

JOHN - THE GOSPEL OF LIGHT & LIFE

John 1:1-18

January 15, 2023

On New Year's Day we looked at Paul's letter to Titus, instructing Pastor Titus to convey this message to his congregation – God's grace is unavoidable and inescapable, because Grace is a person called THE BLESSED HOPE, who lives within every believer, and will return one day to rule and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The key verse we looked at last time was **Titus 2:13**, and we made it personal, ***"I am looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."*** That's my hope for 2023, and I pray that it's your hope as well for this year, that we would be anticipating Christ's return, being prepared and ready to meet our Lord and Saviour when He returns. And while we wait we need to be about the Lord's business, not being idle but keeping in step with the Holy Spirit, on mission!

Today, I want us to take a journey into the Gospel of John – THE GOSPEL OF LIGHT AND LIFE – to learn **WHO** that blessed hope **IS** that we spoke about last time. Of the four Gospels we find in the New Testament, the Gospels that describe the life and ministry of Jesus, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote primarily about what Jesus **DID**, while John writes to tell us who Jesus **IS**. And John's primary purpose is that you and I would come to believe, without any doubts, that Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Throughout Christian history, the Gospel of John has stood as the most favorite books of the Bible, alongside of possibly the Book of Psalms. Today, I want us to look at the first eighteen verses of John's Gospel, the Prologue or introduction to his Gospel. Like the other three Gospel writer, John also most likely wondered where to begin his account of the life of Christ.

Matthew writes to the Jews, so his Gospel begins with the Jewish nation of Israel, with Jesus as the Son of Abraham, who was the promised Messiah declared throughout the Old Testament. Mark's Gospel completely skips the genealogy and begins with John the Baptist, who fulfills Isaiah's prophesy as the one who is sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. And then, historian Luke writes to the Gentiles, so his Gospel begins with the birth narrative and His genealogy goes back to the first human Adam, declaring Jesus as the second Adam, the sinless Son of man come to save all of the descendants of Adam. However, John's Gospel goes back even further to eternity past, before the creation recorded in Genesis. Jesus goes back to time before time, declaring that He is eternal like God, always

existed, like God having no beginning or end. Why this is important as we wait for THE BLESSED HOPE to appear is that we were also created eternal – we will live on in eternity and need to focus on where we will spend eternity. And Jesus wants all of us to live in eternity with Him. Listen to Jesus’ prayer on the night He was betrayed, **“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am (in ETERNITY), and to see my glory, the glory you have given me before the creation of the world”** (John 17:24). And God answered Jesus’ prayer according to **Ephesians 2:6, “He raised us up with Christ the exalted One, and we ascended with him into the glorious perfection and authority of the heavenly realm, for we are now co-seated with Christ!”** Right now, we are one with Christ our Lord in glory and one day we will see him face-to-face. That’s our present reality, every believer is a resident of both heaven and earth – we have dual citizenship!

John begins his Gospel by introducing us to THE BLESSED HOPE, the eternal One, in **John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”** As we read these verses, we are reminded of how the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis begins: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”** (Genesis 1:1). Genesis tells us that the earth was formless, empty, and covered in darkness until the **WORD** spoke things into being, beginning with light and concluding with the creation of us humans, formed from the dust of the earth in the image of God. This is no accidental beginning to his Gospel: John wants his readers to know that Jesus was not a created being as the Jehovah Witness believe but is the Creator. Even though one day Jesus emptied Himself and came to live among us as the Son of man, the God/man, John want to let his readers know that Jesus not only existed with God the Father when Adam & Eve were created, but existed with God for all of eternity. Jesus is not a created being!

John uses **“the Word”** to describe Jesus for that specific reason– the Greek term is **LOGOS**, where we get the word logic and logical. In the English language it simply means “word,” but in the Greek it means so much more: knowledge, wisdom, reason, and revelation. The Greeks believed that LOGOS was the power from which everything came into being, but they had the incorrect belief that **LOGOS** was an impersonal force, so John wanted to correct their miss-understanding of the creation. That is the same issue we have today as well, the belief in millions of years of evolution that everything came about by chance, not by intelligence, a Creator. According to John, **“the Word”** doesn’t refer to an

impersonal force, but to a PERSON, Almighty God who created everything we can know, see, and touch, and who we can come to know in a personal way. And this WORD, the Creator, came to live among us, bringing heaven down to this earth, becoming LIGHT within us, giving us LIFE, as He continues to create, bringing light to darkness and life to hopelessness. That's why John begins his Gospel by telling us: *"Everything came into being through a PERSON named Christ Jesus, and without Christ nothing came into being, and we can't have life without Christ."* Christ = both light and life!

John begins his Gospel by telling us the important fact that *"the Word"* not only pre-existed the creation – but *"the Word"* co-existed with the Creator before there was a creation, and *"the Word"* IS God the Creator Himself. *"The Word"* set everything in motion, and we can come to know the Creator's nature by looking at Christ's life and listening to His teaching; thereby, getting to know who God IS. Know God's heart, God's reasoning, God's mind, God's purposes, God's character, God's power, and God's desire for us to know Him and worship Him – are all rolled up together in a PERSON called the WORD, Jesus Christ. Therefore, God is not distant, or aloof, or unloving, but the One who created the universe wants to be known and have fellowship with His creation!

That's why John makes this seemingly ridiculous claim in **verse 14** – because God wanted us to know Him and have fellowship with Him, the Creator emptied Himself, left heaven and came down to live among His creation – ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** What God would do that? None other than a God of love, because of His deep love for us sinful humans. The Creator of the universe had to get our attention, so He humbled Himself and took this gigantic step downward, taking on our DNA, this weak and frail human flesh that suffers in numerous ways. Choosing to live on this dark evil world among those who would end up hating Him, rejecting Him, and nailing Him to a cross. Why would God do that? Why would God want to identify with us? But He does want to come into the center of our mess! John begins his Gospel by telling his readers that God loves sinful humans so much that He would wrap Himself in human flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, so that we would get a true picture of what our heavenly Father is really like and how much He loves us!

As we read the Old Testament – we read that God was present with His people in the tabernacle at first and then in Solomon’s Temple, residing in the holy-of-holies, but it was an imperfect shadow-like picture of God. God was not visible like the gods of the pagan nations around them (made of wood and stone), so during the Old Testament period, while the Jewish people believed in God and worshiped Him, they had limited knowledge and experiences with their one true God. But then 2000 years ago what the ancient prophets and the people of God, Israel, longed for and hoped for took place – God’s one and only Son Jesus Christ stepped into our world, His creation – and by His miraculous birth, human life, teachings, miracles, sacrificial death and glorious resurrection answered these questions for us: “*Who is God?*” “*What is God like?*” “*Why did God come to this earth?*” and “*What does God expect of us?*” That’s what John tells us in **verse 18**, “***No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in close relationship with the Father, has made him known.***” The concluding verse of John’s introduction to his Gospel states that the invisible God was made visible in Jesus Christ, so now we have no excuse for not knowing what our heavenly Father God is like. And have no excuse for not knowing how much God loves us and what His love requires from us in return. Jesus has taken all of excuses away!

In the Prologue to his Gospel – John not only describes Jesus as “***the WORD***”, but also describes Jesus by two other terms as well – as **LIGHT & LIFE**: “***In him was LIFE, and that LIFE was the LIGHT of all mankind. The LIGHT shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it***” (John 1:4-5). **LIGHT** is another word that John uses to describe Christ. Throughout the Scriptures, **DARKNESS** describes sin and evil, so by describing Jesus as **LIGHT**, John is telling us that Jesus came as the solution to the world’s darkness, and Jesus not only came to push back the darkness, but to totally defeat the darkness. Darkness comes to us in numerous ways, we see it often on the evening news: natural disasters, wars, violence, hate, shootings, bigotry, racism, intolerance, and crimes of all kinds. We also see it within our individual lives as well: drug and alcohol abuse, hatred, anger, bitterness, un-forgiveness, infidelity, gossip, and addictions. These are all expressions of darkness into which Jesus shines His **LIGHT**, bringing healing, forgiveness, grace, mercy, and hope.

John’s entire Gospel message is that Jesus is the only **LIGHT** that will guide us back to our heavenly Father, helping us to find that path to receive forgiveness, grace, love, compassion, kindness, mercy, and the assurance of eternal life. Then, Jesus not only removes our sins, but His light also illuminates the path that we are

to now take as believers in following Him as disciples. Jesus, represents the words we find in **Psalm 119:105**, ***“Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light to my path.”*** It is impossible to walk this path called Christianity without the **LIGHT** of Jesus constantly illuminating our path to keep us from falling back into the darkness!

Unfortunately, because of our human condition to sin, the lure and draw of darkness continues to be a huge issue in our lives and the lives of those around us, as **John 3:19-20** describes perfectly the human condition: ***“This is the verdict: LIGHT has come into the world, but people loved DARKNESS instead of LIGHT because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the LIGHT and will not come into the LIGHT for fear that their deeds will be exposed.”*** Even though the **LIGHT** shines brightly and constantly on all mankind, not everyone wants the light to shine on them and expose them. Instead, many love the darkness, and want to remain hidden in the darkness, because light exposes what we hide away in our closets, because of shame and embarrassment. However, **John 1:5**, makes it very clear that we can’t hide our darkness forever, because one day everything that was hidden will be exposed, all because, ***“The LIGHT shines in the DARKNESS, and the DARKNESS has not overcome it.”*** AND WILL NEVER OVERCOME IT! We can hide for the time being, but one day every hidden sin will be exposed!

Darkness and evil can overcome us and this world for the time being, but the last page of the Bible tells us that God wins in the end. That’s why, as we wait for THE BLESSED HOPE to appear, we need to constantly make the daily choice to walk in the light of Christ and accept and follow God’s Word and His righteousness as an antidote to this world that is constantly tempting us to conform to this world and be filled with this world, trying to bring us back into the darkness. And then, Jesus came to be the light for us, so that we can be the light for others, according to **Matthew 5:14-16**, ***“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*** That’s my daily challenge – be light!

Being a light in the darkness is the primary calling on every believer because Christ is returning and most of the people around us won’t recognize their Creator

unless we shine our light upon their lives. If you don't believe me, then listen to these shocking words from John about Christ's first coming: ***"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him"*** (John 1:10-11). We don't want what took place during Christ first appearance to take place at His second appearance! We want as many as possible to receive Him before His glorious return!

And that brings us to that another word John uses to describe Christ – **LIFE**. John's point is that only in Christ can we find abundant life because **LIGHT** always leads to **LIFE**. In the same way that light is required to grow most of the foods we eat, and those things we enjoy such as flowers and trees. **LIFE** is key to the purpose of John's Gospel, as he concludes his Gospel with these words, ***"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recoded in this book. So that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have LIFE in his name"*** (John 20:30-31). This word **LIFE** is so important to John that he uses it forty-seven times in his Gospel, and his most important use of the word is as ***"ETERNAL LIFE."*** And for John, ***"eternal life"*** is not just what happens after we die, but what begins right **NOW**. The moment we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we live in the reality of ***"eternal life,"*** and all that it entails. **WE DON'T HAVE TO WAIT!**

In this life death is constantly around us, but the assurance of ***"eternal life"*** means that we no longer fear death. Death could not hold Jesus, and it can't hold us, all because we know what's waiting for us on the other side. Jesus made that fact perfectly clear in **John 5:24**, ***"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has ETERNAL LIFE and will not be judged but has crossed over from DEATH to LIFE."*** As we are awakened from our spiritual blindness, and put our hope and trust in Jesus, we cross over the bridge to a new way of thinking and living, because we know that death is not the end. Death only becomes a period at the end of a sentence before a new sentence begins. It's only the end of one chapter of life, and the beginning of this great new chapter God has in store for us in the heavenly realm. And Jesus demonstrated this promise of eternal life in His own resurrection on that Sunday morning we celebrate every year called Easter. We not only point to the cross, but also to the resurrection, because we are people of the resurrection!

And then another added benefit – is that we become part of a new community, a family of believers who share their lives with one another, become members of a family who love us just the way we are, coming alongside of us not only in our good times, but especially when we are going through those dark difficult times that come along far too often. This is what John means by the word **LIFE** in **verse 4**, we are not only people of light, but people filled with life, because Jesus lives within us, ***“In him was LIFE, and that LIFE was the LIGHT of all mankind.”*** John’s point is that Jesus is the source of all **LIFE**:

- 1) Physical and Biological life.
- 2) Inner life – our soul, emotions, intellect, and our personality or psyche.
- 3) Eternal life, the divine life of God – a quality of life that can only come from knowing God. Apart from Jesus, God the Father can’t be known, because Jesus is the revealer of the Father. One day Jesus’ Apostle Philip asked Him this question, ***“Lord, show us the Father...Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me Philip, even after I have been with you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’*** (John 14:8-9).

In summary of these first eighteen verses of John’s Gospel – John gives us four reasons why Jesus came to live among us:

1. Jesus came to make God known. To make the invisible visible, so we would know His goodness and loving nature.
2. Jesus came to reveal God’s kingdom. Jesus’ life shows us that we can bring heaven down to this earth as He did, so what is currently present in heaven can be present here on earth.
3. Jesus came to show us how to live in love. Jesus’ life contradicts everything this world tells us about how to live in love. Jesus defines the meaning of certain words we often use as we live out our love, words like: commitment, contentment, peace, hope, joy, happiness, gentleness, mercy, sacrifice and even suffering.
4. Jesus came to show how love changes us and changes those around us. How to love with nails in your hands and feet!