

Who is Jesus?

PART 2 - JOHN 1:14-18

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****COVID-19 SPLIT SERVICE****

It is a great blessing to be with all of you this morning! It is hard to believe that one year ago we were having our last service for a while. We were here on the odd numbered pews, we weren't touching each other in any way, the Lord's Supper bread was pre-broken, and we had encouraged the elderly and those at risk to stay at home. One year ago. I hope everybody has the elements for the Lord's Supper, either from home or from the table in the back room, as John will be leading us in the prayers for the Supper right after our study. And then, after the Lord's Supper, Caleb Richter will be leading us in, "Footprints of Jesus" (#153).

Most of you should be receiving the church bulletin in an e-mail every Saturday afternoon. If you are not, I hope you will let me know, and I would be glad to add you to that mailing list. In today's bulletin, I've included a Facebook post I made back in January, explaining that we've been worshiping with the doors and windows open since the pandemic began, and in that article I point out that in spite of the temperature extremes, I had not heard anybody complain about the temperature inside the building. It has been hot, and it has been cold, but you have been extremely understanding. Last Sunday night, though, I finally heard from somebody that somebody else wasn't coming to worship because it might be too cold in here. I have been thinking about that all week, and I'd like to give the reminder that if you are considered high risk, if you have legitimate concerns about getting COVID, please continue joining us online or on the phone. We take some rather extreme steps to keep each other safe, we maintain a capacity limit well under what the health department requires, but we cannot guarantee that you will not get COVID as a result of being here. Coming together is a risk.

However, if your concern is freezing to death, I can guarantee that you will not die of hypothermia in this building. Even when we worshiped together several months ago when the temp outside was below zero, I checked the thermostat on the wall back there on our way out, and it was still only down to 45 degrees. In Wisconsin, 45 degrees is a decent spring day. A few days ago, though, I started wondering: What's the temperature other places we go during the week? Since I go camping pretty often, I keep a thermometer in my car. So, when I ran a few errands over here this past Thursday morning, I took that thermometer with me. I started by taking it out in Woodman's over here on Milwaukee Street, in the pickle section. And I don't know whether you can see that, but it was 60 degrees in Woodman's this week. Right now, in this building, with the windows open, it says 74. So, it is 14 degrees warmer right here in this building than it is in Woodman's right

now. Then, I took my life in my own hands and stopped at Wal-Mart up on Nakoosa Trail. We were missing good, hot, crispy fries from restaurants, so we were looking for a little deep fryer. And, as you might be able to see, it was 67 degrees in Walmart this past Thursday morning, which is 7 degrees colder than it is in this building right now. My next stop was at the Costco up in Sun Prairie, where I whipped it out in the coffee aisle. It was 61 degrees at Costco, 13 degrees colder than it is right here right now.

Again, if you are at risk and concerned about the virus, continue joining us online or on the phone. But, if your concern is the temperature in here, I would encourage you to pretend you are going to Woodman's, pretend you are sitting in a deer stand, pretend you are taking your dogs for a walk wear a coat, and come together with your Christian family to worship God on the first day of every week.

As we begin, we need to at least briefly summarize God's plan of salvation, especially since we don't know whether someone might be with us today for the first, the last, or the only time, and this might be my last opportunity to preach the gospel. The gospel is the good news that God loves us so much that he sent his only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. In response, we obey that good news by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by confessing Jesus as the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with him in baptism.

And once again, we have several examples, starting with Silas Balfour, who was baptized last week at the Palm Beach Lakes congregation down in Florida. David Sproule is the preacher there. We went to school together, and David has been serving at that congregation since his graduation from Freed-Hardeman many years ago.

And then, we also welcome Michelle Jones, who was baptized last Sunday at the Central Church of Christ down in Paducah, Kentucky. Adam Faughn has been preaching there for several years now, and this is where Josh's parents worship. But we share these pictures by way of encouragement. What Silas and Michelle have done this week, you can do this morning. If you have any questions, if you would like to study together, we hope you will get in touch.

If you were with us last Sunday, you might remember that we started looking at the question, "Who is Jesus?" And we spent some time in the first few verses of John 1, where learned that Jesus is eternal, he is the word, God himself, our Creator, as well as life and light. We reminded ourselves that whenever we are anxious, discouraged, stressed, and overwhelmed, we worship an awesome God. Let's remember who he is. We also learned how important it is to use this information to introduce others to the Lord. He is worth sharing. And we closed with the reminder to think very carefully about our own relationship with Jesus. Do we personally see him and know him as the Eternal Word, God Himself, Creator of everything we see around us, and the source of all life and light? Have we decided? Are we all in? Have we surrendered completely? Or are we holding back. There really is no middle ground here. He is either a liar, a lunatic, or God himself, as he claims to be.

This morning, I'd like for us to continue in John 1 by skipping ahead to verse 14. In verses 6-13 (the verses we're skipping over), we are introduced to John the Baptist. We do have some comments about the Lord, but most of it comes back in starting in verse 14. So, let's continue this morning by looking at John 1:14-18. With reference to the "**word**," John continues in verse 14 by saying this,

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" ¹⁶ For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the

Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

I'd like to focus on verse 14 this morning, by noticing three big ideas, with some of the supporting information coming in verses 15-18.

I. But as we continue answering the question, "Who is Jesus?" the first big idea here comes at the very beginning of verse 14, as we find that the WORD BECAME FLESH.

It would have been very easy for John to have said that the Word became a human. That would have been accurate. It would have been very easy for John to have said that the word came as a "body." That would have been accurate also. John could have easily said that the Word came as a man. That would have been accurate as well. And yet, John uses a word that we translate here as "**flesh**." And this is a word referring to actual flesh – meat, bone, blood, and so on. We don't often think of ourselves as being "meat," and yet we are aren't we? Years ago, we were watching a movie with our kids. It was called "Zathura," and I think it was somewhat similar to Jumanji – it might even be in the same series, perhaps by the same author. Some of you might remember it. I don't remember all of the details – something about a board game, and a house turning into a spaceship, and there are some kids in there, and there are some lizard-like aliens who are attracted to heat. Well, at some point in the drama, somebody is explaining these aliens to the two children, and he says that they roam the universe looking for "meat." At this point, the little boy lets out a little sigh of relief. But then, his older brother turns to him and says, "Dude, you're meat!" And then you see the panic set in. For years, our son would say to our daughter, "You're meat!" And the panic would set in just a little bit! So now, in our family, every once in a while, we will remind each other that we are "meat." Well, this is basically the word John uses here, "**The word became FLESH.**" The Eternal Word of God came into this world as meat, as "**flesh**."

Sometimes, theologians refer to Jesus coming in the flesh as the "incarnation." Think about the root of that word for just a moment. What happens when we go to Laredo's and order "carne asada"? We get "meat," don't we? What do we mean when we say that some animal is a "carnivore"? We are saying that they eat meat. And again, we are meat! Jesus came in the form of "meat" or "**flesh**." Last week, we focused on Jesus being Eternal God. This week, we have the other side of that. He is also fully human, with all of the weakness and potential for sin that the rest of us have. When he came to this earth, he was not half and half, but he was fully God and all flesh at the same time. Jesus had hands, and feet, and hair, and skin. He had a liver. He digested food just like the rest of us. He was just as human as we are. He made himself understandable.

If we were to keep reading in John, we would find in John 4:4 that Jesus became "**weary**" after a long journey, just like we get weary. In John 11:35, we find that Jesus weeps over the death of a close friend, just like we might weep over the death of a friend. Toward the end of the book, we find that he bled, and suffered, and died. "**The word became flesh**," as John says. He came to this earth and identified with us. He lived in the flesh, just as we do. Years ago, J. Robert Oppenheimer, professor of nuclear physics at UC Berkley, was promoting the international student exchange program, and he supposedly said, "The best way to send an idea is to wrap it up as a person." If that is true of nuclear physics, then it is also true of God, who sent his Son, the Word, into this world as "**flesh**." That's who Jesus is. God became "**flesh**."

II. **This leads us to the next big idea in this passage as we find that Jesus (as the Eternal Word of God) DWELT AMONG US.**

And in the NASB, you might notice a footnote here, where the translators explain that the word John uses here could also indicate that Jesus ***“tabernacled”*** among us. And it goes back to a word referring to a “tent.” Jesus came to this earth, and he pitched a tent. The Message says that Jesus “moved into the neighborhood,” not quite as literal, but that seems to be the thought here. He came to this earth and moved in with us. He lived in a tent with us. A tent, of course, is a temporary dwelling. The strength of a tent is that it is often lightweight and portable. We take it with us. The downside of a tent is that it is lightweight and portable! As I have mentioned a number of times, tents have vastly improved over the past few years – better materials, better construction, better design, and so on. But tents still have their weaknesses. They might leak. They might blow away with you in them. They are small. They are hot. They are cold. They usually don’t have indoor plumbing. Tents are temporary. They wear out.

I had some time to hang out at my parents’ house a few weeks ago, and when I looked through some old pictures I found the exact moment that my parents gave up tent camping. We were on a circle tour of Lake Superior, and a giant cloud followed us all the way around the lake. It rained all day every day for days. It was awful. But the last soggy straw came in Wawa, Ontario. I remember it so well. We woke up, and the popup camper across from our campsite was completely surrounded with water. The guy in the camper had a wooden leg and couldn’t get it wet, so a rescue crew came in put down a wooden plank so the guy could escape from his camper. We watched a guy with a wooden leg literally walk the plank. My dad said, “This is it!” We threw the wet tent in the trunk, left the campground, and checked into the Best Western in Wawa, Ontario. From that day on, my dad has continued to say that “the world’s worst hotel room is better than the world’s best tent.” I don’t agree with that (now that tents have improved), but I understand the thought! Some of you might agree with my dad on that. There are some downsides to living in a tent.

But John says here that Jesus came to this earth and pitched a tent with us. He ***“tabernacled”*** with us. When we tent with somebody, we get to know them much better than if we just live in the same town for a while. A few years ago, Amanda suggested a few online groups for hiking and backpacking, and one thing I learned that I didn’t know before is that hikers on a through hike will often give each other names. You can’t choose your own trail name; no, it has to be bestowed upon you by your fellow hikers, often based on something that happened on the trail. There’s a sense of community, a sense of family. You’re close, sometimes too close.

Several years ago, I mentioned what happened when Aaron joined us at our summer camp for the first time. I like tent camping that week. After being with 60 kids and 30 staff during the day, I get to escape and get away from it all at night. Well, I showed up early on Sunday afternoon and pitched my tent out in this large clearing. Then, I went back to setting up camp and getting everybody settled in. Hours later, at night, I went back to the field, and, “No!” Aaron had pitched his tent almost on top of mine. We were practically sharing guy lines. There’s a huge field, and he’s right there! I don’t think I said anything that first year. I didn’t know Aaron well enough to complain; after all, he was nice enough to take a week off of work to come to camp. But the next year, I think I said something like, “Hey, do you think you could give me a little space out there? You know, so I can snore and stuff?” “Oh, sure!” And so now we have some space between us out there. I still laugh at that – finding my tent in the dark with a flashlight, and we are practically on top of each other out there in this huge field. Must be an Army thing, I don’t know. But that’s what Jesus did for us. He ***“tented”*** with us. He moved in with us – not in a palace, but in a tent.

By the way, later in the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul refers to this ***“earthly tent...our house,”*** being ***“torn down.”*** He’s referring to our bodies, and he talks about groaning and being burdened, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven. He’s suggesting that our earthly bodies are imperfect and temporary. Well, Jesus as the Eternal Word of God joined us in this. He tented with us. For 33-½ years he lived down the street from us. We camped out together. We ate together, and slept together, and learned everything there is to learn about each other. As Bruce McLarty says, “He moved in, changed His address to ‘Earth,’ and got His hands dirty in the everyday work of living.” ***“The word became flesh and dwelt among us.”***

III. **The last big idea I’d like for us to think about this morning comes in the rest of verse 14, as John lets us know that by becoming flesh and dwelling among us, Jesus REVEALED HIS GLORY TO US.**

And really, this is what’s going on in the rest of this paragraph. By coming to this earth, Jesus allowed us to see who God really is, ***“we saw His glory,”*** John says, ***“glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** When John says that ***“we saw His glory,”*** he uses a word that shares a background with our English word “theater.” It refers to paying attention to something, the idea of looking intently at something, the idea of careful scrutiny. By looking at Jesus, we see who God really is. By looking at Jesus, we see what God is thinking, just as we might learn something about a father by looking at his son, there is a similarity between the Father and the Word. They share the same nature. They share many of the same characteristics. He elaborates on this down in verse 18, ***“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”*** Jesus is ***“the only begotten God,”*** and he has ***“explained”*** the Father. So, Jesus has revealed God’s glory. And he does this in two ways, in ***“grace and truth.”*** ***“Grace and truth”*** is the glory of God.

Perhaps you have seen the acronym defining grace as, “God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense.” Grace, in a sense, is the gift of God’s kindness. Some have referred to grace as being “the generosity of love.” Some have suggested that grace is “unmerited favor.” In other words, it’s God’s love and kindness toward us when we’ve done nothing to deserve it. But really, not only do we not deserve it, but we have some things that make us completely undeserving of it. I’m not sure how to word that, but it’s not just that we are undeserving, but God showed his love toward us while we were his enemies (as Paul explains in Romans 5). We are not just “undeserving,” but we are “dis-deserving.” Someone has explained it to me by suggesting that grace is getting what we do not deserve and not getting what we do deserve.

Here in John, though, John introduces us to Jesus by explaining that as God in the flesh, Jesus is ***“full”*** of grace. His grace is God’s glory shining through, making itself known, reaching out, in spite of our weakness. And isn’t this what we have in the book of John? In Chapter 2, we have Jesus graciously saving a wedding host from terrible embarrassment as he miraculously changes water to wine. In John 2:11, in fact, John explains this miracle by saying, ***“This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”*** In Chapter 4, we have Jesus meeting with the woman at the well, unheard of in those days – an act of grace. In Chapter 8, we have Jesus rescuing the woman caught in the very act of adultery, seeing her not for how she was at the time, but seeing her for what she could become – an act of grace. In Chapter 9, we have Jesus healing the man born blind – an act of grace. In Chapter 11, we have Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead – another act of grace – also tied to God’s glory, by the way. In John 11:4, on his way to Bethany, Jesus says, ***“This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”*** So again, we have God’s glory revealed through the grace of Jesus.

But back here in John 1:16, John seems to preview all of this by referring to all of us receiving ***“grace upon grace.”*** Standing before a gracious God is almost like standing at the ocean with wave upon wave of grace

crashing on the shore. We appreciate some awesome thing God has done for us, and before we can even say “thank you,” the next wave is already on the way – wave after wave, **“grace upon grace,”** John says, washing over us. When people looked at Jesus, when they heard him speak, when they saw him act, they saw the glory of God shining through.

Not only in grace, though, but the glory of God is also revealed through Jesus in **“truth.”** And for this, he moves straight to the Law of Moses. I appreciate how we have this picture of wave upon wave of grace, and we have the Law of Moses thrown in here – wave upon wave of grace, **“For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”** The Law of Moses definitely had some grace in it, but the grace kept coming with Jesus, who both grace and truth personified, grace and truth in the flesh. This, by the way, is the first time we have the name of Jesus in the book of John. We’ve known it all along, we’ve always known what’s coming here, but this whole chapter about the **“Word,”** is really about Jesus. Jesus truly is the Eternal Word of God, in the flesh.

And so we’ve learned a few things – the Word became “flesh,” the Word “dwelt among us,” and Jesus (as the Word) reveals the glory of God in grace and truth.

Conclusion:

Here at the end, let’s at least briefly go back to the “So what?” question. What does this passage really mean for us today? I would make two observations based on what we’ve learned here:

First of all, God knows. God knows what it’s like to live in this earthly tent, and he understands. He cares. He came to this earth to save us, and part of that meant getting to know us. This is personal. He made it personal. He knows what it means to be tempted. He knows what it means to feel pain. He knows what it means to be lonely. He knows what it feels like to be rejected. He knows what it means to lose a good friend to death. He knows how it feels when your closest friends turn against you. He knows what it’s like to face injustice. The Eternal Word of God came to this earth in the flesh, and he experienced all of these things and more. This is personal. God knows. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Sometimes, God might feel distant, but he’s not. He knows. And he wants to be involved. As scripture tells us in Hebrews 2:18, **“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”** As God in the flesh, Jesus is fully qualified to know, and understand, and help. And that’s encouraging. When we pray, God knows.

There’s a second very practical application of this passage, and that is: Since God came to this earth in human form, we need to look out for each other. And I say this because of how Paul applies all of this in the book of Philippians. I’ll be reading a familiar passage from Philippians 2:3-8, but as I read, notice the reason for this. He starts with the command and then gives the reason – Philippians 2:3-8 – Paul says,

³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

I hope we caught that. We pour ourselves out for each other. Why? Because he poured himself out into human form for us. If the Eternal Word of God can empty himself into the form of a bond-servant, then certainly we as his people can do the same for each other. We don't look at ourselves, but we look for ways to serve others. We think of others as being more important than we are. We don't look out for our own personal interests, but we look out for the interests of others. As we say quite often: We look at what he did for us, and then we turn around, and our job is to "be Jesus" to the world around us. We do what he did. As we plan on singing in just a moment, because he came in the flesh, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

And that's where we leave it this morning. Thank you for being with us as we've learned more about Jesus. I hope you can be with us online or on the phone this coming Wednesday evening as we start a brand new study of the book of Acts.

As we close, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for the introduction to the fourth gospel account, a detailed description of who Jesus really is. We are thankful that you have communicated to us through Him and ultimately through the inspired word. As we think about what you have done for us, we pray that we would always remember that you care about us. You loved us so much that you gave your only Son. We pray that we as your people would live by the example he set when he came to this world in the flesh.

Today, we have a special concern. We love Tyler. And as you know, he has been through so much. He's also been an encouragement to us. We are thankful for the care that you have provided at UW Hospital. We ask that you would continue to intervene on his behalf. Be with Carl and Stacey. Give them strength and the comfort than only you can provide.

We come to you today in the name of Jesus, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. Thank you, Father. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com