

## Plan for Sermon on John One

Title: Have You Seen the Glory?

Text: John 1:14-18

Main Idea: *“We will see and cherish the glory of Jesus when we realize who He is and what he has come to do”*

Outline:

1. Who is the Jesus?
  - The Jesus (the Word) is God and with God (Verse 1)
  - The Word has become a man (Verse 14)
2. What makes Him unique?
  - He is the only son from the Father (Verses 14)
3. What has he come to do?
  - Reveal the Father by being full of grace and truth (Verses 14 and 15-17)
4. How should we respond?
  - We should receive him as savior (Verses 11 and 12)
  - And worship him as God (Verse 18)

Are you bored of Christmas? Does it seem repetitive to sing the same carols for a month every year? Have you felt your heart grow hardened to the incarnation of Christ? In September this year, I went on a road trip with an English family from church to the outskirts of Nashville, Tennessee to see an eclipse. One of the members of our company had become entirely obsessed with it, so, he went on Nasa’s website and found us GPS coordinates for a carpark where we could view the eclipse with 100% totality. The whole process of the moon coming before the sun took maybe a total of 30mins. Right in the middle of the eclipse the parking lot went dark, the street lights came on, and the crickets began to chirp. It was as dark then at midday in Tennessee as it was at 10pm last night here in Geraldine. The sun was still shining just as bright as before but the moon had obscured it so that it no longer provided the light it once did.

For many of us this has happened in relation to the glorious mystery of Christmas. Some of us have allowed the material worries of Christmas and the cares of the summer holidays to obscure our ability to see and rejoice in coming of Christ. We can’t see the light in the world. Perhaps for others in our group this morning, Christmas has become dull by its sheer repetition and you have woken up on boxing day year after year having gone through the motions of Christmas but without thinking about or rejoicing in the radiant realities behind the baby in the manger. There are still more who I guess have never noticed anything particularly spectacular about the baby who was born in an obscure town in the middle east 2000years ago.

So, what does the baby in the manger mean for us? What is John's solution to our problem of not seeing and cherishing the glory of Christ? Here is what I think is a summary of John's answer. If you are taking notes, this is the main idea of John's message for us today. *We will see and cherish the glory of Jesus when we realize who He is and what he has come to do.* Let me repeat that for you. So that is my aim this morning; I want with the help of the Holy Spirit to explore again who Jesus is and the glory of what he has come to do. And my prayer is that while I am explaining these things to you, God will bless my words so you are lifted up to see with the eyes of faith Christ as He really is whether for the first time, to receive him as savior, or again to worship him afresh this Christmas.

Let me give you an outline of where we are going. There are four parts. (1) Who is Jesus? (2) What makes Him Unique? (3) What did He come to do? (4) How Should We Respond? (Let me repeat that again for those of you who are trying to write that down).

I am going to be paying specific attention to John 1:14-18. So, if you haven't already got your bible open there open it together with me now. Verse 14 begins with the first part of John's solution of to our lethargy towards Christ. It tells us who Jesus is. He is as it says, "the Word."

### **MAIN POINT ONE: Who is Jesus?**

So, who is Jesus? What is so significant about the baby in the manger that we all associate with this time of the year? This is John's answer. He is "the Word who has become flesh and dwelt among us." In order to get a handle on what is being said here let us break this definition down. There are two parts to it.

The first part of John's answer is that the baby in the manger is the divine second person of Trinity. He is "the Word!" To see what John means by this title we need to look up at verse 1. In verse 1 John starts his gospel the way that Moses started his account of creation: "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*" The person who took up existence as a baby in Bethlehem had existed already at the beginning of all things. And not only that but this person simultaneously is God and is with God. He is, in the words that theologians have used to describe this, a different person than the Father but shares one essence of Godhood with him.

So, what, then, is one thing you must say when your son picks up some pieces from your nativity scene this afternoon and asks, "Dad, who is the little boy sitting in this pile of hay?" One thing you have to point out is that little boy didn't begin being a person when He became a baby. In fact, the little boy that Mary gave birth to, being God, created the whole universe, and everything in it, even His very own mother.

For Jesus, as the uncreated creator, becoming baby living among us is a phenomenal act of humility. The greatest act of humility that the world has ever seen. Paul instructs the believers at Philippi to "have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:5-7). Don't you see the glory of what has happened here. The most-high God came down and hung out us mere men. John says that he "dwelt among us." God has descended to pitch tent with his people. This is one thing that the song "Mary did you know?" gets right when it asks, "Mary did you know that . . . when you kissed your little baby you have kissed the face of God." Jesus who made himself known to the disciples is God.

But the deity of Christ is only part of John's answer of who Jesus is. The second part of John's answer is that Christ is also now a man. He has "[become] flesh and dwelt among us." Look back at verse 14. Here John spells out in very clear terms that the infant Jesus, though really God, is also a real infant. He isn't just putting on baby clothes and pretending to be a child. He actually is 100% man just like us.

And this is important because it is only by becoming man that Christ is enabled to reveal to us the Father. The text says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen His glory." And the implication is that if he had not become flesh we would not be able to see his glory. Verse 18 says, "no one has seen God at any time." So, God in his essence is unknowable to us. That is what it means when it says no one has seen Him.

Jesus acts for us like a TV. Right now, in this room, all the programs on freeview are floating around, but we can see any of them. But if I had a TV with a freeview decoder and a satellite dish I could show you any show that is on TV. Similarly, God is invisible and unknowable for us unless he takes on a human nature. But hear is what John wants us to get excited about, after the incarnation he can say that he has "seen" Christ's glory! He talks later in his

first epistle about how he and the other disciples have “heard. . . and seen with their eyes . . . and touched with their hands the Word of life” (1 John 1:11). John has shaken God’s human hand so to speak. He has talked to God in the flesh. And that could only happen because Christ took on flesh, with a human soul to speak in human language, and a human body with human hands and a human mouth.

Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation of the God. If you want to see God you must look at Christ. By God’s grace, Christ has become a man and put God on display. And we have in the New Testament four biographies of Christ’s earthly life, death and resurrection. So, if you want to know and encounter God this Christmas it is imperative that you pick up your bible. Because in Christ, we encounter God in a unique way. Which leads us to our second question: What makes Christ unique?

### **MAIN POINT TWO: What Makes Him Unique?**

There were many contemporary fables of Greek and Roman deities taking on human form? Even the ancient Canaanites, whom the Jews removed from the land Israel, have stories of their deities taking on human appearances. If John’s gentile readers could easily point to their own mythology and find similar stories, and the Jewish readers could find similar themes in the religious motifs of their political neighbors, what makes John’s account unique? What is so special about this story of an incarnation?

This, I think, is John’s answer. Jesus’s incarnation is special and better than all counterfeit incarnations because He is the final revelation of the one true God.

Consider here what John says about Jesus. John says in verse 14, “and we have seen His glory, glory of the only Son from the Father.” This is John’s answer to why Christ is unique. He has an exclusive glory. He is “the only Son from the Father.” In contrast to all the fables of Greek and Canaanite religion, which allow people to synthesize all kinds of beliefs alongside one another, John claims total exclusivity for Christ. He is the revelation of the one true God. His glory is that of “the only Son from the Father.” And as such it surpasses all false imitations.

Let me give you an illustration. There are only two types of All Blacks Jerseys. There is the real deal, produced by Adidas and only sold in select retailers, and there are the knock offs, produced in by people in their mum’s garage and sold in on the streets of Fiji or at the Warehouse. But there is a distinct difference in

quality between the two. The genuine jersey surpasses all of the counterfeits because it is an exact replica of the jersey worn Richi McCaw and Dan Carter. It is more glorious! So too Christ possesses the glory of an exact replica of the one true God. That is what it means when it says that His glory is that of “the only Son from the Father” (verse 14).

Now think what ramifications does this have for the way that we celebrate Christmas this year? I think it means that we must celebrate Christmas with a sense of exclusivity. The birth of Christ is unlike any other religious holiday celebrated anywhere in the world because he is the real deal. And John is calling us to rejoice more in the glory of Christ than every other special occasion that we celebrate this year. More than we rejoice at the election of a new prime minister, more than we rejoice in our child’s graduation from high school, more than we rejoice in a great year for our business. Christ must be the supreme thing that you rejoice in, and though it is appropriate to have a calendar day organized for us to remember His birth, Christ must continue to be your greatest joy in all the other joys of life this coming year.

### **MAIN POINT THREE: What has He Come to do?**

So, at this point, we have established who Christ is and what makes him unique. But I think we hit at the very heart of John’s message when we ask our third question. What has Christ come to do? What definition of Christ’s mission does John give in this passage? The answer might surprise you. You are right theologically of course if you say Jesus came to save us because Luke says in Luke 19:10 that “the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” But I don’t think that is what John is saying here.

John’s answer is that Jesus has come to reveal the glory of God. Let me show you how I know that. I get it from looking at verse 14 in light of verse 17 and 18.

So, look at verse 14 first. Read with me, it says, “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.” It is clear that John and the disciples saw Christ’s glory. But how do we know that is why Jesus came and not merely a byproduct of his coming. The answer, I think, is in this phrase at the very end here: “full of grace and truth.” What does this phrase mean? And that is where verse 17 and 18 come into this. Read them with me “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God; the only God who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Notice

verse 17 uses that phrase “grace and truth” again. So, what does it mean that Jesus glory is full of grace and truth? In verse 17 grace and truth is used as a summary of Christ’s whole earthly ministry. John summarises Moses as the bringer of the law and summarises Christ as the bringer of grace and truth. Grace and truth are the entire of Christ ministry.

So, if Christ’s glory is full of grace and truth it means that his entire ministry reveals his glory. In all of Christ gracious actions to live a perfect human life, to die on the cross, to rise again, and to ascend into heaven on our behalf he is revealing His glory. “Glory as of the only Son from the Father” (verse 14). And in all of Christ’s truth telling actions from the sermon on the mount through the entire New Testament as he sends his spirit to lead his disciples into all truth and into the book of revelation as he speaks to the churches he is revealing His glory. I think, then, grace and truth is a summary for Christ’s entire ministry to us. Saving sinners and leading them to the truth is what Christ has done since he has come. And John says Christ has come full of grace and truth as the revelation of his glory. His glory is full of grace and truth. This is what the glory of God looks like. Jesus saves sinners when He wants to show the world who God is. Putting all this together then we can summarize the reason Christ ultimately came. Christ came to make known His and His Father’s glory by saving sinners like you and me and leading us in the truth. Isn’t that incredible.

If Christ point, in saving us and teaching us, is so that we would be amazed at his glory, how does this change the way the way that we celebrate Christmas with our families today. At the minimum, I think it means this: if Christ’s is not elevated as more significant than roast lamb and Christmas stockings then you have missed the point of his coming. Christ’s has come to be held up as glorious. Here are some practical ways that I think we can do this in our time together with our families:

1. **We can read scripture:** If Christ has come that we might know him and his father in all their glory. Then it follows that the gospels that record his works and words help our hearts to glorify him. A good place to start is the gospel of John because it is simple enough for children and deep enough for seasoned believers.
2. **We can sing carols and hymns:** Depending on how they are sung Christmas carols are simultaneously the greatest and the worst part about this time of the year! But regardless, we have a number of songs dedicated to helping us rejoice in the glory of Christ’s coming. And I think there is a reason that throughout the entire bible whenever

anyone is really excited about something they begin singing. Think of the songs of Moses and Miriam after God saves Israel from the Egyptians at the Red Sea. Or even more obviously the angels themselves “praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest” in Lukes gospel (Luke Singing is a very natural way for us to express and encourage one another in giving glory to God.

3. **And the last thing I think we can do is show grace to one another:** One of the major ways that Jesus reveals his glory to us to by manifesting his grace to save us. I think that means that we give glory to him when we are gracious to one another on his account. So, when you get pushed to the back of the line at dinner time and get stuck eating the big purple potatoes instead of the small soft yellow ones, you should respond in grace and show your family that Christ is a bigger deal to you than potatoes.

### **Conclusion: How Should We Respond?**

As we conclude now, let me just offer a few thoughts on an appropriate response to John’s revelation of Jesus is. Here are my two suggestions for how we should respond.

Firstly, if you are here this morning and you are not a Christian. If you are still sizing up who you think Jesus is. Let me first say you are welcome. We want you to be here so that you can hear about the only one who can remove your sin, take away your guilt, save you from eternal judgement, and give you the eternal life which you were made to experience. But let me also warn you that you must respond to Christ! Sitting on the fence about investing in insurance won’t save you when a tsunami bulldozes your house. You need to make up your mind about Christ. There are two options, which you can see in verse 12, here is option one: “[Christ] came to his own and his own people did not receive him.” Here is option two: “but to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Will you accept or reject Jesus as savior? This is an excellent time of the year to ask yourself this question: “who is Jesus?”

Secondly, if you are here this morning, and you are a Christian who has become numb to Christmas, because you are numb to Christ. I think this passage requires us to deliberately remember in our time today the glorious realities that underlie the baby in the manger. It is in Christ that the fullest revelation of God has come. Do you see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? The glory is there, Christ is glorious, the question is: have you allowed

other things to eclipse your view of Christ? The Christmas period is an excellent time to remove the distractions and get alone with Christ in the scriptures.

Read with me verse 18 as we close: "No one has ever seen God; the only God who is at the Father's side, he has made Him known."