Son of God by the apostles because He had in Himself the fullness of all things belonging to the spiritual Kingdom of God” (*The Gospel According to St. John 1-10*, 22).
 - c. He is God’s covenant faithfulness.
 - i. A number of evangelical scholars (Köstenberger, Morris, Carson, etc.) believe that “grace and truth” is equivalent to “steadfast love and faithfulness.”
 - ii. When Moses asked God to show him his glory, God responded with a declaration of himself: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness [.]” (Ex 34:6).

- iii. Jesus is full of truth because he is the perfect manifestation of God's steadfast love and faithfulness.
- D. Summary: Jesus is "full of grace and truth" because he is God's perfect and ultimate expression of love, mercy, faithfulness, wisdom, and reality to his people. Jesus is God's covenant in human form!

⁶ "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,
⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness. (Isa 42:6-7)

VI. The Pre-eminence of Jesus (John 1:15)

- A. All this explains why John the Baptist would say "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'" (v 15).
- B. John, and later, the disciples of Jesus, were able to see the younger Jesus for who he truly was.
—This was no ordinary rabbi or charismatic Hasid. This man is none other than the only-begotten Son of God, the eternal Word through whom God creates, sustains, and redeems the universe.

VII. Adoration

- A. How should we respond to this Revelation of God himself?
- B. John the Gospel-writer provides us with a clue: "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."
—The disciples marveled at his glory. They delighted in his glory. They could not stop contemplating and speaking of it.
- C. This idea of adoration is not absent from the Gospel. In fact, it is central to our salvation.
1. Our Lord prays in John 17:24: "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, *to see my glory* that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."
 2. At the heart of eternal life is a life of absolute contemplation and adoration of the glory of the only-begotten Son of God.
 3. The theological term for this is *the beatific vision*.

Jesus was not only given to us to be our Savior. He was given by God the Father to be the *Truth*—that is, the chief delight of our hearts, the ultimate glory, beauty, majesty, and delight for whom we live. Jesus is the ultimate Truth that stands behind every beautiful sunset, every clear blue sky, every cup of cold water on a hot day, every gentle breeze, every transcendent work of art, every tender smile, every kind word, every loving embrace. There is an objective reality behind all those earthly glories. It

is all in *him*—the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Let us receive Jesus as God’s gift of absolute Beauty to bless our minds and hearts.

*Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth—
“God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made”—
you are the eternal Joy of your people.
Lord, grant us yourself.
Soothe our aching hearts.
Restore our tired souls.
Melt our fears away.
Give us yourself and all will be well.
Amen.*

Questions for Reflection

1. How should we understand “became flesh”? Did the Word merely appear to be human? Or did he do more than that?
2. What does the Son’s glory consist of?
3. In what sense is the Word “the only Son from the Father”? How is he superior to all other sons of God?
4. What does it mean to say that the Word is “full of grace and truth”?
5. What prevents you from delighting in Jesus? Ask God to show you the hindrances in your life that prevent you from more fully delighting in the all-glorious Son of God.
6. How do you practice delight in the Lord Jesus?