

John 1:14-18 | “The Glory of the Son”
Preached on December 26, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to John 1, verses 14-18.

This Sunday, I am finishing up our short Christmas series looking at John’s introduction of Jesus.

We saw that Jesus is the Word and that Jesus is the Light.

Even on Christmas Eve, we continued in this passage as we saw the responses of people to Jesus.
[pause]

Now this morning, we will finish out John’s introduction by seeing the *glory* of Christ.

That means that once we are done with this passage, this Christmas season we will have seen the word, the light, and the glory - all themes that John brings forward about Jesus.

I would like to READ THE PASSAGE for you. *[pause]*

As people, we are captivated by glorious things.

We love to see glory in people, places, and things. *[pause]*

Let’s take each of those things in reverse of the order that I just used them.

Let’s first take the glory of *things*.

Just yesterday, there were a lot of presents unwrapped.

Maybe there was one present that you received which was amazing; it was glorious.

Possibly it was something made by hand, like some sort of handcrafted gift.

You look at the craftsmanship and beauty of it, and it just amazes you.

You enjoyed the glory of that present that you received yesterday.

There’s something in you that admires and marvels at the glory of certain things. *[pause]*

What about the glory of *places*?

If you think about it: the tourism industry is proof for our love of the glory found in places.

Tourism basically runs on people’s desire to see glory.

Why do people travel to go to the Grand Canyon?

Is it not to see the glory of the Grand Canyon? *[pause]*

No one likes to travel and stay at a plain-looking place devoid of any beautiful sights, for when we travel, we even tell people that we are going *sightseeing*. *[pause]*

If someone had a choice, they would pick the seat at a restaurant that looks out at the sunset view of the ocean, rather than the seat that looks out at a brick wall.

We would even prefer to take the scenic route when we drive because at least we can enjoy the glory of creation as we go on a trip.

There's something in us that admires and marvels at the glory of certain places. *[pauseeee]*

The third thing that we enjoy is that we enjoy the glory of *people*.

When someone does some sort of amazing feat, showing great skill and talent, don't we marvel at that?

When someone shows great love to another person, against all the odds, isn't there something in us that enjoys witnessing that?

We admire and marvel at the glorious things that people can do. *[pauseeee]*

You see, we have been wired by God to marvel at glorious things because we have been wired ultimately to marvel and worship a glorious God.

Yet sin has corrupted that glorying, hasn't it?

Sin corrupts our worship so that we worship things above God.

There's nothing wrong with admiring the glory of a beautiful sunset, if it pushes you to glory in the God of all sunsets.

But I find that many of us, especially at Christmas, find more joy and glory in people, places, and things above God.

And the passage that we are looking at this morning helps to reorient our glorying to its rightful place: "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."¹

And His glory makes all others pale in comparison. *[pauseeee]*

So as we examine this passage from God's Word, what do we find?

Well it's definitely all about Jesus Christ, and it tells us some things about His person and work. First...

I. In Christ, glory is seen. (14-15)

¹ 2 Corinthians 4:6 uses this phrase.

How can John say, ‘we have seen His glory?’

Verse 14 tells us: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”

It was His coming that led to His glory being seen. *[pause]*

The Son of God became flesh, and he didn’t stop being God, but added humanity onto His divinity.

This is the Incarnation of which we celebrate at Christmas - God became man. *[pause]*

He didn’t just become flesh and stay in Heaven, but He became flesh and dwelt among us.

He literally ‘tabernacled’ among us. *[pauseeee]*

God’s glorious presence was with His people in the Tabernacle back in Moses’ day, but once Christ came, God’s glorious presence was now ‘tabernacling’ with them through Jesus.

God had directly, personally, and intimately dwelled among His people as a human. *[pause]*

Just think about that and it kinda blows your mind.

God’s presence was with man in a way that you could touch, see, and hear as a person, for he became a person.

And by coming, His glory was seen. *[pause]*

Now before we go further, what exactly is ‘God’s glory’?

Well the glory of God is his beauty, radiance, and majestic splendor.

It is the infinite beauty and greatness of God in all of His perfection, and it is intricately linked to His character.

You can’t separate God’s glory from God’s character, for His character is a huge part of what makes Him glorious.

This is why in Exodus 33, Moses asks to see God’s glory, and how does God respond?

He says, “I will make all my *goodness* pass before you.”

And then when he does pass before him, He proclaims His name and character: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious,”² and then he goes on to give more about who He is.

This is exactly why even John says, “We have seen his glory,” and then expands upon what that glory is, it’s the only Son, “full of grace and truth.” *[pauseeee]*

² Exodus 33:18-19; 34:6-7.

That's God's glory, and in Jesus, God's glory came to us.

This means that Christmas is actually a celebration of the coming of God's glory to us.

God's glorious presence was living as a man among humanity.

It didn't remain hidden from us, but the human race got to know who God was more fully and personally. *[pauseeee]*

It's one thing to hear about someone, but when that person personally comes to you, that's when you can get to know them most fully.

So the Word became flesh and dwelt among mankind, and His glory was seen by John and all the others living in that day.

And now we get to see His glory through their accounts.

We get to hear what He said, how He acted, and how He felt from those who were there and who can bear witness to His person and work on earth. *[pauseeeeeee]*

Even John the Baptist bore witness about him.

Verse 15 tells us that He proclaimed that Christ was the one whose ministry came after his, but who ranks before him since He is the pre-existent One.

So even John the Baptist declared Christ's preeminence. *[pauseeee]*

Christ's glory was seen and testified about.

This wasn't something that no one saw, but many saw His glory and can testify about it, so that we aren't left wondering and doubting...

...But we can confidently trust the Jesus of the Bible.

And this Jesus and His glory is "glory as of the only Son from the Father." *[pause]*

You want to know how glorious his glory is? Well it's the glory of the very Son of God! *[pause]*

Who Jesus is makes Him glorious.

He is the one and only, unique Son of God.

We may be children of God through what Christ has done, but only *He* is the one and only Son of God. *[pauseeeeeee]*

We, as humans, tend to think there are some glorious things in this world.

We stand in awe at a beautiful sunset with all of its beautiful hues, we stand amazed at a magnificent building with its intricate details, or we are astonished at a great feat that an athlete does.

But to think that all of that greatness is like a drop of water compared to the never-ending ocean of God's inexhaustible glory, now that's staggering! *[pause]*

The One who was with God in the beginning, who is God, who is from the Father, and who created the universe, came and His glory was seen.

And this glory from the Son is "full of grace and truth". *[pause]*

John describes His glory to us, and he uses that phrase to do so.

How many of us could this be said of?

Could people say that we are "full" of grace or "full" of truth?

We may be characterized by grace and truth in some ways and at some times.

We may show them here and there, but Christ is *full* of both grace and truth. *[pause]*

He is absolutely filled with those two things.

That means that He never lies, but His word is completely true all of the time and you can count on its reliability.

He is never unloving, mean, or nasty - but He is full of grace. *[pauseeee]*

You want to see grace? Behold Christ!

You want the truth? Look to Him for it! *[pause]*

People in this world are searching for truth, but they will always fall short, if they fail to find it in Jesus.

People in this world are trying to redefine what love and truth actually are, but they can never actually redefine them because they have been defined to us by Jesus Christ.

You find out what grace and truth really are by beholding Christ. *[pauseeee]*

In Jesus, God's character is perfectly displayed for the world to see, and oh how glorious it is! *[pauseeee]*

Praise God that His glory *is* His matchless grace and truth because it means that He will always act in grace and in truth with us. *[pause]*

When we read Jesus' words, emotions, and actions in Scripture, we are reading of Someone who was living, filled with all grace and truth.

We can read and be encouraged, confident, and loved by what He said and did.

Whatever He said or did, we can know: that was full of grace and truth because He is full of grace and truth! *[pauseeee]*

Think about it...

Pure grace and pure truth were walking on this earth because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

That's the glory of the one and only Son of God, who came with grace and truth to us.

And since He is full of grace, then that means...

II. In Christ, grace is given. (16-17)

What is it that makes your friend be kind to you? It's because they are a kind person.

What is it that makes your friend keep telling you the truth? It's because they are an honest person.

You receive kindness and truth because your friend's kindness and honesty flow out to you from their character. *[pause]*

Now your friend is a sinner, and therefore they won't always be kind and truthful.

But in a much more full and perfect way than your friend, we receive grace and truth because Christ's grace and truth flows out to us from His character. *[pause]*

You see, Christ's glory means grace for us.

John says, "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

It is because He is full of grace that from that very fullness, we receive grace.

So Christ is like a full fountain that is always full of grace and ever-flowing out to us. *[pauseeee]*

The greatest news in the world is the glory of the Son of God because it means unmerited favor for us!

And how does He show that unmerited favor?

In tons of ways, but the most evident one is of course His work of redemption.

He showed grace by coming to earth, not counting “equality with God a thing to be grasped.”³

He showed grace every single day that He lived on this sin-filled, suffering-permeated earth because He could have given up, and not gone through with the Cross.

And He showed grace by being the sacrifice for our sins at Calvary. *[pause]*

We were undeserving sinners under the wrath of God, yet in the fullness of His grace, He came so that we could be forgiven and free.

God’s glory is the most important thing in the world, for out of His glory flows grace to sinners. *[pauseeee]*

This grace that we receive, John says, was “grace upon grace.”

Well what does that mean? I believe that verse 17 helps us to make more sense of it.

Verse 17 says, “*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” *[pause]*

There was grace given in the Law through Moses.

Why?

Because it told Israel who God was and how they were to relate to Him.

But now the greater grace given upon that is the grace and truth that comes from the Son of God Himself. *[pause]*

Grace has been ratcheted up.

The grace of the giving of the Law has been superseded by the grace of Christ, for Christ is the very embodiment of grace and truth in person. *[pauseeee]*

What kindness of God!

As we celebrate Christmas, we remember that grace has come to us in Jesus.

In Christ, grace came to us as sinners, to us in darkness, to us helpless, blind, lost, and under condemnation. *[pauseeee]*

Grace is never kept inside, but grace always extends out to others. *[pause]*

You see, these verses prompt us to respond, for Christ’s grace isn’t merely meant to only be *seen*, but *received*.

Imagine a person dying of thirst, and they come upon this overflowing fountain of water.

³ Philippians 2:6.

They see it, and say, “Isn’t that an amazing fountain!” but then they walk away and die of thirst.

That doesn’t make sense at all, for the fountain is overflowing for that person to drink from and live.

So also, we behold the overflowing fountain of Christ’s grace, and we receive that very grace for ourselves. *[pauseeee]*

If you have never received Christ as your Lord and Savior, His grace is flowing out to you today, with the offer of the complete forgiveness of your sins because of His death on your behalf.

Will you receive it or walk away to your own demise? *[pause]*

What about you who have already received His amazing grace that flowed from the wooden cross?

His grace has no limit, for even now, He gives grace.

Do you feel like you just can’t go on because you feel so overwhelmed? He gives you grace in the strength to endure.

Do you feel lonely and discouraged? His grace comes to you by means of his Word, comforting you with truths that lift up the despairing.

Do you feel incapable? His empowering grace enables you with gifting, motivation, and strength.

Will you receive His grace today? *[pauseeee]*

In Christ, glory is seen, grace is given, and thirdly...

III. In Christ, God is revealed. (18)

People unwrap presents in different ways, don’t they?

Some people try to unwrap a Christmas present in a delicate way, and people are thinking, “Come on, just rip that thing open!”

Other people seem to struggle to unwrap a present, and I don’t blame some of them, for there is certain wrapping paper out there that is really hard to open.

And then, of course, you have the third group, this group of people tear open a present like a wild animal tearing at a carcass.

Wrapping paper goes flying everywhere as they excitedly rip it open to see what’s inside. *[pause]*

No matter how you open a present, unwrapping a present *reveals* what’s inside.

So also, the truth behind Christmas is that God was revealed in Christ's coming.

When He came, Christ, the greatest gift ever given, was like a present opened up, as God was fully revealed to us. *[pause]*

Verse 18 makes this clear.

It says, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." *[pause]*

This is a commonly known theological truth - no one has ever seen God.

God cannot be seen by any human or else they will die.

Even when Moses sees God in Exodus, God is partially veiled from him as He puts him in a cleft of the rock and covers him with His hand.⁴

Yet this "unseeable" God has been made known in Christ Jesus. *[pause]*

The original word used for 'made known' is where we get the word "exegete," which means to expound or interpret.

So Christ is the perfect exegete of God.

In Jesus, God is fully described, explained, and revealed in detail. *[pause]*

You want to know who God is and what He is like? Look to Jesus.

Why is this?

Because Jesus is God, "the only God."

He is at the Father's side, and it literally says, "he is in the Father's bosom." *[pause]*

That image depicts closeness, fellowship, knowledge, and intimacy.

The Son and the Father have such a close relationship that it can be said that He is in the Father's bosom, close by, at His very side. *[pauseeee]*

Christ took on flesh and his whole person and work revealed God to us.

You want to know God's mind, will, character, and power? Look no further than Christ, for Christ is "the Word." *[pauseeeee]*

So what difference does this make for us?

⁴ See Exodus 33:22.

It means that we get to know God most fully in Jesus, and that reminds us of the importance and centrality of Christ.

You can't ever reject Jesus without rejecting the Father, for God wanted us to know Him, and we know Him most fully through Christ. *[pause]*

That means that we can't reject the news of the baby in the manger without serious, eternal ramifications, for His birth truly meant, "God with us".⁵ *[pauseeee]*

In a time like ours where religious pluralism grows and says that all roads lead to Heaven, or a time that says that you can take or leave Jesus...

...Or even a time that says, "That's your truth, but I have my truth."...

...Jesus as "the Word" pierces through all of the lies, and strikes to the heart of the matter...

To truly know God, you must know Christ.

And to know Christ, you must know that Christ is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. *[pauseeee]*

Do you know Him?

Have you beheld Him, who humbly took on flesh and dwelt among us?

Have you beheld Him, who is gloriously full of grace and truth, and who revealed God to us?

Have you trusted in the One whose glorious grace was on full display, as he hung on the Cross for the forgiveness of your sins...

...And whose glorious power shone forth as he rose from the grave?

Have you received that grace, which flows from Him as a free gift to you? *[pauseeee]*

May we always remember that...

The glorious grace and truth of God has come to us in Jesus!

This is what we celebrate at Christmas!

We celebrate the fact that while we were yet rebels against God, glorious grace and truth were sent to us from Above.

And His glory made God more fully known to us, so that if we know Jesus, we know the Father.

But that's not all that He brought, for out of the fullness of His glorious grace, we have received grace, as we receive the right to become children of God. *[pauseeee]*

⁵ See Matthew 1:23.

Out of his great love, God determined for us (the totally undeserving) to know Him and become His children.

What glory!

What infinite beauty and greatness of God! *[pauseeee]*

This Christmas, there are a lot of things that are glorious to some degree.

Maybe it's a neat, beautiful present that you received, maybe it's an amazing place with all of its marvelous Christmas decorations....

...Or maybe it's the skill or kindness of another person.

But don't let those things distract you, don't let them take away from the glory of God, but let them point you and lead you to worship the glorious Creator of all of those things.

And how that glorious Creator became flesh and dwelt among us, so that we can see His glory, receive His grace, and know God.

There's nothing like the glory of the Only Son from the Father.

“O come, let us adore Him.”⁶

⁶ A phrase found in the chorus of the Christmas carol, “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” by John Francis Wade.