

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

“Bearing Witness of Him”

John 1:6-18

Turn with me in your Bibles to John Chapter 1. We are going to look at verses 5 through 18. I am going to start with something a little different this session. I got this story from Pastor Sandy Adams in his teaching notes on John Chapter 1. It really speaks of what has happened to our world.

Did you hear about the colony of mice that lived deep inside the grand piano? From the beginning, the mice enjoyed the beautiful music that came from the piano. The music lighted up their dark piano world. Common sense told them that such music was no accident. All mice believed in a "Great Unseen Pianist." Until one day, an inquisitive mouse crawled into a part of the piano no mouse had been before. He reported back that vibrating wires made the music. Then another mouse went deeper into the guts of the piano and said the first mouse was wrong. The music was made by felt-hammers striking the wires. The mice concluded their world was mechanical and impersonal. The Great Unseen Pianist must've been an ancient myth. A primitive speculation of what now could be explained. Yet sadly, they only looked inside the piano, not outside, to the Great Pianist who sat at the keys.

Last time we talked a lot about what happened **“In the beginning.”** The Holy Spirit had Moses write Genesis 1:1:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Then, in John 1:1 the Spirit had John further our information on the creation account by writing this:

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Who is the Word?

Jesus.

Jesus is the Great Pianist spoken of in our earlier story. And mankind is the mice.

Many have forgotten about the Creator and now worship the creation (see Romans 1). They have come to an understanding of the mechanics of God's creation. But they have concluded that the music of life is a result of the wires, hammers and keys. And they

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ignore the Pianist who is sitting at the piano making a joyful noise. Instead, they wallow in the darkness of the inside of the piano, but never look at the light outside.

Jesus is the only One who can shine the light that these people need.

Remember what John said at the end of our study last time (John 1:5)?

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

I said last time that the word “**comprehend**” here was difficult to translate (I’m not even going to try to pronounce it!). So I did the next best thing; I went to a concordance and cross-referenced it. And the verse that the Lord gave me that I think explains what Jesus is talking about here is John 12:35. This is Jesus speaking to His disciples about His upcoming crucifixion. He says:

“A little while longer the light (*Jesus*) is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.”

People have been blinded by “**the god of this age**” (2 Corinthians 4:4). They walk in darkness (without Jesus) and know not where they are going (straight to Hell). And in our time, the darkness seems to be getting worse. That is where we believers come in.

We need to be witnesses of what Jesus did. We need to bring people to the Light of the World. That is what John is going to talk about: being a witness of Jesus. Look at verse 6:

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

In addition to the Word, another man came on the stage of history. He was not God, but was called from his birth to be a witness of Him. His name was John. We call him “John the Baptist,” not because of his denomination; but because in the time of Jesus, he was baptizing people in the wilderness.

Does anyone know what his message for the people was?

Matthew 3:2:

“Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”

Who else shared this same message?

Jesus did in Matthew 4 right after saying that Light had dawned on the “**shadow of death.**”

Interesting.

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Now John did not go to a “*semitary*.” In fact, he was kind of an earthy guy (we have a lot of those around here). He feasted on locusts and honey and bought most of his clothes at Tractor Supply. And, like the Old Testament prophets, he was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus (Luke 7:27). Because of that, his message was very important. Look at verse 7:

This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

The key word in this verse is simple to pick out. John both came for a witness and to bear witness. Obviously, this is an important word. It is the Greek word *martooreho* in English and means “*to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something.*” In fact, John used the verb form some ten times (six times as a noun).

But did you know that Luke used the word 10 times in the Book of Acts?

What is the Book of Acts about?

The church.

John came to be a witness of the Light, and so are we to be.

His purpose was to bring Jesus to others and others to Jesus. And that is our commission as well (Matthew 28).

Think about it this way:

The moon has no light of its own. It reflects the *light* from the sun. Same with us (Colossians 1:27). We reflect the Light of the Son. And when we do, people come into the Light and see Jesus. What a time to live!

But here is the deal, folks. We don’t save anyone. Only Jesus does. And if I read my Bible correctly, this has to happen (John 14:6):

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

We bring Jesus to people, and *He* brings them to the Father. This is how it works:

The Father draws them near (John 6:44), the Spirit convicts and convinces (John 16), and Jesus saves.

We are just instruments that He uses to be His hands, feet, eyes, ears and mouths. We are not called to be attorneys. We cannot convict or convince anyone of the truth. That is the Holy Spirit’s job, and we are simply vessels for Him to work in and through. And the way this happens is that we “**witness**” to people, just like John did.

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We share the truth with them and tell them all about what the Lord has done and is doing in our lives. We also share the Word of God with them. Then we leave the rest to Him. That is what John did. Look at verses 8-9:

⁸He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

⁹That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

Why did John the apostle think it was necessary to point out that John the Baptist was not the Light?

There is some evidence that the movement that the Baptist began continued even after the resurrection of Jesus. Even 20 years later Paul found some of his disciples in Ephesus (Acts 18). There is still a sect called Mandeans who live in Iraq that trace their ancestral link to John the Baptist. But — they are hostile to Christianity. So here is what John the writer is trying to get across: John the Baptist was great. Jesus even said this about him (Matthew 11:11):

“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist;

Wow! Great kudos for John. But then Jesus finished by saying this:

but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Jesus was not just a great man and equal to John. He is not like John or Mohammed or Buddha or Confucius (Confucious). He is not just another great teacher or good man. Jesus is the One who literally gives light to people in this dark world.

Guess who is the least in the kingdom?

Me — and you.

But by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and guides us, we too can be a great witness of Jesus. We can proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. He is the “True Light” that all men need. Here are some things to know as we share Him with the lost of the world (verses 10-11):

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Think about what John is saying here. The Word, the very One who the world was created by and for, was here; but nobody knew Him. Now, what is interesting about this is that the first time John writes the phrase, “**His own,**” it is in a neuter form, speaking of

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the creation. The second time it is masculine, referring to humanity and specifically, His people, the Jews.

When Jesus came into the world, all of creation acknowledged Him. The winds obeyed Him. The water supported Him. And the rocks were ready to cry out about Him.

But there was one segment of creation that did not receive Him. Man — and especially His brothers and sisters in Israel. He did miracles and preached powerful sermons and, in fact, did exactly what their Messiah was supposed to do.

Isn't that what He told the disciples of John the Baptist when they came and asked if He was the One they should be looking for (Luke 7)?

He fulfilled ALL the prophecies that were written of Him at His first coming. But instead of accepting Him, they hung Him on a tree.

Human nature is the only part of nature that has a problem acknowledging who Jesus is.

Every Saturday or Sunday in the fall, people stand, yell and stomp their feet as their favorite football team plays a game. People sway and sing at halftime as a lady who makes obscene gestures sings a song. And the same thing happens at rock concerts, movies, baseball, soccer and basketball games and the like.

Humanity has no problem with worship.

But what happens when you bring up Jesus?

Arms fold, voices hush, and faces curl up in frowns. Our culture finds it very easy to worship all kinds of things. But it has great difficulty worshipping Jesus. So it is not that they can't believe. It is that they won't. That is why we need to bring them into the Light. This is what will happen if we do (verses 12-13):

¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

I like that first word: **But**...

It is a word of hope. When it appears in the Bible (*But* God, *But* then and just *but*...), good things often follow. John Courson wrote this about this word, “**but**”:

How many great truths hang on this small hinge?

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We talked about this a lot in Romans. The Jews believed that they were the children of God because they were Jewish. Not so — and Paul destroyed their arguments so we don't need to revisit.

Salvation is granted by God, and God alone. You have to be born again into His family. He sets the terms, fields the requests, issues the pardons, and regenerates the spirit. Salvation has never been, and will never be, a work of men. It doesn't come by blood relations or birth. It doesn't come by the strength of the flesh or by the decree of man. It comes as a supernatural work of God. And He has chosen to give it only to people who trust their lives to His Son, who **“believe on His name.”** And verse 14 tells us why this is so important:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Is there a more powerful verse in all the Scriptures?

I think not.

This word translated **“dwelt”** literally means **“encamped”** or **“tabernacled.”** The Word, the One who created and sustains the world, came and tabernacled among us. In modern terms you might say, *“The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood!”*

God stepped out of Heaven to walk in our mean streets. Or, as we read in the story at the beginning of our study, He became a mouse and moved into the piano.

Is this the most incredible miracle of all?

By the *dunamis*, the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus entered into Mary's uterus. And like each of us, He slid through the birth canal. He was tightly wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a feed trough.

Can you imagine placing God in the bin in which you feed your cattle?

And the rest is HisStory. Of course, it is all HisStory. But this was special.

God entered the world through the lowest door, but then stooped down to lift us up. And now He cries when we cry. He laughs when we laugh. And He hurts when we hurt.

The Logos did not create the universe and then leave it alone as the Greeks believed (as do many in our time). John says He not only created the world, He joined it. And He did it so He could save it. Now that is grace.

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And the kicker, the most amazing thing about this, is that brother John saw it all. He was a *WITNESS* of all the things that Jesus did. He shared bread with the God/Man; and even many years later, he is still blown away. He tells us that he “**beheld His glory.**” Like Moses on the mountain, he saw the Glory of the Lord — His only begotten Son. (Now I don’t think that John got a glow from Jesus.)

But I do believe he could tell that Jesus had been with the Father. He saw that Jesus had an authority about Him. Nicodemus could see it. So could the woman at the well. I believe that traces of God were all over Him. Remember what He said to Philip that “**He who has seen Me has seen the Father**” (John 14:9). In Colossians we learn that He was the “**fullness of the Godhead bodily.**”

But what truly set Jesus apart was that He was full of grace and truth. There was no harshness in what He said, even when He rebuked. He spoke and it was truth. And there was no compromise in the grace He shared — no greasy grace from Jesus. He called out and forgave sin with an equal boldness. And this is a great witness to us. G. Campbell Morgan wrote this about grace and truth:

These two ideas should hold our minds and direct our lives. God is grace, and truth. Not one without the other. Not the other apart from the one. In His government there can be no lowering of the simple and severe standard of Truth; and there is no departure from the purpose and passion of Grace.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!

Next John returns his attention back to John the Baptist. Look at verse 15:

John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ”

John the Baptist was an important figure in the New Testament. He is mentioned at least eight to nine times. He had the special privilege of introducing the nation of Israel to their Messiah. That is why He said that Jesus “**must increase but I must decrease**” (John 3:30). Even though he was six months older than his cousin, he says that Jesus was “**preferred before**” him. In other words, He was *before* in priority. But He was also eternal (*before* me).

Unlike us, the birth of Jesus was not His beginning. John knew that Jesus had shared eternity with the Father before coming to earth. He is very God and very man. I know that is a mind-bender. But in God’s plan, this was absolutely necessary.

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The Grace of God had to literally bring salvation to the world (Titus 2:11). He had to become man and provide a perfect sacrifice. And not only did He die in our place, He left us with abounding grace to live by. Look at verse 16:

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

I think what John is saying here is that there is a never-ending supply of grace to be found in Jesus. For those of us who believe, the well never runs dry. In Romans 5:20 Paul even said that “**where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.**” And I don’t know about you, but I need the much more grace of God. Here is how it works (swiped from Sandy Adams):

Have any of you ever read the comic strip, “Dennis the Menace?”

Picture Dennis and his buddy Joey walking home from the Wilsons and in their hands are a load of chocolate chip cookies.

Their faces are covered with chocolate and crumbs and great big smiles.

And Joey asks, “I wonder what we ever did to deserve this?”

Dennis, normally a Menace and in need of God’s grace answers:

“Look Joey, Mrs. Wilson gives us cookies not because we’re nice, but because she is nice.”

That is grace. It is unconditional love; and it originates in God, not in us. It is never earned and cannot be purchased. As Sandy says, “*Grace is love that is on the house.*” And Jesus is full of this grace that the world needs.

Why does the world need grace?

Because it is under the Law. Look at verse 17:

For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The Law was given on a quaking mountain. Grace and Truth were born in a manger.

The Law was written on tables of stone. Grace and Truth were wrought in a heart of love.

When the Law came down, 3,000 people died (Exodus 32:28). When the Holy Spirit came down, 3,000 people got saved.

The Law kills. Jesus gives life — abundant life.

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I am not saying that there was no grace under the Law of Moses, because there was. The Law also revealed God's truth. Each sacrifice was an expression of the grace of God.

But, in Jesus Christ, grace and truth reach their fullness; and this fullness is available to us. We are saved by grace, but we also live by grace, and depend on grace in all that we do. But not only did Jesus reveal to us God's grace, He revealed God Himself. Look at verse 18:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

The word translated "**declared**" is *exegeomai*, from which we get our word *exegesis*. This word means "*to expound, to explain or unfold.*" Jesus expounded on the Father because He had seen Him. He explains to us who the Father is and unfolds His truth to us. And that is what we are supposed to do.

We are to expound on Jesus because, in God's Word, we have seen Him. Every page of the book reveals Him to us. The more we learn about Jesus, the more we come to know the Father. Jesus is in a very real sense a sermon on God. His whole life is a divine revelation. He is the Word made flesh. And we get to be His witnesses to the world.

Dennis and Joey got some cookies. I would rather taste and see that the Lord is good.

Next time we are going to learn more about both John and Jesus. Read ahead and be blessed.

Let's pray.

SING THE REVELATION SONG