

December 25, 2016
Sermon for Christmas Day
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
The Gift of Glory
John 1:9-18

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

John 1:9–18 (ESV)

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 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 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.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ!

Amen.

First of all, Merry Christmas!

But our world doesn't seem to notice Christmas that much. Ever met a famous person? We have a thing about famous people. If you go online or even watch the evening news, even today, the headlines might say something about Christmas but I'm almost sure that there will be news about at least one celebrity.

It seems like we want to know all about them. Their celebrity status is like a magnetic star riveting our attention, sometimes to the point of our being hyper focused, not even noticing the rest of the world around us. When someone tells us that they know a celebrity personally, our first question is usually, "Wow. What's he or she really like?"

The tabloid press makes its money off of our desire to know the rich and famous. That said, many famous people don't want to be known. They complain about the paparazzi's relentless intrusion in their lives. They disguise themselves when out in public. They try to protect the privacy of their families. When asked a very personal question by a reporter, they may end the interview or bolt out of the room.

God wants to be known like this. And He should be. He is our creator and thus He has the right to demand that He come first in our lives. "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me!"

Christmas is also about the lengths to which God will go to be known and loved. When John says, "*The Word became flesh,*" he is describing Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, as God's premier self-revelation in human form.

In other words, if you want to know this God, who so deeply wants to be known, then look at Christ. To see Jesus is to see God. "*Whoever has seen me,*" Jesus once told his disciple Philip, "*has seen the Father*" (John 14:9).

Call it the great humbling. Call it the incarnation. God makes Himself known by coming as a human being, born of a woman, born under the Law. He won't be found hiding in a palace or a temple either. As John puts it, He "*dwelt among us.*" More literally, He "pitched his tent" with us. Remember one of the first Advent sermons when I told you that our God is a God with skin on?

God has a history of immersing Himself in His creation, walking with Adam and Eve in the garden, visiting Abraham and Sarah, being in the tabernacle with the wandering Israelites and in the temple in Jerusalem. And now this, God incarnate, in the flesh!

Look at the Incarnation of Christ in this way. If someone really wanted to know you, I mean, know you as you really are, where would you be, and what would you be doing?

Where would they find you? Would you be at church? Would you be at your job? Would you be found reading a story to a child? Creating something beautiful? Making people laugh? Working hard? Another way of saying this is, "Where and when does the real you shine through best?"

God shows Himself in His Son, living among His creation, among mankind as one of us. John says, "*We have seen his glory, the glory of the Son from the Father ...*"

Sure, John was no doubt thinking of the glory he saw when Jesus was transfigured before his eyes, but he was also thinking of all the other glories that made God known to him in Jesus. The glory was there as Jesus healed a leper or taught on a hillside, and even when He was "lifted up", when He was nailed to the cross (John 12:32).

When John answers the question, "From what you saw in Jesus, what is God really like?" he says that Jesus is "*full of grace and truth.*"

John is overwhelmed by the generous love of God he sees in Christ. In verse 16 he writes, "*For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*" Grace is what John sees in Christ, "*grace upon grace.*"

In other words, Jesus embodies the relentless, extravagant, limitless, and constant love of God.

And John saw truth in Jesus as well. Later in his gospel he remembers Jesus saying, “*I am the truth*” (John 14:6).

Jesus embodies the truth about God. He didn’t come just to teach people about God. He showed people what God is like. To know Jesus is to know the truth about God. To know the truth about God is to be set free from fear, guilt, and even death itself (John 8:32).

In these Advent and Christmas sermons this year, we have opened so many gifts which come to us in Jesus. There was a young child, about 5 years old who was doing His Bible memory work, and was so proud of what he had learned that he decided to add Psalm 51:11 to his prayers on Christmas Eve. As he prayed he said: “O Lord, cast me not away from my presents.” We can pray today with that child too. Among the cherished presents we have in Christ are hope, love, peace, life, joy and today, glory. “*We have seen His glory.*”

Glory is the gift of knowing God up close and personal in Jesus Christ, and to know Him is to love Him.

So don’t let Christmas end today. Don’t let it end in 12 days either. God’s presence is with you all the days of your life. Look up from your trials and troubles. God is there. His forgiveness in Christ is there too. Look up from your joys and celebrations for God is there too. Look up from any part of your life and know that God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is with you always. Comforting, celebrating and loving you. All the days of your life and unto eternity.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Psalm 51:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Sermon Outline

The Gift of Glory

(John 1:9-18)

- I. Our world doesn't seem to notice Christmas that much.
- II. God immerses Himself in His creation.
- III. Jesus shows people what God is like.

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