

The Word that Changed the World, part 1

(John 1:1-5)

(preached 4/15/18; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

I realize that not everyone that walks into a church is on equal ground.

There are certainly the saved who come to church and the unsaved who also attend, but among the saved, there is also inequality...

Some have been saved for decades and some for just days...

Some have grown up and matured under Bible based preaching and others have been in churches with man-entered, agenda driven preaching...

So the challenge of ministry in the church is difficult to say the least..

How do you touch everyone's soul through the ministry of the church?

How do you meet everyone's need?

Well, if it were left up to me, I would go crazy trying to do that...

The deacons would also go crazy trying to do that..

Because it is impossible even in a small church like our own to know everyone perfectly and make sure that you all leave happy..

So how is ministry done in the church?

Well, God has solved that problem because He has called His men to preach the Word...

That is why the preaching ministry of the pulpit is central to the long term health and stability of the church...

As long as the pulpit stays centered on preaching the Word of God, the greatest possible benefit is given to the church..

For that reason, the direction of the pulpit and the preaching ministry of the church is helpful to the church both long term and short term..

It is helpful long-term because the Bible is the key to Christian growth and maturity...

Men come and go in pulpits but the Bible when it is interrupted properly and taught accurately to the church stabilizes and strengthens the church...

It is helpful short term because as the church is taken through parts of Scripture, the Lord also helps us grow in certain areas that we may lack spiritually...

For instance, we just finished up the book of Jude, and the short term benefit is that it raises awareness in our hearts to the growing number of false teachers in the world...

When we were in the book of Revelation, it filled our hearts with anticipation of what is coming for both the saved and the unsaved in the future...

Which encourages our evangelism and our commitment to holy living...

You see, this is another added benefit of expository preaching...

It allows the purpose of a book to soak in your life...

For one year, we looked at the end of time and our hearts have been molded to live in anticipation of what is coming..

For two months, we dealt with false teachers and though it is not pleasant to consider, you are equipped to spot men and women who seek to lead the church astray...

Today, we start a new journey as we open our Bibles to the gospel of John...

And for a year or so, we will consume ourselves with the person and work of Jesus Christ...

For some of you, you may listen to that and think...

12 months in one book of the Bible?

How can you possibly take that long to teach 21 chapters?

Now look, I understand that not everyone embraces expository preaching...

I am sure that some people think about going through every word and verse of a book as sheer boredom...

Some are even about to dose off at the thought of such a mountain to climb...

I am under no illusion that everyone loves this style of preaching...

But I would remind you that Jesus taught this way and so did Paul and so did Ezra and others in the OT...

And I also remind you of this...

Who else would you rather spend the next year of your life with on Sunday morning than Jesus Christ...

Not just to see what He did, but to see who He was, to witness his power and to worship his deity as God in the flesh...

Honestly, the reason I chose this book as our next journey is simply because I cannot get enough of Christ in my life....

I am amazed by who He is and what He does in the gospels...

And I, like many of you, want to know him better so I can love Him more and worship him more fully...

In fact, if you forced me to define what the Christian life is like...

I would simply say that Christianity is best defined by a deep, committed love of Christ...

And the best way to increase our love for Him is to spend some time with him...

Now before we get into the book of John, let's deal with some background of this book...

I. The Background of John's Gospel

The book of John is one of what are commonly called the 4 gospels, which include Matthew, Mark, and Luke...

Those books are called the gospels because they detail the good news about Christ...

However, John is unique among the 4 gospels in a couple of ways..

First off, John was written later than the other three gospels...

Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written in the 50s or early 60 AD, while John didn't write his gospel until 80 or 90 AD...

This would give John a much different perspective since he was an older man compared to the other 3..

It also allowed John to fill in some gaps about Jesus that the other writers had not included in their record of the life of Christ..

In fact, 85-90% of what is in John is not in the other gospels..

Which leads to a second unique characteristic of the gospel of John..

It is more of a heavenly perspective of Jesus Christ...

You see, Matthew, Mark, and Luke dealt with Jesus from a human perspective...

They detailed Jesus' birth, which John doesn't do...

They detailed Jesus' baptism, which John doesn't do.

They detailed Jesus' temptation, which John doesn't do.

You see, John wants to give us the divine side of Christ...

In fact, the purpose of the book of John is stated clearly within the book...

John 20:30-31...

30 Therefore many other [g]signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is [h]the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

You see, the purpose of John's gospel is to highlight the deity of Christ...

Jesus is God in the flesh...

And since He is God, we are called to believe in Him.

In fact, John is going to use the word almost 100 times in this gospel...

We will see this word a number of times in John's gospel..

We are also going to see the word 'love' used over 80 times in this gospel..

In fact, John has often been called the apostle of love...

John is also a writer that uses the word 'truth' quite often as well..

In fact, we will see it over 20 times in this gospel...

John wants us to believe the truth about Christ, and then love Him with our entire lives...

This leads to third distinct trait of this gospel and that is its author...

Now remember, the Bible is not written by the man.

John did not come up with this book on his own.

The Scriptures tell us that John was carried along by the Holy Spirit as he wrote, with God breathing out every word for John to record...

Now that doesn't mean that John's personality doesn't come through this gospel it does...

In fact, John never uses his name once in this entire book.

He simply refers to himself as the disciple that Jesus loved...

That is not arrogant statement, but a sign of John's great humility...

He was humbled that Christ loved him...

He was humbled that Christ called him to be a disciple...

If you remember, John was the son of a fisherman...

John had taken up the craft with his father...

It was a good business but it was far away from the glitz and glamour of Jerusalem...

John was a blue collar worker....

In fact, we know that from the words that John uses..

Part of my introduction to Greek in seminary was reading through the book of John...

And the joy of that is that John wrote very simply...

He did not use the higher vocabulary of Paul or other gospel writers...

John's blue collar background made his writing simple to read, even though John wrote about some of the deepest truths of the entire Bible...

Now John's fisherman father was named Zebedee, his mother was named Salome...

And it is highly likely that she was the sister to Mary, which was make John a cousin to Christ..

John had a bother named James, and for a while they were known as the "sons of thunder" because they once asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven a destroy a group of people who were rejecting Christ...

But that hot temper was quickly cooled by Christ as John was disciplined by Him...

You see, John grew in his walk with Christ...

He matured from a hot headed young man to a wise older man who had a deep love for Christ...

To the point that God used John to write 3 more letters and the book of Revelation to the church after he wrote the gospel of John...

John is an example to us all that the gospel changes us by increasing our love of Christ and our desire to be more like Him, which certainly the testimony of John's life as well...

My prayer for our church as we go through the book of John is that our love for Christ will grow as well...

We live in a culture that throws the word love around like a football...

People will list off there things thy love in life, and simply tack on Christ at the end...

I love cheeseburgers, I love the beach, I love football, and oh I love Jesus too...

We live in a culture where it is fashionable to say you love Jesus, and most people in your life would say that...

But how has that love of Christ impacted your life?

Do you love Him enough to obey Him?

Do you love Him enough to share His name with others?

Do you love Him enough to leave your friends and family behind and follow Him?

My prayer is the book of John will lead you to that kind of love of Christ.

And not only that, but I also pray that God would use our time in John's gospel would cause someone to believe in Christ...

Again, nearly everyone in your circle of friends and family would say that they believe in Jesus...

But what does that mean?

Remember, the demons believe that Jesus exists, but they aren't going to heaven...

And there are many people in our culture and probably in this church today who claim belief in Christ but it isn't a belief that will save them...

Do you believe in Christ in a saving way?

Has your belief in Him impacted your life and family and friends?

Well, the gospel of John will present to us with what we need to believe about Christ in order to be saved....

And my prayer is that it will lead someone to saving belief in Christ as we go through this book as a church over the next months...

Well, there is the background and the possible benefit of this book, let's spend the rest of our time simply looking at the beginning of John's gospel...

II. The Beginning of John's Gospel

Verse 1...

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 [a]He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not [b]comprehend it.

As we begin John's gospel, he begins at the very beginning of time...

And in the beginning of time, John declares that the Word was there, the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now, you can't begin to understand this verse unless you understand the meaning of the WORD.

When John wrote this gospel in 80-90s AD, Greek philosophy was still around...

You may remember Greek philosophy from history class...

Names Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle...

These men and others in philosophy attempt to explain the world through knowledge and reason...

In John's day, philosophers approached the world without a correct view of God's creation of it and His constant care of it...

In their view, there was a force at work in the world...

It wasn't a personal force like the God of the Bible...

It was simply a power that had created the world and was at work in the world..

If you are familiar with the movie Star Wars, they speak of the force that it at work in the universe...

This is similar to Greek philosophy in John's day.

The Greeks often called it the Logos of the world....

And that is the word that John originally wrote here in the verse 1...

"In the beginning was the Logos....."

What John is trying to do is evangelistic here..

He is telling his readers that the force in the world, the Logos that they talked about, was not unknown...

Instead, the Logos that they couldn't figure was the God of the Bible...

Look, this view of the world is still around today..

There are people who acknowledge that there is something or someone who created everything but they don't know who or what it is...

Look, the Bible is clear, that force, that power, that Logos is God...

The triune God of the Bible...

And so John really starts out his gospel with a bang by declaring to his readers that the force in the world is God...

This Logos is God..

This Word, as John calls it is God..

Now, John was not just going after Greek philosophers with this opening statement, he was also appealing to Jewish readers as well...

The Jews knew the power of the Word of God...

God's word was so powerful that God spoke the universe into existence...

For the Jewish mind, the Word was what revealed God to them...

The prophets spoke the Word and the Jews came to know God...

God delivered the word to Moses and the Jews got their law...

So this word, Logos, meant something to Greek Gentiles and to the Jewish people..

Now before we go any further, let's cheat a little bit by letting our eyes move down to verse 14 of John 1...

Verse 14 says this...

14 And the Word became flesh, and [k]dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of [l]the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Though we will get here in a few weeks, here we see the identity of the Word that John is talking about...

Who is the Word of John 1:1?

It is Jesus Christ, the God-man.

John is opening his gospel and is simply telling his readers..

In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God...

Now, look that simple sentence is slam full of truth that you need today...

In that simple opening verse, here is what you find...

You find the the concept of the trinity..

You find the eternal nature of Jesus.

You find the deity of Jesus..

You find the person of Jesus..

You find the answer to all the false religions of the world that claim that Jesus is not God..

John is a simple man with simple words, but verse 1 is one of the deepest verses in all the Bible...

Now, we don't have time to get into every aspect of verse 1, but let me offer you three truths about Jesus Christ that are essential to the Christian faith..

In fact, you must believe these 3 truths about Christ in order to be saved...

The first truth we see here is this...

Christ is eternal.

The first part of verse 1 simply says that Jesus was already existing at the creation of the world...

In the beginning was Jesus.

In other Jesus is not a created being.

God did not create Jesus as the Mormons teach..

Jesus has always existed, even before the beginning of time...

In fact, Jesus created the universe according to Colossians and look at verses 2-3...

2 [a]He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Jesus is eternal...

And because he is eternal, he existed before anything else existed...

He has no beginning and no end...

In fact, John is going to record a number of statements that Jesus made in his ministry that begin with the phrase "I am"

In the gospel of John, Jesus is going to say that I am the bread of life in John 6.

I am the light of the world in John 8 & 9.

I am the door of the sheep in John 10.

I am the good shepherd in John 10.

I am the resurrection and the life in John 11.

I am the way, the truth and the life in John 14.

I am the true vine in John 15..

And the significance of that is that the God of the Jews was simply known as the great I AM, since He had revealed that name to Moses in the burning bush..

And the reason that God called Himself the great I AM is that it identified his eternal nature...

There is never a time where God wasn't around...

God is, and always has been, and always will be, so He simply decided to call Himself the great “I AM.”

Well, the Jews had so much reverence for the phrase that they wouldn't even write it down...

Well, here comes Jesus and guess what he calls himself over and over?

I AM...

In fact, look at this exchange that Jesus has with some Jews in John 8:56-59..

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced [p]to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham [q]was born, I am.” 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus [r]hid Himself and went out of the temple.

The Jews were ready to kill Jesus simply because he used the phrase I am, yet Jesus had every right to use that because because He is the eternal God...

We will see this over and over in John...

But John identifies the eternal nature of Jesus right here in verse 1..

The second truth we see about Christ here is his equality with God...

John simply says that in the beginning Jesus was with God...

In order to be with God, you must be equal to Him...

No one stand with a Holy God unless they are holy themselves...

Listen to John 17:5 as Jesus prays...

5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Jesus is not above God or below God, he is equal to God...

Think of it this way...

If Jesus wasn't a created being, then he has to be God since God was the one who created all things...

To be with God is to be equal to Him and to be equal to Him is to be Him...

Now, this verse also gives us the picture of the Trinity...

God is one God in three persons...

Father, Son, and Spirit...

So it is possible within the trinity to be God and to be with God at the same time...

And this is clearly what John is describing to us in verse 1...

There is one more truth packed up here in verse 1, but is simply a summary of the first two things that we looked at here...

John simply finishes up verse 1 by simply saying the Jesus is God...

If Jesus is eternal like God....

If Jesus is equal to God....

The next logical step is to simply identify Jesus as God...

Look, you cannot be saved unless you see Jesus as God.

As I said before, the Mormons see Jesus as created being...

In fact, they even believe that the God of the Bible is a God that was created by other gods in the past....

The same is true of the Jehovah's Witness...

They will talk about Jesus, but they refuse to see Him as God...

In fact, the Jehovah's Witnesses Bible is called the New World Translation and in verse 1, their wrong translation of the Bible simply says...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.

When they visit your house, ask to see their Bible and turn to John 1:1...

This is the pattern of false religion.

They may acknowledge the existence of Jesus, but they will deny his equality with God...

Well, John isn't going to do that..

In fact, the rest of the verses in John's gospel are meant to show the deity of Christ...

Jesus is God, and you better believe that if you ever have any hope of seeing and being with God...

We will end here today get back on pace next week...

Let me leave you with a few thoughts before we turn our minds off....

Conclusion

#1 - What you believe about Christ is essential to salvation.

Let me tell you something.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and plenty of other false religions all claim the name of Christ in their religion...

But to claim Christ without a true biblical view of Him is deadly.

Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are not going to heaven unless they repent of their view of Jesus as simply a created being...

And the same is true of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and anyone else who does not acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ.

Sadly, the line between biblical Christianity and false religions is getting blurred more and more these days...

Back in 2012, Mitt Romney, a Mormon, was the nominee for President, and he went to meet with Billy and Franklin Graham in NC prior to the election.

A few days later, the Billy Evangelistic Association removed a page on their website that identified Mormonism as a cult...

You see, some in the church play fast and loose with the identity of Christ for all sorts of political and social reasons..

But we don't have that option.

Christ is God, and those who refuse to acknowledge have no hope of salvation until they do...

#2 - How you respond to the identity of Christ is essential to salvation.

If Christ is God, we must repent of our sins and acknowledge him as Lord...

Some simply run to Jesus like they would a first aid kit...

Lose your job?

Run to Jesus, offer a few prayers and continue in your sin...

Break a relationship?

Cry your way to Jesus, offer a few prayers and continue in your sin..

Need financial help?

Head to the church, say a few nice things about Jesus, and continue in your sin...

Can I say this clearly enough??

Jesus is not a genie in bottle that you rub, he pops out and you make a few wishes and hope your life changes while you stay in your sin...

Jesus is also not a public relations manager where you show up to church to make your reputation look better, make your mom or wife happy, and then go on living sinfully like you always have...

Let me be as clear as John...

Jesus is God in the flesh.

The Creator of all things, including you.

And he demands you to turn from your sin, trust in His name, and love him so deeply that you follow His commands for the rest of your life...

Anything less than that response to Christ falls short of saving faith....

Today, what is your view of Christ?

What do you believe about his identity?

And furthermore, how has that belief changed anything about your life?

Let us pray.