

Grace and Truth

Preached: 12/27/2020; – Germantown;

Opening Scripture

Philippians 3:7-14

Opening Prayer

Scripture

John 1:1-18

Message

Grace and Truth

During the Sundays of Advent, leading up to Christmas we looked at the first 18 verses of John's gospel. The Prologue. Matthew and Luke tell us the stories of Jesus' birth. They tell us about the birth of John the Baptist, the angelic visit to Mary informing her that she will be the mother of Jesus, the promised Savior, God's Son. They tell us about an angelic messenger sent to Mary's fiancé Joseph tell him about Mary's choice and instructing him to go ahead and take Mary as his wife, even though she is pregnant with a child that he is not responsible for. They tell us about a trip to Bethlehem, about the birth in a stable with a feed trough for his first bed. They tell us about the announcement to Shepherds and their visit to see the child. They tell us about the visit of Magi from the East. All of these details have great significance. They are not just nice stories, but stories that tell us that Jesus was a very special baby.

When John introduces us to Jesus, he begins his gospel in these verses telling us more about Who Jesus is, Why He came into the world, and how He fulfills that mission in the world. His words are some of the most beautiful words contained in the Bible, but they can also be some of the more difficult to understand. We are going to conclude our study of John's prologue today. There is one more lesson that I want to focus on. Twice in these verses John uses the terms "**Grace and Truth**" in reference to Jesus. If we are going to grasp the meaning of these verses it will be important for us to take a look at those two words.

As we have studied these verses from chapter 1, I have mentioned that we must look at them against the backdrop of John's purpose in writing this gospel. As far as we know, John is the last of the Apostle's who was living. And this book is one of the last books of the

New Testament that was written. Bible scholars believe that it was written near the end of the first century – 80 – 85 AD. Other books of the New Testament have already been written. The other gospel writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke – have completed their records of the story of Jesus' life. Their writings are very similar to each other. They include many of the same stories. But John's gospel is different. He includes stories that were not yet recorded. John has a very clear and specific purpose in writing his record of the life of Jesus. At the end of his book, in chapter 20, he tells us what that purpose is:

That You May Believe

³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

It's almost as if John is thinking to himself: "***Just in case people have not grasped the importance of Jesus from the other writers, I will present my case for believing in Jesus.***" As John states in his purpose, his desire is that people would have life in his name. The lives of people must be changed, they must be transformed. As John observed the people of the world, he saw lives that were broken and in trouble. People were enslaved to sin. People were being deceived. Faith was weak or absent. Religious leaders were misguided and corrupt. John saw people who were longing for something new, for something true, for something transformative. So he writes this gospel to **make the case for Jesus** who alone can bring meaning and authenticity to the lives of seekers, who **could make people who were empty and dead on the inside alive again.**

So as we have looked at this prologue, here is what we have learned.

- **Verses 1-5: Jesus is different.** John begins by telling us some things that are true about Jesus – He has existed from the beginning, He was with God, He is God, He is creator. Jesus is the source of Life and Light for all humanity.
- **Verses 6-8:** This isn't just John's opinion. John's testimony about Jesus is confirmed by a man who was sent by God – John the Baptist. He also testifies – as John did – that Jesus is the light of God that has come into the world.
- **Verses 9-13:** Jesus has come into the world to give people the opportunity to be transformed into Children of God. For the most part the world has not received or accepted the truth

about Jesus. Even his own people – the Jewish people – who have been the recipients of God’s promises rejected Him. But there were some who did believe and they became children of God.

- **Verse 14** In order to make it possible for people to become children of God, it was necessary for Jesus to become human – He became flesh. As a human He will be able to become the perfect sacrifice – the lamb of God – for our sins. As a human he knows what our life is like. As a human he shows us what God is like.

So John tells us that Jesus has come into the world to bring about transformation to people. He does that because He is empowered by Grace and Truth. **(Vs. 14, 17)**. We read about **Grace** in the Bible often. It has its roots in the Old Testament. It is the defining characteristic of God. Commentator Michael Card says that the Hebrew word is translated 14 different ways in the Old Testament. It is often translated as “Mercy”, sometimes it is translated as “Love”. It refers to God’s faithfulness to keep His promises to people who disobey and sin. Michael Card: “***When the one from who I have a right to expect nothing gives me everything.***” It refers to the power of God to bring about transformation in the life of one who believes. John tells us that the grace that Jesus offers will never be exhausted. **(Verse 16)**. There will always be more grace. **Truth**. When John speaks of Truth, he is not referring to “knowing the right answer”. He is referring to Knowing the right person. Truth now is a person. Truth is Jesus. He is the One who has come from God, and who is God. There is nothing sinful or evil in Him. It is through the Grace and Truth that we encounter in Jesus that our lives can be changed, that we can become a child of God. John is not suggesting that Grace and Truth did not exist before Jesus. What the world had before was good. But now we have something better.

As we conclude this study of these important words from John, let me encourage you to consider that Jesus has come into the world to offer you a new life. To offer you a transformed life. He alone has the power through the truthfulness of His life and words, and through the grace that he offers to make you new. As we prepare to leave one year and enter a new year, I’m sure that there is much that we want to leave behind. There is much that we hope for in a new year. But the only certainty that our lives can be different and better is found in Jesus.