

Sermon Outline

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

ADORING THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD, PART TWO (JOHN 1:16-18)

I. Introduction

II. Grace upon Grace (John 1:16)

- A. In verse 16, John says, “For from his fullness we have all received...”
1. “For” (*hoti*) harks back to verse 14: “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.”
 2. In verse 16, John continues his autobiographical description of what it means to have experienced the glory of the only-begotten Son.
- B. John now tells us about the expansive, super-abundant nature of the grace that flows from the Son.
1. John describes this overflowing of grace as “grace upon grace.” Grace never stopped flowing from Jesus.
 2. In fact, the original is very telling here. It literally reads, “grace instead of grace” or “grace against grace.” Each powerful demonstration of grace from the Lord Jesus seems to eclipse the previous one (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 15).
- C. Why “grace upon grace”?
1. “Grace upon grace” because Jesus’ miracles (and teachings) escalate in power, intensity, and depth.
 2. “Grace upon grace” because our Lord Jesus radiated grace by his whole life.
- D. Jesus shows us what we humans were meant to be—people who overflowed with kindness and goodness.
- E. But there is an aspect to Jesus’ graciousness that we are not able to emulate exactly—the divine aspect.
1. It seems that John is emphasizing the divine nature of Jesus’ grace in verse 16.
 2. Jesus constantly overflowed with goodness because he was the eternal Son of God, the Source of all goodness for the world.
- F. Summary:
1. In both his humanity and his deity, *our Lord Jesus was a supernova of holy grace and goodness*, radiating life and light to everyone the Father brought to him.
 2. As we deepen our trust in Jesus and grow in conformity to him, God causes us to grow in gracefulness as well.

III. Jesus Is Superior to Moses (John 1:17)

- A. Verse 17 asserts that Jesus is superior even to the prophet Moses himself: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

- B. The Jews held Moses in very high regard because the Lord God gave Israel his Law through Moses.
- C. In saying that “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” John could not have meant that...
 1. there was no truth in the Law of Moses.
—The Law of Moses reveals the holy commandments of God who is Truth.
 2. there was no grace in the Law of Moses.
—The Law of Moses legislated sacrifices to atone for the sins of God’s people.
- D. Yet, those qualifications aside, we still have to account for the fact that John is suggesting that Jesus is somehow superior to the Law.
—In what way is Jesus superior to Moses and the Law?

IV. Overwhelming Grace (John 1:17)

- A. *Jesus is superior to Moses, because he shows greater grace than the Law could give.*
- B. The New Covenant forms the backdrop of Jesus’ ministry.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. ²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezek 36:25-28 ESV)

- C. While Israel went into exile because they had broken the Law, God remains committed to his people—and promises to forgive and undo their sin.
- D. It is this great sin-removing, world-renewing grace that the Lord Jesus brings.
- E. When John says that grace came through Jesus, he means this:
—The long-anticipated, end-times grace of God—
the *grace* that forgives all our sins once and for all,
the *grace* that reconciles us to God in spite of all the bad things we have done,
the *grace* that creates new hearts for God—
this is the grace that has come into the world through Jesus Christ!
- F. Why is Jesus superior to Moses? Because Jesus brought what neither the Law nor Moses could possibly give—the supreme forgiveness of sins.
 - Acts 13:38-39: “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”

V. Ultimate Truth (John 1:17)

- A. *Jesus is superior to Moses, because he brings about the final reality that the Law could only hint at—the reality of eternal life.*

- B. In John's Gospel, truth is not merely what is opposed to falsehood. Truth is also to be understood eschatologically, i.e., relating to the final restoration of all things. (Burge, *John*, 59).
- C. Jesus is superior to the Law, because he brings about the reality—the state of things, the condition of the universe—that even the Law could not, namely, eternal life.
- D. In the Gospel of John, eternal life is a relational term. It refers to a renewed relationship with God.
- John 17:3: “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”
 - Ezekiel 36:28: “You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”
- That is what eternal life is—it is life with God and his people forever in a state of harmony and peace that can no longer be broken.
- E. Summary: Jesus brought grace and truth, because he brought about the ultimate forgiveness and state of blessing that the Law could only hint at.

VI. God Has Made God Known (John 1:18)

- A. Verse 18 brings the grand finale to the Prologue of chapter one.
- B. The opening words—“No one has ever seen God”—alludes to Exodus 33:18-20.
1. Here we have the prophet Moses praying to God.
 2. Moses asks God to show him his glory (v 18).
 3. The Lord's response
 - Exodus 33:19-20: “And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.’”
 4. From how God responded to Moses, we know what Moses was asking for. —He was asking to see the full power and majesty of God.
 5. To that request, the Lord says that no man shall see him and *live*. No sinful human being is capable of withstanding the full sight of God.
 6. In what he had said, God is very clearly demonstrating that even the great prophet Moses has his limits. Moses is part of sinful humanity.
- C. But now, something is about to happen: Though no human being has ever seen God, “the only God [or “only-begotten God”], who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.”
1. Not even Moses could see God with the naked eye.
 2. Now, the one Person who has seen God face-to-face has come into the world.
 3. He is the *monogenēs Theos*—the “only God”/“only-begotten God.”
 4. Up to this point, the divine Being has been revealed by many names: “the Word of God,” “the true Light,” and “the only-begotten Son of God.”
 5. At the climax of the Prologue, John reveals the Word in all his splendor. *He is none other than God himself. He is the Lord YHWH, who is Creator and King of the heavens and the earth.*
- D. Let's be very clear on this point: The only-begotten God is not one of God's creations. He is not the first creation of God.

1. Instead, he comes from within God’s own being like a drop of water is pulled from the sea.
 2. That particular drop of water has always existed within the larger body of water. But its existence is only revealed when it is pulled out and shown to be distinct.
 3. Yet, even the water analogy is highly imperfect, because the drop of water is of far less volume than all the water there is in the sea.
—This is not so with the only-begotten God!
 4. The only-begotten God is equal to God the Father in every conceivable way.
 - a. He is as limitless, glorious, stable, and unchanging as the Father.
 - b. In other words, he is fully and completely God.
 5. We stand by the words of the Nicene Creed: The Son 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...”
- E. John does reveal two important facts about the only-begotten God.
1. He “is at the Father’s side...” or “in the bosom of the Father.”
 2. He “has made him known.”
—Who is best able to reveal God if not the very God who dwells with and in God himself?

VII. Adoration

Behold, our Lord Jesus Christ—the Word of God, the true Light of heaven, the Son of God and only-begotten God, abounding in mercy and truth! Trust in him. Receive him. Cling to him with all your life.

*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”—
you are the eternal Delight of your people.
Lord, grant us yourself.
Purify our sinful hearts.
Empower our weary spirits.
Replace our sins and fears with your holy Presence.
Give us yourself and all will be well.
Amen.*

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the meaning of “grace upon grace”? How does Jesus show “grace upon grace”?
2. How is Jesus superior to Moses and the Law? In what sense does “grace and truth” come through Jesus as opposed to Moses?
3. How do the terms of the New Covenant form the backdrop of Jesus’ ministry?
4. How does the only-begotten God/Son relate to God the Father? How does he not relate?
5. Why is Jesus better suited than Moses to fully reveal God?
6. How do we better adore our Lord Jesus? What hinders us from keeping the glory of Jesus before us always? What prevents us from dwelling in the awareness of the glory of the Son?