The Gospel of John

**GLORY, GRACE AND TRUTH – JOHN 1:14–18**

**INTRODUCTION FROM DR. STEVE SCHELL**

“I look forward to the day when I meet Jesus face to face. Sure, I’m curious to see what He looks like. Are the scars still there? What does His voice sound like? Does He look like the pictures the artists draw, or will I be surprised? But more than that I can hardly wait to meet Him as a person. No, I won’t be meeting a stranger. I’ll be meeting a dear friend, someone who’s been with me all my life. But still, I want to look at Him, hug Him and tell Him how grateful I am for everything He’s done. And then I want to step back and watch and listen and just observe Him. And I want to meet His disciples, the people who knew Him during the years He walked among us as a man. I want to hear their stories about the miracles He performed, but even more than that, the question I really want to ask them is, “What was He like? Tell me about the person you walked beside for two and a half years.” I want to ask His mother, “What was He like as a boy growing up in Nazareth?” Thankfully, those who wrote the gospels recorded many of their memories about Him. But in the few verses we’re reading today, one of His closest disciples actually answers my heartfelt question. He describes the character of Jesus. He tells us about the man he remembers. Let’s listen carefully because John is giving us a glimpse of the Person we’ll meet in heaven.”

**Read John 1:1, 14–18**

**John 1:1, 14–18 (ESV)** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **… Verse 14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. **15** (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) **16** For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

V1 – “… and God was the Word”

* John was saying, “The very God of Genesis 1:1 … who created the heavens and the earth … that God was the Word.”

V14.1 – That Creator became flesh and “dwelt” among us

* The word John used which is translated, “dwelt” is interesting. It’s not the normal word you would used for someone living among you. In fact, it was only used 5x in the NT. It’s the Greek verb (skēnóō) that means “tabernacled” … The noun skēnē means “tent”… used 435 in LXX OT… and about 2/3 of them are the “tent of meeting” in the wilderness … the tabernacle.
  + By bringing up the idea of the tabernacle, John is showing us again that he is speaking of a pre-existing person … someone who wanted to be with His people so badly that He told them to make him a tabernacle in the wilderness for Him to dwell in.

**Exodus 29:44–46 (ESV)** I will consecrate the **tent** of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. **45** I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. **46** And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

**Zechariah 2:10–11 (ESV)** Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the Lord. **11** And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.

**Revelation 21:3 (ESV)** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell (skēnóō) with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

V14.2 – And we “have seen” (like spectators in a theater) His “glory” (Heb. kabod)

* Though John wrote his Gospel in Greek, being Jewish and very familiar with the OT Scriptures, there is little doubt that the word on his mind is the Hebrew word, kabōd (kah-bōd’).

**Exodus 40:33–34 (ESV)** And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work. **34** Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory (kabōd) of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

* John uses the same word for glory as the LXX used to translate kabōd … and it’s the Greek word, “dōxa.”
* John said, “We have seen His glory.” Though John doesn’t tell us when, Matthew 17, Mark and Luke who tell us exactly when Peter, James and John saw His glory.

**Matthew 17:1–2 (ESV)** And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

**Exodus 33:11 (ESV)** “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend…”

**Exodus 34:29 (ESV)** When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

* And this is what happens when you fellowship face-to-face with God … His glory begins changing you.
* But there was another kind of glory that the disciples had witnessed. They saw in Him the character of God. His words, His actions and His attitudes produced their own kind of light. As a person, Jesus radiated the heart of God as surely as He radiated the light of God, and there were two qualities in His character that stood out above all the rest. They were grace and truth.

V14.3 – the words, “of the only Son” are translated from one word (used 9x in the NT), and depending on the gender of the word, masculine, feminine or neuter, it would mean an only son, an only daughter or an only child. It’s, of course, masculine here.

Notice Jesus was not created or made … He was begotten as God’s only Son.

* The word “beget” is a very different process than to create or make.
  + To “create” essentially means to bring something into being which did not formerly exist, and that is different in nature than the creator. For example, God created the heavens and the earth … different … lower … in nature than Himself.
  + To “make” something is essentially a process of rearranging materials that already exist in order to produce something useful.
  + To “beget,” however, is the reproduction of something that is the same as our own nature. Cats beget kittens; dogs beget puppies; and humans beget babies, etc.
* Jesus was begotten … unlike all of God’s creations, He is the same in nature as God the Father

V14.4 – “full of grace”

* Of all the attributes of Jesus that John could have mentioned, there were two that stood out to him the most. The first one was “grace” (charis / kháh-reece).
* In the New Testament the word “grace” (charis) is used to describe God’s mercy toward sinners and His willingness to do acts of kindness for people who do not deserve them. And John said Jesus was “full of grace.” There are so many examples in the gospels of Jesus caring for the kind of people that others would pass by, it’s hard to choose just one. But it would be difficult to find a greater example than His ministry to the demonically tortured man on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Many of us know this story very well but we tend to focus our attention on the demonized man, or the pigs; we picture 2,000 of them crashing down the hillside into the lake and drowning.
* Let’s primarily focus on Jesus’ part in that story:
  + His assignment was to cross the lake to set one man free.
  + As soon as got out on the lake, a demonically-inspired windstorm arose attempting to drown Him.
  + Being physically exhausted, He slept through the storm.
  + His own disciples woke Him up and accused Him of being selfish and loveless, not caring if they died.
  + So He arose and rebuked the wind and the sea, and then had to address His disciples’ immaturity and faithlessness.
  + The moment Jesus stepped out of the boat on the other side of the lake, a severely demonized man came running down the hill from the tombs and fell at His feet.
  + The man was so broken that he lived in the local graveyard. He ran around screaming and was completely naked. He would take sharp stones and gash himself. If we would all be honest today, we’d all admit that we’ve seen people demonstrating some of these demonic outbursts, and we that we’d prefer to stay as far away from them as possible. When he ran up to Jesus, he was still dragging behind him some of the broken chains people had used to try to lock him down. The power of demons within him would shatter the chains like they were toothpicks. The monstrous presence within him bellowed out of his mouth begging for mercy, apparently knowing Jesus’ unwillingness to allow them to continue ravaging this man. Jesus didn’t recoil in fear when He heard them cry out. Instead, He compassionately inquired as to their identity and then permitted the entire infestation to fly into a nearby herd of pigs, which then stampeded into the lake and drowned showing their cruel and vicious nature.
  + The man was completely delivered, and he immediately regained his self-awareness, realizing what a humiliating state he’d been in. He somehow acquired some clothes, got completely dressed, and came and sat down near Jesus.
  + When the people of the nearby city and towns heard about it, they all came out to see what had happened. And what was Jesus’ reward for this great act of kindness and power? The entire community beg Him to leave.
  + When Jesus into the boat, the man who’d been healed ran to Jesus a second time, this time in his right mind, begging Him to come with Him. But instead, Jesus instructed Him to go home … to his friends … two things that man hadn’t had in years. He told him to share what God had done for him and how God had shown him such mercy.
* John was there. He watched the whole thing happen, and it left a lasting impression on him. Yes, he surely marveled at the power he saw at work. One command and some 2,000 demons fled. No one forgets a moment like that. But what moved him even more deeply was the unearthly kindness of Jesus. Who else would go to such lengths, and endure such rejection, for one man … a man who was so far gone he had almost lost his humanity? And not only that, the man wasn’t even Jewish. He was a Gentile, so he had no covenant with God, no promises that had to be fulfilled. And among the Gentiles in that region, this man was—without question—the lowest, most unwanted individual. And yet Jesus and his disciples took an unusual amount of time and had to endure a life-threatening storm to reach him.
* And then to watch Jesus—Creator God in human flesh—when He was asked to leave, immediately walked to the boat and quietly get in without saying a word to the crowd about their disdain toward Him, nor about their pathetic indifference and apathy toward a member of their own community who’d been given his life back.
* Years later, when John looked back on that event, and many like it, what he remembered most was how Jesus was compelled by a deep compassion for broken, sinful, and undeserving people, and how He would willingly sacrifice all convenience or reputation to help them. And the word he chose to use to try to describe that quality of Jesus was “grace.” He said Jesus was filled to the brim with grace.

V14.5 – But there was another word. He said Jesus was “full of grace and truth”

The word “truth” (aletheia / ah-**lee’**-thē-ah) literally means “not forgotten.” When a person tells the truth, it means they have not forgotten what they saw, heard or promised. They faithfully declare the message or fact which had been entrusted to them without changing it in any way. And they faithfully do what they said they would do. Something that is “true” contains no lies or errors. Someone who is “true” is authentic, genuine and reliable. And along with grace, the quality John remembered most about Jesus was truth. He had never met anyone so completely honest … about everything.

* But how could you show abundant grace while remaining completely loyal to truth?
  + I can’t think of a better example than (John 8:2–11) the time Jesus was doing an early-morning teaching in the temple when a whole group of scribes and Pharisees shamelessly barged in and pushed a woman front and center. They proceeded to tell Jesus and the whole group that this woman had been caught in the very act of adultery.
  + Of course, their intentions had nothing to do with the woman. Their goal was clearly to publicly discredit Jesus. Having witnessed both His defense of Scripture and His compassion for people, they thought they could exploit this situation to force Him to either compromise the commandments or show Himself to be as harsh and judgmental as they were. Their plan backfired.
  + As they proceeded to rehearse the judgment for such sin from laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger on the ground.
  + When they continued to push Him for an answer, Jesus said, “Let the one who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” And he bent down again and wrote on the ground.
  + And beginning with the oldest, everyone walked away leaving Jesus standing alone with the woman.
  + So Jesus said to her, “Where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.”
  + And listen to what Jesus told her. “Neither do I condemn you, go, and from now on, sin no more.”
    - “Neither do I condemn you, go” = grace
    - “And from now on, sin no more” = truth
* And this is what John is telling us. Jesus was full of grace, and at the same time, He was full of truth.

V15 – John the Baptist bore witness about Jesus… “This is the One who ranks before me, because He was before me.”

* The ESV translates this as a parenthetical statement (in parentheses) because it seems a bit off point. John had already established the fact that Jesus is God, and that He preexisted all creation. So why would the apostle John add it here? Could it be that John is telling us something that his former mentor John the Baptist said, which he didn’t understand until years later? Could it be that John the Baptist was telling everyone, “The person who is coming after me ranks higher than me, and He was here before me … right here … in the Promised Land of Israel … living in the tabernacle. The One who dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses is coming again to visit us.”

V16 – From Jesus’ “fullness” we have all received “grace upon grace.”

* We could call this an abundance of grace.
* So why did God give the law of Moses in the first five books of the Bible? Listen to…

**Romans 5:20–21 (ESV)** Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, **21** so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

* God gave the law of Moses to convince everyone that there was no point trying to earn their salvation or acceptance with God. They needed a Savior.
* Jesus came to be that Savior, and instead of judgment, He offered both grace and truth. God is a holy God, so truth will never change, but through the cross, Jesus purchased the right to extend grace upon grace. Grace to forgive us from all of our sins, and grace to strengthen us to walk in obedience to God.

V17 – “The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

* The law says, “Measure up or you pay the consequences.”
* Grace and truth through Jesus says, “The consequences must be paid, I’ll pay them and in exchange provide you with grace for forgiveness and strength to obey so that you have what you need to walk in the favor and blessing of God.”

V18.1 – “No one has ever seen God”… so the visible God in the OT was Jesus

* This clearly tells us that when Moses talked with God face-to-face, it was not the Father … it was the Lord Jesus before He became a man.

V18.2 – “The only (“only Son,” same word as verse 14) God, who is at the Father’s side, He has made Him known.”

* Jesus has come … and we know more than once … to make the Father known.

**2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding (to gaze at a reflection in a mirror) the glory (dōxa) of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.