

“The Word as Gospel”

A right start is crucial to any new endeavor. You know this to be true.

Everyone here this morning has had to start a new job, begin a new school year, or enter into a new relationship, so you know how important it is to get started off on the right foot. Mess it up in the beginning and you will find yourself constantly trying to dig yourself out of a hole.

This week Parker began football practice and it was interesting to see the coaches at work in getting these kids off to a great start. In those first few practices the tone is set for the rest of the season. The fundamentals are taught at the very beginning. The coaches establish a proper work ethic and lay down the ground rules so they can have something to build on in the future. If the foundation is not properly laid they will not have a good season.

John, the beloved apostle, knew something about getting off to a great start. In the very beginning of his gospel he is careful to lay a proper foundation for us. And if we don't get right what he is saying about Jesus up front then we will miss the message of the gospel.

John's beginning is a radical one. It is so different from the other three gospels in the NT.

Matthew begins his gospel with the birth of Jesus, telling his story from a Jewish point of view, by emphasizing his connection to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people.

Luke also begins with Jesus' birth, but he tells the story more from a Gentile perspective (non-Jewish), with an added emphasis the role of women, and he takes Jesus' lineage all the way back to the first man, Adam.

Mark begins his gospel, not with Jesus' birth, but with the inauguration of his earthly ministry, as a full-grown, thirty year old man.

But John is different. His gospel takes a quantum leap backwards. He tells us that Jesus' ministry existed from before the very foundations of the world.

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. (v.1-2)

So here, in these opening verses, John is telling us something remarkable about Jesus.

He is connecting Christ to the very first words of the Bible from the book of Genesis. “In the beginning God created the heavens and earth.” (Gen. 1:1) And by making this connection to Genesis he is telling us, ironically, that Jesus has **no** beginning. He is the **eternal** Son of God. He was there in the beginning and has **always** existed. In short, John is making the audacious claim that Jesus Christ, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is God.

Jesus Christ is the Word, He is God! (v. 1-3)

That brings us to our first point of the message this morning. Jesus Christ, the very Word of God, is God.

It is important for us Christians to get this truth.

We do not believe that Jesus is like God, or simply contains a little bit of God in him. No, we believe he is fully and completely God. This is why we worship him. And the gospel of John, because of this opening text and also because of the seven “I Am” statements of Jesus, was the central gospel that led to and buttressed the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is God.

In our text today Jesus is referred to as “the Word.” In the original Greek of the NT the word used there was *Logos*. In Greek thought *Logos* referred to “divine reason/power that governed the universe.” It was a reference to God.

From our study of the OT we are certainly familiar with phrases like the “word of the Lord,” or “the word of God,” for they appear many times in the Bible. We also know from our Genesis text that when God created the world he **spoke** it into existence. So again, knowing this to be true, we can see that John’s referring to Jesus as “the Word” is a clear reference to his divinity.

To call Jesus “the Word” is to call him God. But John gets even more explicit, just in case we don’t get his inference. He says the “Word was God.” And he then tells us that “through him, all things were made; and that without him nothing was made that has been made.” (v.3) Only God can create, and here, in this text, we have John attributing the very creation of the world to Jesus Christ!

Now the title of this morning’s message is “The Word as Gospel.”

“The Word,” of course, as we have already heard from our text, refers to Jesus. He is the Word and he is God. Gospel simply means good news. Good news about what? The good news that sinful, broken, messed up people can actually have a relationship with God! That is the good news of the gospel. Our sins and our sinful nature, which destroys us, our relationships with other people, and most importantly, our relationship with God, has been overcome by the power of the Word, Jesus.

Now in order for the gospel to be true it has to be something that God does. Only God can give salvation and that is what John is telling us happens through the man Jesus Christ. Consequently, since only God can save and restore fallen sinners, this doctrine that Jesus is God has important practical implications for our faith. It says something very important about who saves us. His name is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the Word of God, Became Flesh (v.9-14)

But it must more than this. Jesus is God- So what. He must move toward us if we are going to be saved, and right here, in the very beginning of his gospel, John tells us that! He tells us that Jesus

leaves his eternal home in heaven- that is he breaks his divine communion with the Father and the Spirit- and he comes down to us in our world. God, through the sending of His Son, comes to us, to make his home with us in this world. God, in the person of Christ, initiates our salvation by coming down to us. Jesus makes the first move.

This is the second point of this morning's message. Jesus Christ, the Word of God, became flesh.

This is a remarkable truth of the Christian faith. We call it the doctrine of incarnation.

God, in the person of Jesus Christ, takes upon himself human flesh and he comes to us. We can **know** God because God has come to us in the human flesh of Jesus. This is the message we proclaim at Christmas, but the truth is that every Lord's Day is a Christmas celebration, not just December 25th.

What would be the point in our worshipping here week end and week out if God had did not come to us? For if he did not come to us then we could not really know him, personally. We are here today because "the true light that gives light to all men has come into the world," (v.9) and because "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (v.14)

Again, this truth has great practical implications for our Christian life.

First and foremost, it says something profound about how much God loves us.

Showing up is what people need in their time of crisis. You really don't have to say anything; you just have to be there. That's what communicates to another person that you love them, care for them, and are concerned for them. In Jesus Christ, God has shown up for the world. I love you, I want to know you, and so I have come to you in the human flesh of my Son. This love for sinners will ultimately be expressed through Christ's death the cross, though John doesn't say that yet. More on that later. But for now, know that God loves you. That's why God comes to you in the man Jesus. He wants to be with you, he wants to take up residence in your heart.

Thus far, in this message, we have learned two things from the text.

First, simply put, Jesus is God and only God can save; therefore Jesus Christ alone saves. Second, in Jesus Christ God has come down to us in our world so that we may know him.

These two truths are God facts. They have to do with who God is and what God has done for us in order to save us. But again this is not enough; there is more to John's prologue. Jesus is God- So what? Jesus has come down to us in order to save us- So what? There must be a human response to what God is doing in Jesus. This will lead us to our final two points from the text. We will now look at the necessity of the human response.

First, let's look at the negative side.

John tells us that though Jesus was “in the world, and the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to his own, but even his own did not receive him.” (v.10-11)

The World Rejects the Word, Jesus (v.10-11)

So the third point of this message is this: The world rejects the Word, Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the Word, he is God. The Word, Jesus, becomes flesh and comes to us, yet the world rejects the Word. Our answer to God is an emphatic no!

As we will see in the coming months, John talks a lot about light and darkness, and how the world loved darkness so much that it rejected the man Jesus Christ.

Sinful human beings are not inclined in their own strength to respond to the good news of the gospel and that is a tragedy.

Here I am reminded of the Parable of the Sower and how the seed only took root in one-quarter of the places it was planted. The other 75 % got scorched. We love the darkness too much.

The fact of the matter is that most people did not follow Jesus. They rejected him. Even in the height of his popularity, his followers were still a small minority. This overwhelming rejection led to his crucifixion.

Oddly, God used human rejection, through the crucifixion, as the means by which He would accomplish salvation for sinners who would trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

Now we are in the church this morning. Most of us are Christian, perhaps all of us. But it is possible for a person to sit in church all of his life and hear the gospel preached week after week and never get it.

The Bible talks about wheat being among the tares. Jesus talks about people calling him Lord and yet not really knowing him. The NT epistles talk about wolves being in the flock and ravaging the flock. Not everyone who is in the church is saved. Our reformed confessions talk about this when it talks about the differences between the visible church and the invisible church.

My desire is not to cast doubt on anyone here who knows Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but simply to speak to anyone who may have sat in church all of their lives and never really made a sincere commitment to follow Christ with a life of discipleship.

You’re here because your just here. Maybe it’s because your parents brought you as a child. Maybe it’s because you find this place to be a source of comfort and peace. Those aren’t bad things, but they are not the key. The key is Jesus.

Do you know Jesus Christ? Have you experienced the grace of the gospel? Is he the reason why you are here? Or has the darkness of the world (And those aren’t things that are always

necessarily considered evil) overcome the light of his life in your life? That's who I am speaking too this morning, if such a person is here today. You are hearing the message of the gospel this morning. Would you respond to it?

Those who Trust in the Word, Jesus, Will be Saved (*Born of God*) (v. 12-13)

This brings us to the conclusion of God's message this morning, which is this: Those who trust in the Word, Jesus, will be saved.

John tells us in v.12-13 that "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

What John is talking about here is the miracle of spiritual rebirth. It is not like the natural birth of a child, where we can control it and make it come to pass. Our relationship with Jesus has to be born of God.

We are "dead in our transgressions," as Paul says in Ephesians, and we are in love "the darkness," as John's gospel so often tells us; therefore God has to rebirth our dead spiritual lives in order that we may be brought back into a living relationship with God again.

John tells us that when we receive Christ, when we say yes to him with our lives, when we believe in his name- which is to believe in him and all that he stands for and asks of us- we will be born of God.

Conclusion

This prologue is a remarkable beginning to the letter of John and it contains the very core message of the gospel. The invitation to you and to me this morning is to receive it in our hearts and lives.

Jesus Christ is "full of grace and truth" (v.14) and if you will trust in him, and not say no to him and his ways in any area of your life, you will find that his "grace and truth" will lead you to the abundant life that he talks so much about in the gospel of John.

Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; but I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Would you give your life to him today?

Amen.