

**The Compass:  
Encounter- Examine- Explore- Embrace God's Word  
on  
Your Discipleship Path**

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Sermon Series: “Why? Questions We Want to Ask” (Easter/Pentecost 2019)

This Week’s Theme and Scriptural Focus: “Why...Jesus (Is Jesus the only way to heaven?)” **John 1.9-18.**

This Week’s Mark(s) of Discipleship: **Joy** (Trusting in God’s grace and promises, I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances).

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**Day #1--Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup>.** **Read: John 1.9-11. Encounter:** God’s Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

John 1 is meant to echo Genesis 1. John makes clear that Jesus is the Word (Greek: *Logos*) of God made flesh, and that He was at the beginning of time. In chapter 1, John also uses the metaphor of “light” to describe the nature of the *Logos* as well as His relationship to John the Baptizer, who would bear witness to the “light” of the *Logos* of God that was coming into the world!

In v. 9...the Johannine writer asserts that the *Logos* was the true (*alēthinon*) light. The idea of true or truth is another of the central themes of the Gospel. The Greek meaning emphasizes completeness and authenticity, but the Hebrew *’emet*, which stands behind the LXX and New Testament concept of truth, primarily stresses steadfastness or faithfulness and dependability in addition to a contrast with that which is false...the Greek here probably is prose, and the focus must be upon the enlightenment the *Logos* brought in the *incarnation*...the reference to all persons in v. 8 and with the mention of everyone (Greek, “Every Man”) here, it should not be presupposed that the evangelist assumed everyone would accept the *Logos* (cf. 1:10–11) the point is that the testimony and the enlightenment were *intended* for all.<sup>1</sup>

The tragedy of course is that many would not believe in Jesus, rejecting the truth that their Creator was among them. In the Gospel of John, the term “world” (Greek: *kosmos*), “carries a particular meaning in this Gospel...for John the basic sense of “world” is to be understood as the *realm where human beings live*,”<sup>2</sup> and often, refers to systems and structures that are hostile to God and God’s plan for the world.

Attention is now fastened on the incarnation. Two points receive special emphasis: one is the astonishing fact that the Word of God, true God as he is, took upon him human nature, and the other is the even more astonishing fact that when he did this, people would have nothing to do with him. John is concerned that we should miss neither the good news of the incarnation of God, nor the tragedy of the human rejection of God<sup>3</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “The entry of the *Logos* into the world (the incarnation) is described as light shining in darkness (v. 5). Even though John the Baptist’s testimony was clear (vv. 6–9), still Jesus experienced rejection (vv. 10–11)...The darkness is hostile...The hostility of the darkness points to the cross. But...the power of darkness will not prevail.”<sup>4</sup>

**Day #2--Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.** **Read: John 1.12-18. Examine:** The Text and its Relationship to other Passages.

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<sup>1</sup> G.L. Borchert. *John 1–11* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> L. Morris. *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William. B. Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1995).

John now turns to the positive responses to Jesus; to those who belong to Jesus they become God's children. God's children are adopted, specially chosen to be sons and daughters of God! "To 'become children of God' is a work wholly of God's operation. The successive phrases contrast birth from God with human begetting, and emphasize the inability of men and women to reproduce it."<sup>5</sup>

In v.14, John succinctly describes the incarnation and the very character of this *Word-made flesh*: Jesus, the *Logos*, is full of grace and truth—a descriptor of God Himself!

...the Word became flesh," is the controlling utterance of the sentence...Into that condition of human weakness the Logos "pitched his tent" (ἐσκήνωσεν, from σκηνή, "tent") and revealed his glory (cf. *shekinah*, having the same consonants as the Greek σκηνή). The language is evocative of the revelation of God's glory in the Exodus—by the Red Sea, on Mount Sinai, and at the tent of meeting by Israel's camp (especially the last; see Exod 33:7–11; for the glory in and upon the Tabernacle cf. Exod 40:34–38). The Exodus associations are intentional, and are part of the theme of the revelation and redemption of the Logos-Christ as fulfilling the hope of a *second* Exodus.<sup>6</sup>

The Word, that is, the Son of God [John 1:14], assumed the human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. So there are two natures—the divine and the human—inseparably joined in one person. There is one Christ, true God and true man... [who]...dwelt among us. In the OT, God revealed His glory in the tabernacle. When Christ took on flesh, He dwelt, or "tabernacled," among His people. God's glory was manifest in Christ throughout His entire ministry, but especially in His submission to the cross...In Christ, the Lord is faithful to His promise to be gracious.<sup>7</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** "By taking on human flesh, God the Son comes into the world He created. He graciously brings deliverance from spiritual darkness and authorizes believers to become God's children. Those who do not receive Christ by faith remain in darkness. Christ, the true light, has overcome the darkness, and He promises His forgiving grace to you and all people. [Pray]: O Word made flesh, be present with me this day, and fill me with Your limitless grace. Amen."<sup>8</sup>

□ **Day #3--Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. Read: Acts 4.8-10. Examine:** The Text and its Relationship to other Passages.

One of the reasons the early church was persecuted was because of their belief and proclamation that Jesus was the One, true God who had come in the flesh, died for the sins of humankind, and rose again. This message was disturbing on many levels: Jesus, the so-called Messiah, died a criminal, shameful death; God entered into human history; and, God loves ALL people! The persecution came from the religious authorities and those so devoted to Judaism that the thought of a peasant rabbi, claiming to be the Son of God, was seen to be pure blasphemy. Additionally, persecution came from the Roman government. A government led by men, the Caesars, who believed themselves to be divine. Since the Christians would not worship a mere human, knowing Jesus was their true God, Rome had the early believers imprisoned, beaten, used in the gladiatorial games, and killed.

Beginning in chapter 1 of the book of Acts, and up to our text, chapter 4, there had been little resistance to the Christians on the part of the Jewish leaders as well as the Roman government. However, as J.B. Polhill notes:

...In chap. 4 the picture changes. Not, however, with the people. They still were responding favorably to the message of the apostles, indeed, in an overwhelming way (cf. 4:4). It was the officials who turned against the apostles, and not even all of them. The primary enemy was the priestly Sadducean aristocracy

<sup>5</sup> G.R. Beasley-Murray. *John* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

for whom the Christians were a serious threat to the status quo. Twice they arrested the apostles. The first time occurred here, as they descended upon Peter and John in the course of their witness in the temple square. This time the two apostles were given a “preliminary hearing” in their proclamation of Christ. Because the apostles did not heed this warning and preached Christ all the more, the Sadducees were enraged, and they arrested and tried all the apostles (5:17–42).<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 4 begins with the Jewish leaders questioning Peter and John about their activities, particularly concerned about by whose authority they are saying and doing these things. Peter makes it clear that all they were doing was done in the name of Jesus. In antiquity, someone’s name reflected their character and authority; who they were in their personhood, as well as a representative of their clan or family. As D.A. Carson suggests, the question could be paraphrased, “Who do you think you are?”

The authorities’ reaction in v 13 below indicates that it was not a question to which they expected a substantial answer; in terms of the temple and Jewish religion, there was no higher earthly authority than the high priest, who was present. The question asked probably referred to the teaching and proclaiming that formed the problem in 4:2 above. The vagueness of the wording, however, allowed Peter to backtrack to the *act of kindness*, the healing. The whole episode, after all, came about only because Peter explained the healing to the enthusiastic crowd.<sup>10</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Jesus warned his disciples that they would be brought before councils, and promised that the Holy Spirit would teach them what to say. It is with faith rather than fear that Peter now speaks. He is courteous and clear. He points out that they are on trial for being kind—for healing a person! But, of course, it is because they have healed in the name of Jesus that they are under arrest. Peter tells the Council that they killed Jesus, but God has raised him from death. The healing of the man is proof that they were wrong.”<sup>11</sup>

□ **Day #4--Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>. Read: Acts 4.11-18. Explore:** The background to this text(s).

The group mentioned in this text, questioning the disciples, was the *Sadducees*. The Sadducees were an aristocratic group that desired to get along with Rome so as not to lose their power and social position. The Jewish council, or court, which the disciples were brought before was the *Sanhedrin*.

The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy members. The majority of these were Sadducees, mostly from high priestly families. The high priest himself was presiding officer. A minority of the members were Pharisees. They were popular with the people, and their opinion carried considerable weight. The inquiry centered on the question of credentials. By what authority (“in what name”) had Peter healed the lame man? Peter responded with a sermon...the “stone rejected by its builders.” Inspired by the Spirit, Peter even had the courage to accuse the Sanhedrin’s members for their role in Jesus’ death.<sup>12</sup>

Peter ends his explanation where he began—with the name of Jesus! Peter healed in the name of Jesus and it is this name through which salvation is found. Again, a person’s name represented their character, claims, and authority. Peter ends with a direct appeal to the Jewish leaders. Again, scholar J.B. Polhill:

Peter had been bold indeed. He had come full circle. They asked for the name in whom his authority rested. He answered their question. It was the name, the power of Jesus. He directed the charges. The Council had rejected the one who bore this powerful name. The ultimate verdict rested with them. Would they continue to reject the one whom God had placed as the final stone for his people, the only

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<sup>9</sup>J.B. Polhill. *Acts* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992).

<sup>10</sup>D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup>A. Knowles. *The Bible Guide* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg, 2001).

<sup>12</sup>T.C. Butler, C.L. Church, L.L. Scott, M.A. Ellis Smith, and J.E. White. *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992).

name under heaven in which they would find their own salvation? The final verdict would rest in their own decision.<sup>13</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Christianity is the one true faith because Jesus, the only source of salvation, rescues us from the evil one. He delivers all people from a verdict of damnation and heals ills of body and soul. ‘Christ’s name is received only by faith. Therefore, we are saved by confidence in Christ’s name, and not by confidence in our works. For ‘the name’ here means the cause that is mentioned, because of which salvation is gained. To call upon Christ’s name is to trust in His name as the cause, or price, because of which we are saved” (*Apology to the Augsburg Confession* IV 98).”<sup>14</sup>

□ **Day #5—Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Read: John 14.1-4. Explore:** The Background to this Text.

This text is both a source of great comfort and a subject of great debate: Jesus assuring His people that He has gone ahead and prepared a place for us, that He is with us now and will be forever! And, when questioned by Thomas about where He was “going,” Jesus said He was the only way to the Father. Jesus encourages His disciples (us) to trust Him in the midst of circumstances and a world that so easily “troubles” our hearts!

To comfort the disciples, Jesus gave them several exhortations along with promises. Do not let your hearts be troubled, He said. “Troubled” is *tarassesthō* (“stirred, agitated”) from the same verb translated “troubled” in 11:33; 13:21; 14:27. One’s heart is the center of his personality. Each believer is responsible for the condition of his heart (cf. Prov. 3:1, 3, 5; 4:23; 20:9). By a firm trust in God the Father and Jesus the Son, they could relieve their soul-sorrow and be sustained in their coming tests. When Jesus said, Trust in God; trust also in Me, He was probably giving commands, not making statements. Death should not be a terror to them because Jesus was leaving to prepare a place for them in heaven, the Father’s house.<sup>15</sup>

What was the “coming again” that Jesus was referring to? D.A. Carson notes:

The preparing of the place is through the passion and resurrection of Jesus. *I will come back* seems to be a clear reference to the second coming, although some have interpreted it of Pentecost or even of the visitation of Jesus at the believer’s death. Although the disciples’ subsequent questionings would not give the impression of much spiritual understanding, nevertheless Jesus’ words in v 4 show that they ought to have known the way to the Father.<sup>16</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Let the humble pilgrim look at Christ.... Behold he who wants to go, has the way, for Christ is the way, and whither he wants to go, for Christ is the truth, and where he wants to abide, for Christ is the life” (John Hus, *The Church*)

□ **Day #6-Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. Read: John 14.5-7. Embrace:** God and His guiding you through His Word.

Thomas’ statement (We don’t know where You are going) and his question (So how can we know the way?) reflected the perplexity of the Eleven. They would remain puzzled until His death and resurrection and until the advent of the Spirit. They had all the information but they could not put it together. Jesus’ words, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, are the sixth of Jesus’ seven “I am”

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<sup>13</sup> Polhill. *Acts*.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in, *Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

statements in the Gospel of John (6:48; 8:12; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). Jesus is the “Way” because He is the “Truth” and the “Life.”<sup>17</sup>

One aspect of the exclusivity of Jesus’ assurance that He is the way to God is that our salvation does not come through our good works, morality, religious sacrifices, religious practices, or the overthrow of oppressive governments—“all of which were beliefs held by Jews in the first century. Instead, Jesus Himself is the channel through which people can have relationship with God the Father and spend eternity with Him.”<sup>18</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Through His death and resurrection, Christ went to prepare a place for us in heaven, where we will dwell with God forever. The true God cannot be known apart from Jesus Christ. Because of Christ’s work, we can know the Father and enter His eternal presence. [Pray]: O risen Lord, with great anticipation I long for my home in heaven. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Walvord, et al.

<sup>18</sup> *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> *Lutheran Study Bible*.