

# Sermon Outline

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

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## JESUS THE CENTER JOHN 1:16-18

### I. Introduction

- A. The Prologue of John’s Gospel is an important part of this Gospel, because it introduces us to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. The Prologue introduces us to Jesus in such a way that links Jesus to the larger, cosmic plans of God himself.
- C. Why must we believe in Jesus Christ? Why would it be absolutely fatal for the world to reject Jesus? The Prologue gives us several reasons.
  1. Jesus is the *Word of God*, by whom all things were made.
  2. Jesus is the *Bringer* of eternal life and light.
  3. Jesus is *the only-begotten Son of God*, who brings God’s grace and truth in all its fullness.
  4. Jesus is the *only-begotten God* who comes from God to explain God to the world.
- D. I would like to draw one more important (multi-faceted) lesson from the Prologue: Because Jesus is the eternal, only-begotten Son of God who is greater than Moses, Jesus is the Fulfiller of Judaism (Burge, *John*, 45).  
—In the Gospel of John, Jesus offers himself to his fellow Israelites as the new Center of their spiritual life, the new Locus of religious and national devotion.
- E. Judaism has much to do with us because (outside of Christianity) it is the religion *par excellence*.
  1. Outside of Jesus Christ, Judaism is the one religion that comes closest to the will of God, precisely because it is based in the Torah, the Law of God.
  2. While Judaism in Jesus’ day was quite diverse, all groups within Judaism based themselves on the Law of Moses.
  3. If Jesus has come to fulfill the Torah’s requirements—if he has come to bring about the final reality that the Torah promises—what does this say about all the less truthful religious systems of the world?
  4. The inescapable implication: Jesus is not just a Jewish Messiah. He is the true Life of the world. He is the world’s Christ as well.

## II. Jesus over Judaism (John 1:16-18)

- A. In verses 16-18, John places Jesus over the greatest prophet of Israel, Moses.
- B. When John says that “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” he doesn’t mean that there was no grace or truth in the Law of Moses. He means that the fullest demonstration of God’s mercy, the ultimate and most comprehensive revelation of God comes through Jesus.
  1. Through Jesus, God brings supreme *grace*. He forgives even those sins that could not be forgiven under the terms of the Law.
  2. Through Jesus, God brings final *truth*. He brings about the ultimate reality he had promised, which is the reality of eternal life in fellowship with God.
- C. Jesus is also *the only-begotten God*, the divine Lord who comes forth from the eternal being of the Father to deliver the Father’s message to the world.
  1. Unlike Moses who wasn’t even allowed to see the full glory of God, Jesus the only-begotten God had always been at the Father’s side, close to the Father’s heart.
  2. That is why he can give the supreme and final revelation of God himself.
- D. All this prepares us for what we will see in chapters 1-12.
  1. Throughout these chapters, John uses Jesus’ miracles and teachings to show how Jesus brings forth grace and truth by his ministry.
  2. In 1-12, we will encounter prominent representatives and institutions of Judaism.
    - a. a wedding, Jewish ritual purification, temple (chapter 2)
    - b. Rabbi (chapter 3)
    - c. Holy well and notion of holy space (chapter 4)
    - d. The festivals of Judaism (5:1-10:39).
  3. When we see how Jesus relates to each one of those institutions and representatives of Judaism, we see how he has come to fulfill the Law.

## III. Jesus, New Center of Judaism

- A. The Gospel of John is, in fact, a very Jewish Gospel.
- B. It seems to have been written in part to show Jewish Christians or people inclined toward Judaism that Jesus really is the fulfillment of the deepest values and visions of that religion.
- C. Since Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, he has come to be the new Center of the Jewish world.  
—He has come to take over those cherished spaces that were once occupied by the temple, the priests, the holy days, and the rabbis—and replace them with himself.

#### IV. Jesus, New Center of the World

- A. What relevance does Jesus have to non-Jews?
- B. The clue rests in what Judaism is.  
—*It is the religion that is based on the Hebrew Scriptures; which includes the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings.* And all of those books were given by God to Israel to reveal his will to them.
- C. God intended for his Law to go into the world through Israel.
- Deuteronomy 4:8: “And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?”
  - Isaiah 2:1-3:  
<sup>1</sup> The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.  
<sup>2</sup> It shall come to pass in the latter days  
that the mountain of the house of the LORD  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be lifted up above the hills;  
and all the nations shall flow to it,  
<sup>3</sup> and many peoples shall come, and say:  
“Come, *let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,*  
to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.”  
For *out of Zion* shall go the law,  
and the word of the LORD *from Jerusalem.*
- D. If someone greater than Moses and the Law has come, is it conceivable for this Person to have no relevance whatsoever on the rest of the world?
- E. Moreover, Jesus is the Word of God by whom all things were made.
1. Whether we believe in it or not, we are dealing with Jesus in some form or fashion wherever you go.
  2. When John calls Jesus the Word, he used a word that has associations with concepts like truth, logic, meaning, and speech.
  3. The reason we are able to think and speak rationally at all is because we were made in the image of this Word.
  4. The great vocation that has been given to each of us is to learn to cooperate with Jesus in our respective fields of work.
- F. *Jesus has come to take over the world.*
1. He has come to live in you. He has come to be your mind, your heart, your vision, your very life.

2. He has come to be the new Center of everything that you do, such that “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17).

G. If we would let Jesus be the new Center of our lives, he will make things new.

## V. Jesus, New Center of *Your* World

A. Jesus is the Lord YHWH himself in action, graciously coming to his covenant-breaking people, bringing with him the gifts of life and light, grace and truth.

B. Just as Jesus does what the Law of Moses cannot do, Jesus also does what no religion in this world can do.

C. Since we are often guilty of treating our careers, traditions, or hobbies with religious seriousness, Jesus comes to do what none of those things can ultimately achieve for us.

D. *Grace*

1. We are only too aware of the many ways (or at least *some* of the many ways) in which we have failed God and one another.
2. As if the real, legitimate guilt that comes from breaking God’s Law isn’t heavy enough, we also have all the extra burdens that this world places on us.
  - Unspoken expectations from our societies and communities
  - Never-ending demands and criticisms of others
  - Rules and requirements that make no real sense
3. All those things come together to make life immensely burdensome.
4. The sense of being heavily-burdened can show up in any number of ways.
  - a. Stress
  - b. Sloth
  - c. Depression
5. What has Jesus come to do?
  - a. He has come to turn water into wine.
  - b. He has come to heal the sick.
  - c. He has come to call the dead out of their graves.
  - d. He has come to bring the joy of the great eschatological wedding banquet into the midst of our tired world.  
—*Grace upon grace!!*
6. While the complete end of sadness comes only when we enter finally into God’s Presence, it is possible to enter more deeply into the joy of the Lord.  
—Nehemiah 8:10: “the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
7. Joy starts by recognizing that God’s love is a gift, and not what we earn.

—As far as God is concerned, Jesus has accomplished all the KPIs that truly matter; those you need to be accepted and loved by God. That is why we can rejoice! God’s favor has dawned upon our lives through Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

E. *Truth*

1. With that same favor or grace, Jesus also brings *truth*, the reality of ultimate blessedness.
2. Truth is not merely about having the right ideas. It is about living in the ultimate reality, who is God himself.
3. Since “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8), the most stable reality of all for the believer is the love of the heavenly Father.

VI. **Jesus, Your Heart**

**God offers us the gift that matters—his Son Jesus—through Word and Sacrament. Jesus knows what pains you are presently struggling with at this season in your life. He knows all the dilemmas, all the secret pains of your soul. He knows all your failed dreams and ambitions. He knows all the deep yearnings of your heart. And unlike the world, your Savior does not mock them. Because he became flesh, he knows very well the kinds of struggles that you have. But in spite of all that the world tried to throw at him, he could still say, on his way to the cross (!), “Take heart, I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). This same Jesus loves you and comes for you today. He is speaking to you in his Word. He is feeding you in the Sacrament. Don’t turn him away. Receive him as God’s Gift to your soul. Receive him as God’s appointed Center of your life. And watch as he begins to make things new.**

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
you are the only-begotten 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.”  
We do rest in you.  
We do receive you.  
Make of us what pleases you.  
Stay with us now and forevermore.  
Amen.*

## **Questions for Reflection**

1. Based on John 1:1-18, why must we believe in Jesus?
2. What implications does Jesus have for Judaism?
3. Why does Jesus' fulfilment of Judaism imply the fulfilment of the real needs of the rest of the world? Why is Jesus not just the Jewish Messiah, but the world's Messiah?
4. What are the present fears and distresses that weigh on you? How does that affect your daily life? How does Jesus speak to those things?
5. Jesus has "come to be your mind, your heart, your vision, your very life." How does this truth impact you? What feelings come to mind? Why?