

Trinity Presbyterian Church - Carp - July 4, 2021

TO EXALT CHRIST; TO EQUIP, ENCOURAGE, EXHORT, EDIFY GOD'S ELECT

The Christ Who Is Heavenly and Human - John 1:1-18

Word - Witness - World - Wonderment - Works

This morning we begin a new 4-part series of sermons based on the gospel of John, chapter one. The first three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the synoptic gospels, survey the life & work of Christ with quite similar content. However, John's gospel, while recording many of the same events, is more personal, more profound, deeper, more theological in nature and in substance.

For example, as we shall see today, Matthew & Luke record the coming of Christ in terms of his physical birth. But John describes his birth by saying, "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*" John also has a more evangelistic aspect to His gospel account. In John 20:30-31 we see his concern for people to believe Jesus is the Christ & to come to saving faith in him. John also details the work of the Holy Spirit (16). He records the "I am" statements of Christ & the upper room discourse in 14-17. So, John's gospel is unique with a different emphasis & content.

John Calvin, 1509-1564, was the reformer who taught John Knox in Geneva and thus helped launch the Presbyterian Church. He said this about John's gospel - "*It is a solemn publication of the grace revealed in Christ. (Matthew, Mark and Luke) exhibit his body, but John exhibits his soul.*" John takes us deeper into Christ.

The Word - 1:1-5

The greatest event in the history of the world, outside of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead & the continuing impact of that on the world, is God breaking into history by sending his Son, Jesus Christ & his subsequent arrival on planet earth.

He was sent & he came with one purpose and one purpose only. In Matthew 1:21 before he came in the flesh we read - "*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*" That was his eternal, divine mandate from his Father. In Matthew 20:28 Jesus said that he came "*to give his life as a ransom for many.*" The incarnation of the Word is vital to the doctrine of salvation.

However John takes his readers back before the birth, before the incarnation, before even the world began. In verses 1,2 John states - "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." John echoes the opening statement of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1-3 are evidence that the only "big bang" was the sound of God with Christ setting the mountains in place.

John testifies in verses 1,2 to the divine nature, the eternal nature, the creative nature, the omnipotent nature of Jesus Christ. Therefore together with God his Father & the Holy Spirit the triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are sovereign over a well ordered universe, including earth and all its inhabitants.

Here we see the divinity of Christ in his pre-incarnate state. It is the first thing that John clearly establishes. IOW Jesus was not some wandering Israelite who walked in from the desert and said, "I am the Son of God". John tells us where Christ was, what he was, when he was and who he was before he came & in 1:29 why he was. John uses "Word" as a title for Jesus 4X in chapter 1. It means, *"the Divine Expression, i.e. Christ; the Personal Word."*

John in verse 4 says - "In him was life and that life was the light of men." This is further evidence of the omnipotence, the divine power of Christ at creation to give life to all creatures including us. Our life is so precious to him that his resurrection from the dead set the precedent for our resurrection which is by faith in his death to do what he came to do which was, "he will save his people from their sins." There is the power of the Word pre-incarnate to create and then incarnate to redeem & recreate.

The Witness - 1:6-9

In verses 6-9 John writes about "a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe." That John was John the Baptist. All three synoptic gospels refer to John the Baptist, which indicates the important God-given role he played in the coming of Christ. First of all he was sent from God. He had a divine mandate. He came as a witness to testify about Christ and point people to him so that they might believe in him.

He was sent from God therefore to preach the Word. In Romans 10:15 Paul wrote - "And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those

who bring good news.” John the Baptist, the preacher, was sent from God to preach the good news, the gospel, in order to save people from their sins through faith in Jesus Christ and him alone.

John the gospel writer was also a witness to Christ. In 1 John 1:1,2, his first epistle, John wrote - "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us. Here are two eyewitnesses who heard, seen and touched the heavenly and the human Christ. Their witness, plus hundreds of others, testifies to the full, complete and sufficient Christ. We must be witnesses too.

The World - 1:10-13

The apostle John now takes us to the year AD 26 or 27 and the start of Jesus preaching ministry. And what did John and Jesus preach? "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Matthew 3:2; 4:17. There was no confusion or mixed messages between them.

To preach repentance was in line with Christ's purpose in coming which was/is to "save his people from their sins." Verses 10,11 tell what happened - "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."

Some people did not recognize or receive him. But verse 12 tells us that some did receive him & believed in his name. They by grace through faith became children of God because they were "born of God." God did it by his sovereign, eternal electing grace by which he chose before the world began to save his elect. Later in John 3 Jesus told Nicodemus 3X he must be born again. To be born again, born of God is mandatory even for Presbyterians. It is not an option. Verse 12 underscores the value & necessity of faith, It says - "... to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God." Verses 10-13 give a snapshot of the world. Some will, by God's electing grace, receive Christ & believe in his name and become children of God, but others will not.

The Wonderment - 1:14

If there is one verse that stands out in all of Scripture it is John 1:14. John wrote by inspiration - "The Word became flesh und made his dwelling among us. We have seen his

glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” He who was creator of the universe, divine and sovereign, heavenly, took on our humanity, our flesh & blood & bone.

The two natures were perfectly united and yet distinct in Christ. He dwelt among us. The word dwelt in the Greek literally means, *“to tent or encamp, to occupy, to reside.”* When the birth of Christ was foretold in Matthew 1:23 he quoted Isaiah 7:14 which said he was to be called Immanuel which means, *“God with us.”* So when the Son of God took on our humanity, became incarnate, it was in fact God with us in the flesh. This affirms the dual natures residing in the one incarnate Word. It is a wonderment. We are in awe of it because it is both a mystery and a miracle.

But why was he sent? Why did he come? To *“save his people from their sins.”* How was he to do it? *“to give his life as a ransom for many.”* We celebrate Easter once a year but the children of God, those born of him, reborn by the Holy Spirit; they celebrate the fullness of Easter every Sunday in worship & Monday to Saturday by what we do. We are saved by works, but not our own, it is the cross work of Christ. The wonder of the incarnation,

Part of that wonder and awe is his glory. John wrote - *“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* When did they see his glory? It was when he was transfigured before Peter, Andrew and John. He appeared to them in a radiant, glorious form that filled them with terror but also with wonderment & awe. Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9 tell us his face shone like the sun; his clothes became white as light. Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758 said, *“The glory of God is the shining forth of all his perfections.”* That is what John testifies to in having seen the glory of Christ. They saw all his perfections.

He is *“the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* There is no other Christ, no other Messiah, no other sacrifice for sin, no other Savior, no other ransom, no other Son than Jesus the Christ. He came from nowhere else but from his eternal, everlasting Father,

And he came John says *“full of grace and truth.”* No half measures of either, but full to overflowing to give to the elect, the chosen of God before creation, *“the right to become children of God... born of God”*. It is all by God's predestining grace before the world began,

through regeneration, being born again to bring those to be children of God to saving faith and eternal life. The truth of all this is verified by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The first Adam in his humanity, sought divinity for his own sake. The second Adam, Jesus Christ, in his divinity, sought humanity for our sake. John Calvin commented, "*the majesty of God was not annihilated, though it was surrounded by flesh; it was indeed concealed under the low condition of the flesh, so as to cause its splendor to be seen.*"

Dr. Steve J. Lawson said if you want to make a diamond sparkle set it on black velvet. The incarnation, the Word becoming flesh is the same. It was God setting himself down in Christ on the darkness of this world and showing in him the light that shines, that sparkles in the darkness, thereby we see the splendor and fullness of his saving grace & truth. We see it with all its wonderment.

The Work - 1:15-18

In verses 15-18 we see the work of these two men named John. Verse 15 says John the Baptist testified of Christ by crying out, "*This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'*" For those with ears to hear & minds to comprehend, John declared & affirmed the eternal/divine nature of the one who became flesh, i.e. Christ.

In verse 17 John the apostle wrote, "*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" John set grace between law and truth. Law convicts & condemns. Grace pardons & forgives. Christ personified truth by fulfilling the law. He was/is the vehicle for God's grace via the cross & the resurrection. He is God's answer to what one does to be saved.

In verse 18 John the apostle reaffirms the divine nature of Christ "*No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side has made him known.*" He restates that Christ is God and testifies to his current presence with God. Christ is heavenly and human, therefore a spotless lamb who alone can "*save his people from their sins.*" *Soli Deo Gloria.* Amen.