

Sermon Title: The Word Became Flesh!**Passage:** John 1:14-18**Introduction/Context:**

When was the last time you have been completely amazed by some great news or event or by someone's actions? Maybe you were blown away by the recent footy match, how great the players were or how disappointing they are. Maybe it was when Novak Djokovic won the Australian open and Wimbledon this year. Maybe you were in awe of the release of the latest Samsung note 10+ or the leaks of the iPhone 11. Maybe you were amazed by the loving kindness of fellow church members, friends and family. When we are blown away by some great news or event, or by the actions of someone, it can leave lasting impression. Especially when it is very great news. Especially when the event or actions of someone changes your whole life. For John the coming of Jesus Christ is the greatest news. It is the most important news. And he can't get over the fact that Jesus Christ, the Eternal word, became flesh. The incarnation is the beginning of a time in history where things will never be the same again.

As I said a few weeks ago, John is interested in helping us have a deeper understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. We have seen that Jesus is the divine word who perfectly reflects God's nature and work. He eternally pre-existed and co-existed with God. He is the Divine Creator and Divine life. He is the light of the world which shines bright and John the Baptist prepared the way for him. The coming of Jesus is a real historical event.

When we come to v14-18, John concludes his prologue by giving us 3 more truths about Jesus. 3 truths about the incarnation which completely overwhelms him. In his incarnation we see the Glory of God. In his incarnation we see the Grace of God. In his incarnation, put simply, we see God. In Jesus, God's glory is revealed. In Jesus his infinite grace is received. In Jesus the invisible God becomes visible. God becomes known. And as we are faced with these truths, we are to respond with awe and worship. That's how John responds. Let's look at them one at time. Firstly,

1. In the incarnated Jesus you can See the Glory of God

"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. "

John comes back to talking about the Word explicitly in verse 14 to further develop the person of Christ. What stands out is the fact that the Word introduced in verse 1, the Divine Word, the one who is eternal, who pre-existed and co-existed with God, has now become flesh. The mystery of incarnation is spoken here. He has taken up human form. Does that mean he is no longer God? Does that mean he has casted away his divinity? No. In the glorious incarnation, the Word of God, being God himself, did not merely fill a human body but he “became flesh”. He took on everything that makes humans human. He does this without surrendering his identity as divine. Fully God, Fully Man. He possesses two natures, a divine nature and human nature. Although he had taken up all the essential properties and the weakness and frailties of the human body, he is without sin. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus who is our high priest was not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, on the contrary he was “one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”. According to his human nature, Jesus needs eat food to live, he needs to grow in knowledge as he studies the scriptures, he gets tired, and he weeps. The shortest verse in the bible is in John 11:35 and it says, “Jesus wept”. The almighty God, in his earthly life wept. The Westminster confession of faith chapter 8 says that Jesus took upon him “man’s nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin”. They correctly address the harsh realities Jesus lived in. Jesus in his life and ministry, experienced the pains and agonies of a sinful world. Betrayal of close friends/disciples. The death of a loved one. He experienced excruciating pain. Pain that we can’t even imagine. He became man. Fully God, Fully man. Jesus the God-Man.

The question is why? Why would the Word become flesh? He didn’t come in the flesh to party or because he was lonely. He came to dwell, to pitch his tent among us, to live among us with a mission. He came to save to sinners and through his life, his death and resurrection he reveals his glory.

I have used the word glory and I will be saying it a lot, but the problem with the word glory is that it is one of those words which is hard to define or explain. A helpful text would be in Exodus 33:18

In the Old Testament, In Exodus 33, God commands Moses and the Israelites to leave Sinai. They are to go to the land that God had promised, the land which he swore to

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He promised that he would send an angel before them, and God will drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. The promised land, flowing with milk and honey was theirs!! God would not go up among them and because of that the people mourned after hearing this disastrous word and God labelled them as stiff-necked people.

Verse 11 gives us the relationship between Moses and God ¹¹“Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” With that confidence in the second half of Exodus 33, Moses intercedes for the people and begs God to show him proof that his presence will be with them. In verse 13, “Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight.” God responds by saying, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”. Moses has found favour in God’s sight. God will show him his ways. And then in verse 18, Moses responds, and He begs God in v18 saying, “please show me your glory”. Wow. Just imagine saying that to God. Please show me your glory.

What is his glory? What is Moses asking here? The Lord replies to that saying ¹⁹“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.” (v19) What God in effect does here is reveal to Moses who he is. In verse 20-23 God says to him that he can’t see his face but what he can do is show a glimpse of his glory. He can see the backside of God’s glory. By revealing to Moses his goodness and grace and tying it together with his Glory and his face, we are given a clearer picture of what Glory means. God’s glory is his supreme goodness. It is his inherent character. It is his divine nature. It is all that he is. And we looked at parts of it in our series of lamentations. Few verses later, God will say in chapter 34 v6-7 ⁶“v6b The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”.

Another important text would be in Isaiah 6:3, the seraphim says, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory!". What’s interesting about a verse like that is that you would expect the Seraphim to end by saying, “the whole earth is full of his holiness”. But instead he says glory. God’s glory is the radiance of his holiness, goodness, manifold wisdom and might. It is his infinite worth and

majesty. It is all that he is. There are many dimensions to his glory. And very often when glory is manifested, it is a bright light. That bright light comes from his intrinsic nature.

Explaining God's glory is like trying to explain what beauty is. We can't really explain what beauty is, but we know when something is beautiful. We can see aspects of beauty. And that's the same thing with God's glory. We can see aspects of God's glory, God's goodness, power and might. Glory encapsulates all that God is, all that God deserves, and all that he does. God's glory is his infinite goodness. That's why John describes the glory as being full of grace and truth. This is the only place where you will see glory full of grace and truth. Perfect grace and truth. You can try to find wonder, beauty, glory, awesomeness in the world. You can be amazed by the incredible songs you listen to. You can be amazed by the incredible soccer games. You can be wowed by the talents of actors and actresses. You can be amazed by the abundant kindness of fellow human beings. But the only thing which stands miles ahead of the glory of humans, is the glory of the only begotten son, who by his life, his death and resurrection, shows glory worthy of worship. At the cross and resurrection, the immeasurable greatness of his power and might, his infinite grace and love is seen. What that means then is, when you see the incarnated Jesus and you see his glory, you need to worship him. Worship the one who shows glory worthy of worship. Worship the one who is worthy to be glorified. Do you glorify God in every aspect of life? Do you pursue a life of worship? That is the only appropriate response to the God of Glory.

We know the incarnated Jesus shows the glory of God as well because of the testimony of John the Baptist. Verse 15. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

It seems to be a backtrack to verses 6-13 by reintroducing John the Baptist. But by doing this he does a few things. He reassures that this incarnated Word is that same subject and object of verse 6-13. This word who became flesh is the one who John the Baptist prepared the way. What John bore witness about him here is his majesty and glory. He is the one who "ranks before me". The pre-existence of Jesus Christ the Word was the proof that he was greater than John the Baptist. He has more glory than him. We have both the testimony of John the apostle and John the Baptist

which proclaims the Glory of the incarnated Word. The incarnated Word, Jesus who became flesh, shows us the Glory of God.

2. In the incarnated Jesus you can **Receive the Grace of God**

¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

In the incarnated Jesus, we are not only able to see the glory of God, but we are able to see it by receiving the grace of God. In Jesus the fullness of God’s grace is received. Verse 14 ends by describing the glory of God manifest in the incarnate word as full of grace and truth. John picks up the theme of grace in verse 16 and 17 again and connects the glory of God with the Grace of God. “We have seen his glory...full of grace and truth (v14)... For (or because) from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace (v16)

We are only able to see the glory of the incarnated word by receiving his grace. Not everyone can see his glory. In the wedding of Cana, when Jesus performed his first sign of changing the water to wine, he “manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him”. (2:11) They were able to see his glory. Later in chapter 11 Jesus said to Martha just before he raised Lazarus from the dead in verse 40 “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”. Only those who believed would be able to see the glory of God. Only those who have received grace can see the majesty and awesome work of God. Many people saw the miracles of Jesus, but they could not see his glory. They rejected him. The first step in seeing the glory of God is receiving the grace of God which is infinite in value. It is spiritually awakening, eye opening, heart changing grace. Believers are able to see the glory of God because they have already received grace from his fullness. We believe that humanity is totally depraved. Totally corrupt. They are unable to see and believe God apart from the grace of God.

Now there are 2 ways we could understand the second half of verse 16, grace upon grace.

1. We could understand it as being grace which adds onto grace. Meaning it is a continual flow of grace. One blessing after another. In Jesus there is ongoing and endless number of blessings. That would not be biblically incorrect. Jesus does pour out his unending grace towards those whom he loves.

2. Or we could understand it in relationship to verse 17 which gives us a clearer picture of what John is saying. Verse 17 says, “¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. “There seems to be a connection between verse 17 and 16 because of the conjunction “for” in verse 17. John inserts this idea of Law. The Law was given through Moses. Is the Law bad? No, it is grace in its own way. It is God’s word, it is a reflection of God’s covenant with his people and his continual faithfulness even when they have been unfaithful. We looked at Moses earlier in Exodus 33. The next thing that happens after responding to Moses is the giving of the Law the second time. Exodus 34:1 ““The LORD said to Moses, ‘Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.’”. God’s giving of the law points people to grace. It was never meant to save people. Yet John calls the law “grace” in verse 15. It is the second use of grace. The fuller and deeper picture of grace and truth is found in Jesus Christ, in the new covenant. (The greater and fuller grace found in Jesus [for] the grace given under the law through Moses.)

Notice that the law which is a form of grace was “given” through Moses. He was an agent in which God revealed his goodness and grace. And if we look at the wider life and ministry of Moses, we can see similarities yet great differences between him and Jesus. God told Moses to make the bronze serpent and lift it up so that those who looked upon the bronze serpent would be saved (Numbers 21:9). In John 3:14-15 Jesus told Nicodemus, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” Moses’ act foreshadowed Jesus’ saving work. There was also Manna which was grace from God, and the water from the rock which was given through Moses to sustain the people. Jesus on the other hand is the bread of life and the spring of living water. Those who eat and drink him will never hunger or thirst again. Grace was given through Moses, Jesus on the other hand is the author and source of the grace and truth. “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”. In the new covenant, there we have grace upon grace. In the incarnated Jesus, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3).

So, this is what John is getting at, the incarnated Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory. (Hebrews 1:3) He is the one whom the Old Testament has pointed forward to. The grace which we see through the giving of the Law to Moses can not compare to the fulness of grace and truth which comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ makes the spiritually blind see. He brings light to the darkness. By his death and resurrection,

those who believe will be saved. They will be set free from the bondage and shackles of sin and death. By his righteousness, we are able to stand right before God, not of a righteousness which is comes from our works, but a righteousness which comes from the obedience of the one and only son of God. Jesus is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). And there is only one way to see true grace and true truth. And that is through Jesus Christ. Receive his grace today, see the radiance of his glory.

Finally, **3**. In the incarnated Jesus you can **Know God**

V18

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John ends his prologue by pointing out that no one has seen God. And that makes sense, who can understand and fathom an infinite being. Who can understand the all-powerful creator God? Who can see the invisible God? In an article just over 2 weeks ago, Astronomers spotted 'unprecedented' bright flashes in our galaxy's black hole. Scientists are always studying the solar system and trying to find answers. In this case, they were observing the black hole over 4 days in April and May, and they saw unusual bright flashes. Now I'm not a scientist, I don't know much about the galaxy and so I have no idea what happened. The funny thing is, the scientists don't know either. There is great mystery in what actually happened in a place in space which mankind can't fully comprehend. Humans don't have any answer. The great minds don't know for sure and they might never know, and if they do finally find out, it might take years and years, and maybe only come up with a theory.

If we can't fully understand and even see the universe, how much more can't we fully understand and know the invisible God. Yet, Jesus who was with God, who co-existed with God for all eternity has made him known. Paul puts it this way in Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation”. He is the perfect reflection of the invisible God. If you want to know God, you need to know Jesus. If you want to understand the richness of his grace and mercy, then you need to understand Jesus. If you want to comprehend the manifold wisdom of God, then you need to look to Jesus, the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Jesus' disciple Philip desired to see God and in John 14:8-10 Philip says, “Lord, show us the father, and it is enough for us.” They want to see the face of God. Jesus responds to him saying, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”. Humanity prides itself in how we have made scientific, technological, medical advancement. We can do so many things that we couldn't do centuries ago. But what has not changed, is the means to

which we come to know God and see him. The infinite God in being, the one who reigns supreme has become flesh, and you can see him in Jesus. The invisible God made visible in Jesus.

That's an amazing thing. That is great news which is worth remembering. John has experienced God in the flesh. He's overwhelmed by the reality of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling with mankind. In verse 1 he knows that this word has pre-existed and is eternal. But now, in humility, he has taken up flesh, frail and weak. He knows that this word was in perfect unity co-existing with God in complete joy, but now he has dwelt temporarily with humankind. And he can't get over the fact that the divine has assumed human nature. In 1 John 1:1-3 he says, *"1 That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we **looked upon** and have **touched** with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have **seen** it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have **seen** and **heard** we proclaim also to you,"*. Obviously, John takes the incarnation serious. He knows that it is an event, a historical fact which changes history. It is the pivotal moment of time, and John has had the opportunity to hear him, see him, look upon him. He has touched the Word in the flesh. The word of life. He knows by his incarnation he and believers have seen his glory. The glory as of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. The glory of the begotten son. The glory which is like no other. He has received the infinite grace of God and has seen the face of God. Do you respond with as much excitement and conviction as him? Does knowing the truth about the incarnation change your life? It changed John's life forever. You need to see his glory, receive his grace, know God and go out into the world to testify and proclaim this eternal life.

Conclusion:

God tells Moses that he can only see the backside of his glory... what a privilege it is, that we are able to see the glory of God, face to face, in the person and work of Jesus. He shows us his glory. He shows us his grace and we are able to receive it. And he shows us the face of God. That is the best news in the world.