



Sunday, September 28, 2025

John 1:6-18

Last week we started our newest series as we started walking through the Gospel of John. We didn't make it very far - only five verses - but in those five verses what John does for us, was to set the stage for everything he's about to share in regards to the life of Jesus. And he does this by making it explicitly clear that Jesus is Lord of all - that He is the same Word that was in the beginning of Genesis as He is at the end of Revelation. And that even though the majority of the Bible outlines the journey of redemption from sin and death, Jesus has never not been victorious. He was victorious in the beginning, He is victorious in the middle and He will, forevermore, be victorious. He is the Light of the world and the darkness could not, is not, and will not overcome Him. You see, the picture of Jesus as Light is so powerful because as much darkness as you have, it only takes a little light to penetrate it. Light breaks through the darkness. Every. Single. Time.

And because He is victorious - we His children - are victorious too. And as the light of the world shines through us in the world around us, we become His representatives here on the earth. As the Bible says - our role becomes like salt and light to those around us. A little salt to a perfectly cooked steak is a magical thing. A little light in a dark basement brings peace and security. And this is now who He has called us to be.

So it's upon this clarity that we now step into the Gospel of John with great anticipation of all that will unfold before us in the next coming weeks and months.

If you have your Bibles with you this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to John 1:6-18. If you are able to, I'd also invite you to stand with me for the reading of the Word of the Lord:

John 1:6-18

'6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the

world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 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.

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.’”

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 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.

This next section is now a particular interest because we see the introduction of another character. This time it's John the Baptist. However, even in the midst of introducing John the Baptist, we see that the apostle John has a hard time keeping focused on John the Baptist and in verse 9-14 goes right back to reiterating essentially what he just stated about Jesus in the first 5 verses. He just can't help himself.

I recognize this behaviour. My son is a huge Lego Star Wars fan and Lego just released a new death-star which becomes available the beginning of October. Since April or May when this first got introduced, my son has been talking nonstop about this - it has so many more thousands of pieces, it's kind of like a slice of the ship instead of the entire ship/ it's the biggest set that Lego has ever created....etc. He knows everything about it and he's even been selling a number of his other Lego sets to acquire enough money to be able to purchase this one. It's literally all he can think about and talk about...and almost every single conversation I have with him ends up drifting right back into Lego territory.

In the same way, John is so enamoured with Jesus that he can't even do a sidebar conversation about John the Baptist without bringing Jesus into the middle of it - because ultimately John the Baptist points to Jesus, and Jesus is who John really wants to talk about.

At any rate, this section is vital. Now, because the first 5 verses showcase the ultimate power and authority of Jesus in more of a cosmic fashion, it isn't until verse 14 that we see this cosmic view of Jesus take on flesh and become human. But what John is doing now is setting the stage for this by letting us know that the Word and the Life and the Light are coming into the world. But Jesus doesn't overcome the darkness with one blinding flash, like lightning splitting the night sky. He does it by turning on one light at a time - igniting hearts that were once cold and dead with His Light. And how does that happen? Ultimately through people like you and me who share the gospel and point others to Him.

This is why the introduction of John the Baptist is so crucial here - because as verse 6-7 say, he was a man sent by God with one purpose: to point people to Jesus. So, in many ways, you could say that John the Baptist was the very first missionary or even the first evangelist of the New Testament era.

Now, John doesn't spend a lot of time writing about John the Baptist beyond this chapter, so I thought it would be valuable to give you a brief overview of who this man - that was sent by God - was really all about.

The first mention of John the Baptist is back in Luke 1. His story actually begins before he was even born. His parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were older and childless - and then one day, while Zechariah was serving in the temple, the angel Gabriel appeared and told him they would have a son. Not just any son, but one who would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from the womb, and who would, 'make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

From the very beginning, John's whole life was set apart. He grew up in the wilderness, clothed in camel's hair, eating locusts and wild honey - a picture of simplicity and total devotion to God. And when the time came, he stepped onto the scene preaching one clear message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Crowds flocked to him at the Jordan River, confessing their sins and being baptized.

As Jesus comes on the scene and begins to prepare for His ministry, we see a significant moment between the two when Jesus asks John the Baptist to baptize him. Shortly after this, we see the life of Jesus take off and the life of John the Baptist naturally take a back seat. Although the Apostle John doesn't go into detail on this next part, when we look at the Gospel of Matthew, we learn that John the Baptist was put in jail for preaching and eventually beheaded at Herod's command.

Now, the story of John the Baptist raises two interesting observations for me:

The first is that although tragic, I want you to see that it was also beneficial - even necessary - that John the Baptist's ministry came to an end. John had to step aside so that all the focus would be on Jesus. Otherwise, there could have been John-followers versus Jesus-followers. And even though John was long gone, we still see hints of this in Acts 19, when Paul meets a group who had received John's baptism but hadn't even heard about the Holy Spirit. That's the kind of confusion that had to be avoided. John's role was always to prepare the way, and then fade into the background so that all eyes could be on Christ.

Which leads me to my second observation: Why was it necessary to have John the Baptist prepare the way? Why couldn't Jesus do both?

One reason John the Baptist's ministry was necessary is because it fulfilled prophecy. Hundreds of years earlier, Isaiah and Malachi had said there would be a forerunner - someone crying out in the wilderness, preparing the way. If Jesus had just shown up without John, there would have been a missing piece in God's plan. John's ministry was proof that God keeps His word.

But beyond prophecy, I think the other element is that John gives us a real-world picture of the role we're meant to play. Part of our calling is to prepare the way for people to meet Christ. God chooses to use people in His Kingdom work. He doesn't need to - we see that in the way He confronted Saul on the Road to Damascus - but He chooses to - which we also see with Ananias ministering to Saul during his conversion process. Whether it's John the Baptist before Jesus' ministry, the disciples during His ministry, or the apostles after, there has never been a season where God did not use His people to prepare the way.

This is where the parable of the seed and the soil can actually help bring some clarity. The seed is the gospel, and it has to be sown into the soil if it's going to grow. But not all soil is the same - some is rocky, some shallow, some choked with weeds, some hard like the roadside, and some good and ready. You see, too often we read this parable through the lens of the seed, but when we read it through the lens of the different soil types, we begin to see the necessity of preparing the soil, not just before it receives the seed of the gospel, but during and after. This parable through that lens is all about preparing the way, just like the role of John the Baptist, the disciples, the apostles and now us.

Through discipleship, prayer, teaching, conversation, community - we're helping to remove rocks, pull weeds, and till the ground so that the soil becomes a healthy environment where the seed of the gospel can grow and thrive. We're spiritual gardeners. And Jesus has tasked us with the role of

helping to prepare soil.

Ultimately, though, the Holy Spirit is the only one who can soften hearts so they can respond to the gospel. The Church helps to disciple and nurture faith, but there is always an individual responsibility where each one of us has to ask: what kind of soil am I? Am I open to truly receiving the Word, or am I too distracted, shallow, hardened? The Spirit prepares, the Church discipled, but every person must choose to embrace the discipline it requires to grow deep roots.

This is where John now shift's gears and goes back to talking about the sovereignty of Jesus Christ in verses 10-18. Again, oh, to be so enamoured with who Jesus is that He literally infiltrates every single conversation that we have and becomes the focal point of our very lives.

Now, although similar to his opening five verses, there's something unique about verses 14 to 18 as John describes the nature of God.

The first thing I want you to see is what we briefly touched on last week - that in vs. 14, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' Now, when it comes to theology, this is a major verse because it holds within it the very key for our salvation.

All of humanity is destined for death because of sin. Not one single human being has been untouched by it. Paul says in Romans 3:23, 'all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.' And Romans 6:23 adds, 'the wages of sin is death.' That's the reality we all share.

You see, the Bible teaches us that when Adam and Eve embraced sin, it acted like a kind of spiritual DNA of sorts that infected every single human being born from that point forward. And the consequence of that sin was death.

The only antidote for that infection was the blood of a perfect, spotless, without-blemish human being. But here's the problem: because every single human being is born with that same sinful DNA, it was impossible for us to find the cure on our own.

So in His grace and mercy, God allowed lambs to be used as substitutes for a time. Their blood could cover sin temporarily, but it could never cleanse it permanently.

Then, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ - born into the world as a baby, fully human yet without sin - to be the perfect, spotless, without-blemish sacrifice. His blood became

the true and final antidote for the infection of sin in all humanity. But that blood couldn't just be donated in part - it had to be poured out in full. Romans teaches that the penalty of sin is death, which means that the shedding of blood and the giving of life are inseparable. On the cross, Jesus didn't just spill some blood; He gave His life completely. And in doing so, He satisfied the penalty of sin once and for all. His blood became the cure for the infection we all carry - the final antidote to the spiritual DNA of sin. And now, everyone who puts their faith in Him receives not just forgiveness, but new life - a new nature, a new identity, a new family.

God's love for the world was so great that He did what no one else ever had, because no one else ever could - He sent His Son to die the death we deserved so we could live the life He offers.

The second thing I want you to notice is that John only uses two attributes here to describe the nature of God. Grace and truth. Notice it's not mercy, forgiveness, love or justice....etc. These are all true. However, by highlighting the elements of grace and truth in this section, John is revealing to us the significance of the tension between grace and truth.

Some of us naturally lean towards grace - we want to be compassionate, forgiving, understanding - all great qualities. However, if we only live in grace, we can easily end up excusing sin or ignoring what's true. Others of us lean towards truth - we want to be clear, honest and straightforward - all great qualities as well. However, if we only live in truth, we can easily end up being harsh, judgmental, or unkind. Hence the tension between the two which can sometimes lead to compromise.

Jesus doesn't compromise between the two though - He embodies both perfectly. He is full of grace and full of truth. Not half-and-half, not sometimes one and sometimes the other - fully both, all the time.

An incredible picture of this shows up later on in John 8 where Jesus meets a woman who has been caught in adultery. Her community has turned their backs on her because of her sinful actions but Jesus responds with deep compassion - grace - by saying, 'Neither do I condemn you.' But in the same breath He also speaks truth by saying, 'Go and sin no more.' You see, He recognizes that it was her sinful actions that brought her to this place, and if she doesn't turn from her sin, then she will be brought back to this place time and time again. And in this instance, truth is received because grace was extended.

Jesus never excuses sin by offering grace. He never even tolerates it. His response is always the same: grace and truth. Grace in the form of forgiveness. Truth in the call to turn from the desires of

the flesh and to walk in His ways.

Which has deep implications for us the church. It means that when we respond with great grace but no truth, we're just perpetuating sinful behaviour. In the same way, when we respond with truth but no grace, the truth often falls on deaf ears. So our calling is to hold them together - to extend grace that welcomes and forgives, and to speak truth that convicts and transforms.

Example: when my kids were younger, one of them had this habit of sneaking snacks and then hiding the garbage. We would find old wrappers stuffed in couch cushions or tucked behind furniture. And of course, we gave a lot of grace because of the stage they were in and the age they were at. But if we only gave grace and never spoke truth, then that behaviour would never change. Grace softened their heart, but truth corrected it. Grace opened the door, but ultimately, it was truth that brought transformation.

This is what it means to represent Jesus well. He was full of grace and full of truth, and if we want to reflect Him to the world, we can't settle for one without the other.

So do you see it now?

The Word became flesh - that's our salvation.

And He came full of grace and truth - that's our example.

Grace without truth leaves people stuck in sin. Truth without grace leaves people crushed under guilt. But grace and truth together? That's Jesus. And if we're going to reflect Him to the world, we can't settle for one without the other.

Now, the last thing I want you to see before we draw this message to a close is the beginning of verse 18. In the midst of all this grace and truth talk, John adds a simple one-line saying that, 'No one has seen God at any time.'

But Adam and Eve did while they were walking in the garden before the fall. We know that Moses did on the mountain top. Elijah also did, but had to shield his face. So what is John saying here?

He's saying that no one has seen God in His full essence - His full glory. Every glimpse in the Old Testament was partial and filtered according to what a human could handle. But now, in Jesus, we don't just get a glimpse. We get God Himself. John continues: 'The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known.'

In other words, if you want to know what God looks like, look at Jesus. If you want to hear the voice of God, listen to Jesus. If you want to know the heart of God, watch Jesus. He is grace and truth wrapped in flesh, the perfect revelation of the Father.

Again, John is very strategic in writing this because he knows there will be many Jewish people reading these words. And for many of them, if they wanted a glimpse of God, they would look to Moses and the law. But here John is saying, 'As great as Moses was, Jesus is greater. As much as the Law revealed, Jesus reveals more.'

The Law revealed God's truth - His holiness, His standard, His expectations. But truth on its own can only expose where we fall short.

When Jesus came, He came full of grace and truth. In Him, we don't just see the standard of God - we see the heart of God. Whereas the Law could uncover sin, only Jesus could forgive sin. The Law could show us what we ought to be, but only Jesus gives us the grace to become it.

So John is making it unmistakably clear: if you really want to see God, don't stop at Moses, don't stop at the Law - look to Jesus - the One who is full of grace and truth.

Points to consider:

Just like John the Apostle couldn't stop circling back to Jesus - like my son who keeps circling every conversation back to the Death Star - do I let my life circle back to Jesus? Does He naturally spill out of my conversations, my priorities, my passions?

In the whole talk about the tension between grace and truth, ask yourself this question: what areas am I applying too much grace and not enough truth in? Or what areas am I applying trust too without grace? What areas of our lives do we need to embrace this tension in?

Blessing

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you

May He cause His face to Shine upon you

May He be gracious towards you

Lift up His countenance upon you

And may He give you peace

In Jesus name, Amen.

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