

St Martins C3 – December 22, 2024

John – God With Us – Gospel Beginnings

Sermon Notes:

John was the final person to write the story of Jesus in the New Testament. He strives to be original and not borrow too much from the other writers.

Read John 1:1-5

John goes right back to the beginning and refers to Jesus (1:14, 17) as the Word. The Greek for “The Word” is *logos* and at the time it was a lofty title to give to Jesus.

He was with God, meaning he was distinct from God, and He was God, which means that Jesus is equal and one in being with God.

It messes with your head a bit. John doesn't try to resolve our confusion. He just presents it and says, “Here you go, this is who Jesus is.”

Creation in all of its beauty, goodness and magnificence came through Jesus. He brought life to every leaf and life to every body. The life of Jesus is life to our hearts and souls.

Let's live life well and celebrate Jesus this Christmas. More than the presents under the tree, more than the good food, more than the religious observances. We celebrate Christmas when we embrace the life that Jesus gave to us.

Read John 1:10-14

Some reject Him, but some don't. They believe and accept him; they become children of God.

"The Word became human ..."

What a beautiful phrase. It describes the way Jesus became a living person. Here is the mystery of the incarnation. Jesus is fully God, standing outside of time, and then he inserts himself inside of time as a human baby.

"... made his home among us."

The word for "made his home" used here is the word "tabernacled". It is intentionally bringing us back to the Exodus when God was with Israel in the Tabernacle. Now, John marvels at the greatness of Jesus being present with people.

Read John 1:29-39

This is a whole new take on Jesus. He is not just the eternal Word. Nor is he a man. But he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

First, the disciples recognise that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Then they seek him. Then, Jesus asks them. "What do you want?" The disciples show respect and a desire to be close to Him. Jesus invites them in, and they spend time in His presence.

That interaction describes the opportunity we all have this Christmas to know Jesus more as God and as a human. To remain with Him as we seek to know Him more.

Questions for Connect Groups:

Key Point

Jesus is God in human flesh, the Lamb of God who invites us to know Him and commit our lives to Him.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

Have you ever tried to grasp the complexity of Jesus' nature?
How easy is it to comprehend his divine nature?

How can Jesus be God and also be with God? How would you describe Jesus' relationship with God?

What does it mean that Jesus is fully God and fully man?

What parts of Jesus becoming human are most mysterious?

How would you describe Jesus becoming human to someone who asked?

Why is the divinity of Jesus so important?

Have you received Jesus and given Him your allegiance? Have you responded to His "come and see"?

What does it look like for you to spend time "remaining" with Jesus this Christmas?

Monday Devotion: The God Man

Read John 1:1-5

It is Christmas week, just two days from the day when we open the presents, eat the food and spend time with family. That stuff is amazing and filled with value, but as Christians, we see there is more meaning than those social customs.

Christmas is the time when we remember the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. At first glance, John may not seem like the most appropriate gospel to use to celebrate Christmas. After all, John doesn't mention anything about the birth of Jesus.

However, as we explore John Chapter One this week, we will see that this account of Jesus' beginnings brings so much deeper meaning to our celebration of Jesus and the new birth he offers to each of us.

We begin by exploring the early "poem" about Jesus' pre-existent nature, eternal co-equality and unity with God. These words of John are worth pondering and teasing out.

Look at all the allusions to Genesis 1 and think about why John chose to highlight these parts of that story in Jesus. Also, consider the relationship between Jesus and God.

As you consider the wonders of His greatness, let it draw you to worship Him. Jesus is so mighty and awesome, yet so humble in coming to earth to save humanity and to bring us to God.

Tuesday Devotion: The Entrée and the Mains

Read John 1:6-28

The story of Jesus in all four gospels is tied up with the story of John. John fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 40:3-5) and prepared the way for Jesus, announcing His coming, like a herald of old announcing that a great King was coming.

John the Baptist was a revered person at the time, and so John spent some time showing that his testimony was important, but he is a distant second in comparison to Jesus. He was the starter, and Jesus was the mains.

Jesus' coming as a person carries so much significance for some of the big questions we face today. Especially, our suffering.

Some compare God to a kid on an ant hill with a magnifying glass. He mercilessly uses the sun's rays to torture and kill the ants for the fun of it. That is the lived experience of many people. They live with pain and difficulty and see no deliverance.

The coming of Jesus shatters that image. If that image was accurate there is no way the kid would become an ant and turn the magnifying glass on himself.

Jesus' coming reminds us that God cares deeply for our lives and wants to make a way for us to become His children and live with Him forever. Bring what you are going through to God and put it in the perspective of the greatest love ever given.

Wednesday Devotion: Behold the Lamb

Read John 1:29-34; Isaiah 53

The book of John is filled with many great declarations about Jesus. Think of Thomas touching Jesus' nail-scarred hands and saying: "My Lord and My God". Think of Nathanael proclaiming in the next passage: "You are the Son of God – the King of Israel."

For me, the greatest declaration of Jesus' life and mission is found here: "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the World."

The reference to Jesus as a lamb may seem obscure, but as we read Isaiah 53, we capture the power of this title. We see that Jesus came not as a conquering war hero but as a sacrificial atonement. He chose to be beaten and harmed so that we might experience life.

Today is Christmas Day. As you read the Christmas story about the trip to Bethlehem, the shepherds, the angels, and the wise men, don't forget to spend some time considering Jesus' full mission and the outcome of His life, death and resurrection.

Spend time in prayer and adoration to Jesus. He can take away not only the sin of the world but also our sins.

May you know the peace, hope and joy that comes through Him and Him alone.

Merry Christmas!

Thursday Devotion: Welcomed In

Read Read John 1:35-51; 15:15

When Jesus called his first followers in the book of John, he did more than call them to learn from a teacher or fulfil a mission, He invited them to a relationship.

As you read John 1, see the way Jesus invited the followers into His life and the place where He was staying. He showed He cared about their life, even when they were just sitting under a fig tree.

Being a disciple of Jesus is an invitation to be part of the life of Jesus. We get to see Him up close and personal. We get to be His friends.

There is an old saying that goes: “Show me your friends and I will show you who you will become.” We often take on the character traits of the ones closest to us.

As friends of Jesus, we have an intimate view of who He is and what He is doing in the world. We then have the privilege of reflecting on His transforming life as we grow in each of the four relationship areas.

Make Jesus the one who is closest to you. Every day, take the time to get to know Him and choose to be His friend.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself to you as your friend.

Friday Devotion: The Stairway Between Heaven and Earth

Read John 1:50-51; Genesis 11:1-9; 28:10-17

One of the great storylines of the Bible is the story of Heaven and Earth. When God created the world, He created two spaces: a space for humans called the Earth and the space where He exists called the Heavens.

All of the Bible can be seen as the story of man's search to reunite Heaven and Earth. Take, for example, the story of the Tower of Babel, where people unite to build a tower that reaches the sky. They weren't just trying to get closer to the moon; they were trying to reach the roof of the sky so they could step into God's space, into Heaven.

Think also of Jacob's ladder. Jacob has a dream in Bethel and sees the angels climbing up and down the ladder between Earth and Heaven with God at the top proclaiming His covenant with Him.

Now, Jesus' statement in verse 51 becomes so striking. He is Jacob's ladder, allowing things of Heaven to come to Earth. He is the one who allows us to see God and to step into Heaven.

The New Living Translation adds a phrase (that I can't find in any other translation, but is a good summary) where Jesus says He "is the stairway between Heaven and Earth." As we consider our desire to get closer to God, let us ensure we are not trying to build our own stairway to Heaven by our works or religion but only through trusting in Jesus.