

We Beheld His Glory.

Text: John 1:1-5, 14

1) The glory of Jesus Christ

Suggested Hymns:

2) The glory of the work of Jesus Christ

633, 623, 19, 27, 33

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 1:1-5, 14, ¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* ⁴ *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ⁵ *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

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.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Christians in many lands today turn back the pages of history and prayerfully read its most important chapter. A faint glow of light in Bethlehem's stable reveals the Christ Child lying in a manger. Reverence and love are in the eyes of the Virgin' Mother and her husband Joseph.

On near-by fields the shepherds faithfully guard their flock. Suddenly the darkness gives way to a dazzling brilliance, from the midst of which an angel brings the reassuring message, *“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.”* ¹¹ *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*¹

What striking contrasts: deep poverty and heavenly glory; Christ, the helpless Infant, and Christ the Lord! Both are panels of the same picture.

In this way Isaiah viewed it many centuries before, *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder.*

*And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*²

In this same way the Apostle John regarded it. Of Jesus Christ who had become flesh he wrote **We Beheld His Glory**. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Glory Of Jesus Christ

The Glory of “The Word,” the Creator. The inspired writer takes us back to the first days of history when out of nothing there emerged this universe, when the mystery of life began to pulsate in matter.

At that time there already was One whom he calls “*the Word*.” He was with God in an intimate relationship. Yes, Jesus Christ Himself was God. All of creation, without exception, owes its origin to Him.

Our text begins, ¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* ⁴ *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ⁵ *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

The words nearly leap off the page to get your attention, “*In the beginning ... the Word ... God ... life ... light.*” As you begin to read this book of God’s Scriptures, you feel you have entered a new level of God’s truth in Jesus Christ. John sounds a keynote to his Gospel unlike any of the other Gospels. He trumpets the Christ and the glory of God in Him. He switches on the floodlights and opens the climax of God’s work of salvation.

The account starts “*in the beginning*,” before anything existed. We are reminded of the opening words of Genesis, which speak of the same period when only God existed and all creation was but a page in His eternal plan. “*In the beginning*” marks an absolute point of reference for all history — the eternal presence of God.

John turns our attention to the “*Word*.” John identifies *the Word* as the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. “*The Word*,” then, is a title for Jesus and tells us important things about him.

“*The Word*” tells us that Jesus is God. Even before John says, “*The Word was God,*” we know Jesus was because He was “*in the beginning*” when only God existed.

Not only was *the Word* God, He was *with* God. He was face-to-face with God. He existed in a mutual relationship with the Father, distinct, yet one with the Father. Here we have two divine persons interacting. *The Word* was together with God, yet *the Word* was God. What *the Word* was, God was also, and what God was, *the Word* was: the same essence.

We have here one God and two of the three persons we have come to call the Trinity. Let all who doubt the divinity of Christ read the Gospel of John and believe. John leaves no room for doubt.

The title “*Word*” by itself tells us still more about Jesus. *The Word* is the means by which God communicates with us. It is His message to us, His divine revelation, and His wise counsel. God gives all that to us through His Son and we know that God brings about changes through His Word.

God’s Word, which has great meaning and accomplishes His will, is personified in Christ. Negatively put, we cannot know God without Christ, *the Word*. Positively put, Jesus Christ reveals the truth of God to us. If you want to see God, look to Jesus. If you want to come close to God, come close to Jesus. If you want to live according to God’s will, live with Jesus. Jesus Christ is *the Word*. “*The Word was God.*” “*He is the image of the invisible God*” we read in Colossians 1:15.

The Word has power. It creates. It gives and sustains life. It sheds light. We are not surprised to learn, therefore, that ³ *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* Only two kinds of essence exist: created and uncreated. Only two kinds of beings exist: creatures and their Creator. *The Word*, Christ, was not created; He did the creating. He is God.

Through Jesus, the Father “*made the universe.*”³ “*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible.*”⁴ The power of *the Word* brought all creation into being. When we hear in Genesis, then, that “*Then God said ... and it was so,*” we correctly identify

Christ as active in creation. God spoke, and His Word created all things from nothing.

The Glory Of Jesus Humanity. Our text says ¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* This 2nd person of the Trinity became flesh. A full humanity, without the taint of sin, now was His. He lived with us as one of us. He grew from infancy to childhood; from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood. With an eager mind He studied. He worked as a carpenter in His father's shop. He knew joys, heartaches, and loneliness.

Everything important in our spiritual lives becomes ours in connection with *the Word*, Jesus Christ. "*The Word*," who was with God and who was God, "*became flesh.*" Jesus did not stop being what He was, namely, true God. But He also became true man, a real human being. He became incarnate, in the "*flesh.*"

The Word took on human nature and received the name Jesus. He was born in the flesh like every human being, complete with human emotions, human frailties, and human needs. In his life, therefore, we will see Him weep and sleep and eat and hurt and die.

Nevertheless, *the Word* made flesh was free of one thing every other human being has had — sin. The flesh of all other humans since Adam and Eve is inherently corrupted by sin. Through His miraculous virgin birth, Jesus "*became flesh*" untainted by sin. He came to live free from sin in our place.

The Glory of Jesus Power. Jesus' glory had not departed. It was "*veiled in flesh.*"⁵ Time and again, however, it broke forth as the sympathetic Saviour responded to the needs of a troubled world. His creative power multiplied five barley loaves and two small fishes into a supply which satisfied the hunger of five thousand people. His healing power restored sick bodies, lifeless limbs, sightless eyes, silent tongues, and soundless ears. His controlling power quieted the howling storm. His life-giving power called the widow's son, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus back to the living.

The Glory of Jesus Character. His was also the glory of moral perfection. Not once did He have reason to ask the Father's forgiveness for an unworthy thought or desire, a sinful word or deed. The verdict of Pilate is true, "*I find no*

fault in Him.” Jesus holiness, however, is not merely expressed in what He did not do.

Love, which is the essence of the divine Law, shines forth in all its fullness. It reaches out in loyal service to His Father so that at the close of His earthly ministry He could pray in John 17:4, ⁴ *“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.* Jesus love brought hope and comfort and life to many people who sought Him and whom He sought.

Jesus activity on behalf of people defies description so that John feels constrained to write, *And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*⁶

We Beheld, we See. The disciples saw this glory. Many others were witnesses of it. But they were blind to its real character and meaning. They failed to receive Jesus. Many rejected Him with murderous hatred.

The disciples, however, saw through the eyes of faith. The glory grew upon them until only one word could adequately describe Him, namely, God. Peter spoke the mind and the heart of all the disciples when he paid Jesus the tribute, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*⁷ He thus re-echoed what the Father Himself had said from the open heaven at the Baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*⁸

2. The Glory Of The Work Of Jesus Christ

There was another glory which has endeared Jesus forever to millions in heaven and on earth. **The Glory of His Work and Love.**

If Jesus had merely manifested the divine glory of power and a perfect character, His coming would not have been the occasion of *“great joy”* to mankind.

To take a healthy person to the bedside of an incurably sick person and urge the sick person to become like the healthy person would be heartless. It would emphasise his own helplessness.

It would have been even more tragic if Jesus had appeared in the flesh merely to give us a living example of perfect holiness and obedience. His

command *“Follow Me”* would send an enlightened conscience into despair. *“Dead in trespasses and sin,”* man would find the way to heaven barred forever.

The God of love would not therefore taunt man. He knew better than anyone else that only grace, a free, undeserved gift, could rescue man from his plight. On the first Christmas day He, therefore, presented to the world that Gift, Jesus Christ who was nearest and dearest to Him, His only-begotten Son.

Our text says, *‘In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* As the **Word** made all things, He gave life to the created beings. The term life used here means significantly more than biological life, it means “eternal life.”

The life John speaks of comes in connection with *the Word*. *The Word* brings God into fellowship with humankind. In so doing, *the Word* brings the life that we can experience only with God.

We can say, naturally, that all human beings have life. We say it of birds, animals, and plants too. That is our way of saying they exist with certain properties of growth and an ability to consume nourishment or that they have certain chemical properties we scientifically identify with living things. That life also comes from God. He gives it to all people regardless of whether or not they believe in Him.

However, those who know and believe God through *“the Word,”* Jesus Christ, have a new life with God that is full and endures forever. They have life entirely as God meant it for us in His perfect creation before sin brought death. They have real life, God’s kind of life. They come into communion with God Himself.

Here John sounds the keynote of the Gospel. He tells us that in the eternal Word, who is God, is life and light. When we believe in *the Word*, we receive life and light.

“That life,” which is in *the Word*, *“was the light of men.”* This combination of light with life reminds us of an indoor plant positioned at a Northern window, thriving from its regular dose of sunshine. Place that plant in total darkness, and it will soon die. So it is with us and Christ. His light gives us life.

We ought to pause here and ask ourselves, “*Who are we without Christ? What do we have without Christ?*” Take away Christ, and we have no saving knowledge of God; we have no real life and we have no light. Note how closely these thoughts relate to one another and how absolute they are. Separation from God, death and destruction, and total darkness exist apart from *the Word*, Jesus Christ.

Life and light are in *the Word*. In other words, we find life and light only when we believe in Christ. However, because of sin we human beings resist the truth in Christ. Some people never see the light. John significantly switches to the present tense to tell us “*the light shines in the darkness.*” The light continues to shine to this very day. John adds, however, *the light shines in the darkness, [but] the darkness did not comprehend it.*

“*The Word*” brings the light. Those in darkness, however, fail to understand what *the Word* is bringing and, therefore, remain in darkness. Just so, the dark world of sin and unbelief failed to understand that Jesus was the promised Christ. Even the religious leaders of Israel failed to see the light and opted to stay in darkness. They went so far as to crucify *the Word* in an attempt to silence Him forever.

The light is identified with *the Word*. The light chases away our fears, reveals the saving love of God, and guides us on the way of eternal life. This light dispels the doom and gloom of the darkness that leads to hell. It lights the path to heaven. It is found in the Saviour.

Now we need to present *the Word*, live the life, and let the light shine for others. *The Word* will make its own impression, and the Holy Spirit will give faith and understanding.

Glory of Grace. Glory, unspeakable glory, was revealed in that grace. It was the glory of a perfect obedience to the divine Law, performed for us as our Substitute. It was the glory of a suffering that completely atoned for man’s sin. Never was this grace more glorious than when the only-begotten Son hung on the cross, shedding His precious blood for us.

Uncounted sin-burdened children of Adam have looked at that miracle of grace and there found forgiveness and “*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.*”⁹

This is echoed the sentiments of the hymn writer,¹⁰

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

Glory Of Truth. Jesus is also the glory of truth. As man He was all that man should be. In Him the divine plan for man is seen in all its beauty.

As the only-begotten Son of God He is all that God is. In Him God has become visible so that those who see Him see the Father. In Him we behold the God who is just. In Jesus we see the God who is loving and merciful. In Him we see the glory of the heart which *“desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*¹¹

We See This Glory. Today many people are looking in the wrong direction. They are fascinated by the tinsel which custom and commercialism have placed into the forefront of the Christmas celebration. More serious-minded people vaguely see something which they call *“peace on earth, good will toward men.”*

We pray that the Holy Spirit may so guide and enlighten us so that with eyes of faith we may see the glory of Jesus as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

With that faith we become children of God, members of God's family whom Jesus calls His brethren. Then the glory seen over the fields of Bethlehem will be a preview of the glory that will be ours when we as members of God's family live with Him forever. God grant, this, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 2:10

² Isaiah 9:6

³ Hebrews 1:2

⁴ Colossians 1:16

⁵ Hebrews 10:20

⁶ John 21:25

⁷ John 6:69

⁸ Matt. 3:17; 17:5

⁹ Philippians 4:7

¹⁰ Hymn 171

¹¹ 1 Timothy 2:4