

He Came Full of Grace and Truth

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[0:00] John 1, verses 14-18.

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.

John bore witness about Him and cried out, This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me. For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side.

He has made Him known. May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? St. Augustine lived around, he was born around 350 A.D., died around 420 A.D.

[1:17] And he did many great things. One of the great early church fathers, he said this quote that I want to share with you right now.

He said, That's amazing to me because, you know, that was about 1700 years ago.

But the same truth still applies today. People don't realize how sinful they are. But they're quick to point out how sinful other people are around them, aren't they?

And tragically, let's be honest, this is too often the case even in the church. We're quick to make up excuses for ourselves. I'm not that bad. But when it comes to others, we hold them to a standard that we're not willing to hold to ourselves.

We like to think that we're better than we really are. We have excuses for just about everything. Justifying why we made a mistake or why we did something that we knew that we shouldn't have done.

[2:46] And we also like to use those excuses by comparing ourselves to other people. And we think, well, you know, I may have done some bad things, but I'm not as bad as that person.

You know, I maybe have done some things that I'm not proud of, but I've never spent any time of jail. So I'm not as bad as other people are. And certainly all of us, I hope, if we compared ourselves to somebody like Adolf Hitler, we could all say, yeah, we're great people compared to somebody like that.

At least I sincerely hope that you can say that. Otherwise, we do have counseling and, you know, I certainly would like to meet with you and pray before you try to exterminate an entire race of people.

But I think you know what I'm saying. We like to think that we're much better than we truly are. And so in the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul addresses that issue.

That issue that we all suffer with. See, here's the thing. The Bible doesn't compare our goodness next to somebody like Adolf Hitler.

[3:53] As a matter of fact, it doesn't compare us to anyone or any other thing or any other standard that is of this world. The Bible compares us, judges us next to God Himself.

He is the standard of goodness by which all of us are compared. And I don't know about you, but I don't compare very well next to God.

If ever there was a man, though, who walked with integrity. If ever there was a man who was known as a good guy. If ever there was a man who people in society looked to and thought, there's a righteous man.

There's a prophet. The prophet of prophets. If ever there was somebody who they would feel uncomfortable comparing themselves to, it was Isaiah ben Amas. Great prophet of the Old Testament.

He was highly respected. He was perceived by his community as being a very virtuous man. Again, no one would feel good comparing themselves next to a guy like him.

[5:10] Let's read Isaiah chapter 6 verses 1 and 7 together. With this in mind.

Is the Lord God of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of Him who called.

And the house was filled with smoke. And I said, woe is me, for I am lost. For I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

And he touched my mouth and said, behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away. And your sin is atoned for. Isaiah catches one glimpse of God.

[6:35] And in that moment, his selfish esteem is completely shattered. He's fully exposed under the gaze of the absolute standard of holiness.

The absolute standard of goodness. And he couldn't bear it. He couldn't literally stand it. In the presence of God's purity and holiness, he was completely undone.

Being full aware of his inability to measure up to that perfect standard. For the first time in his life, Isaiah fully understood who God was.

And at the same time, for the first time in his life, he truly understood who he was. Fully aware of this now, Isaiah crumbled to the ground. Every fiber of his being trembling.

He wished he could be hidden. He wished he could be covered up. Anything to get out from underneath the holy gaze of God.

[7:45] Adam and Eve had fig leaves to cover themselves up with. They had a place to hide, but Isaiah didn't. He was in pure moral and spiritual anguish.

As he stood in the presence of God who is holy, holy, holy. And all he felt was guilt, guilt, guilt for his sins.

And that feeling of guilt screamed out of every pore of his body. And he realized just how much he was unable to measure up to God and his perfect standard.

But then God has something amazing happen. He orders one of those angelic beings to fly to the altar and to take tongs and to take a glowing coal from it.

And he ordered him to use those tongs to place that coal on the lips of Isaiah's mouth. And so that seraphim placed those white, hot coals up against his lips and seared them.

[9:00] Now imagine the lips are one of the most sensitive part of the human body. This was an act of severe mercy. A painful act of cleansing.

Isaiah's wound would be cauterized. The dirt of his mouth, the dirt of his flesh was being burned away. He was being refined by holy fire. Later in this book, Isaiah will prophesy of the Holy One who would come.

The One who would come and bear the sins of His people. Who would cleanse them fully and completely by experiencing the most severe mercy of all, which was dying on the cross for sinners. A painful act of cleansing. Where Christ would take our sin, enduring our guilt and our shame, and exchanging it with His righteousness.

Let's read Isaiah 53, 10-11. Again, written 700 years or so before the incarnation of Jesus Christ, but speaks specifically to Him. Who has believed what He has heard from us?

[10:09] And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He, speaking of Christ, grew up before Him like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him.

No beauty that we would desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised and we esteemed Him not.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to His own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Then Isaiah 53, verses 10-11. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush Him.

[11:17] He has put Him to grief. When His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring. He shall prolong His days.

The will of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Out of the anguish of His soul, He shall see and be satisfied. By His knowledge shall the righteous one, My servant, make many to be accounted righteous.

And He shall bear their iniquities. Jesus' birth and His life and His death and His resurrection are essential for our salvation.

Jesus wasn't simply a good teacher or an example of upright, virtuous living that we should admire. He is Lord and Savior.

He is Christ and King. He is the Son of the living God. He's it. He's everything. He's all. Without His life, without His death, without His resurrection, we are without hope in this world.

[12:24] Do you know that? So the main idea for this morning's message is this. John presents us here with three facts about the Lord Jesus Christ that are essential to our understanding of who He is and what He's done.

And this is why I think that's important. If we truly understand this and believe this, if you understand the great recipient of grace that you have become, and if you understand that, then you will in turn be a great giver of grace.

If you understand the grace that you have received, you won't help but want to extend grace to those who are around you. And guess what? But when people see that, they will give glory to God for you, for your grace.

They will see something that's unlike anything that they see in this world and they'll wonder why. And you'll have an opportunity to tell them, it's all because of Jesus Christ and the amazing grace that I have received from Him.

So the first fact we see that John presents us here is that Jesus is God with us. In verse 14, He's God with us. There again he says, This verse here is the most concise biblical statement that there is about the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

[13:53] And when we say that word, when we use that term incarnation, what we mean is the act of God whereby He took a human nature to Himself.

So it's not that Jesus was some kind of 50% man and 50% God or anything like that. No, He's truly God and He's truly man.

Fully God and fully man. The infinite became finite. Eternity entered into time. The invisible became visible.

The Word became flesh. Now if you really want to impress your Christian friends who don't go to this church, here's a fancy pants theological term that you can throw out there.

This is what we call the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union. Use that this week and impress your friends. That is the union. That's referring to the union of Christ's humanity and His divine natures, two natures, united in one person.

[15:02] He's fully and truly God. He's fully and truly man. God the Son truly became a man yet He remained fully God.

He entered the realm of those who are bound by time and space and He experienced life as it is for those whom He created. So every Christmas when we sing that great Christmas carol by Charles Wesley, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, he captures this beautifully in one of those verses.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see. Hail the incarnate deity. Pleased as man with men to dwell. Jesus our Emmanuel. Emmanuel meaning God with us.

The eternal Son not only became a man, He also dwelt with men for some 33 years. and that word there in the gospel that John uses dwelt in the Greek literally means to live in a tent.

So now you can say, well what does that mean? Did Jesus really like to go camping? You know, He liked to live in tents. Now I will say that Jesus said that you know the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.

[16:17] I think that He did spend a lot of His nights asleep out in nature under the stars. We know certainly He spent a lot of time going out in remote places where He would pray. But that is not at all what this is referring to.

It's referring to something much greater and deeper than that. If you remember in the Old Testament, God dwelt in a tent among His people.

That tent was called the tabernacle. The tabernacle was always placed in the center of the Israelite camp during the Exodus. The tabernacle was the center of their worship for the Jewish people. It was where they would go to meet with God before the construction of the temple, which was just a more permanent tabernacle. God gave Moses specific instructions on the design, the dimensions, the furnishings, and the functions of that tent.

The tabernacle was about 45 feet long and about 15 feet wide. And it was divided into two distinct parts. There was an outer chamber, which was called the holy place.

[17 : 30] And then there was a smaller inner chamber, which was called the most holy place, or the holy of holies. And that was the place where God's presence was manifested amongst His people.

That was where God met with His people. The only item in that room was the Ark of the Covenant, which you know contained the stone tablets and some other things.

But the high priest was only able to go in there once a year, one time a year on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle blood on top of the Ark of the Covenant, which was called the mercy seat, which they saw that as being the throne of God and only one time a year.

And only He was able to go into that holy place. And there He would sprinkle the blood for the remission of the people's sins, seeking God's forgiveness.

The tabernacle was made of boards covered with curtains. It was surrounded by a large courtyard, which contained the altar where sacrifices were made to God continually throughout the days and the weeks and where people sought forgiveness and where they sought to give their thanksgiving to God as well.

[18 : 50] Everything about this tent, everything about this tabernacle, its dimensions, its furnishings, its colors, its functions, its arrangements were designed to communicate a greater spiritual truth.

They were a preview of Jesus Christ. Who He is, what He would do. Jesus Christ is the true and greater tabernacle of God.

He pitched His tent among us, adding humanity to His deity. Why? Why did He do that? Hebrews 2, 14-18.

Since, therefore, the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself, likewise, speaking of Jesus, partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to a lifelong slavery.

For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make a propitiation for the sins of the people.

[20 : 11] For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted. See, this passage speaks to the ultimate purpose of Christ's incarnation.

He came to earth to die. By dying, He was able to conquer death. And through His resurrection, He showed that He has rendered Satan powerless against all who believe in Him.

If you're saved, you will be saved. You are saved. You will be raised. You have eternal life now and forever. Hebrews 10, 19-22, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places, again, referring back to that most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain that is through His flesh.

And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from the evil conscience of our bodies, washed with pure water.

You see, Jesus' flesh was torn at His crucifixion. So too was the temple curtain symbolically torn.

[21 : 30] It was literally, I should say, torn, but it symbolically separated man from God's presence. The people used to have to stand outside the tent and watch as the high priest went in.

But when Christ came, who tabernacled with us, when He entered that heavenly temple, He did not return, but instead tore that curtain, tore that thing that separated us, He went in and invites us to join Him there as well.

And the last time we see this word dwelt used in the New Testament is in Revelations 21.3. It's only used about four times.

Here's the last time and I think it's really significant. Again, John, who wrote this Gospel inspired by the Holy Spirit, testifies in Revelation 21.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them. And they will be His people. And God Himself will be there as their God.
[22 : 47] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

Don't you know that this is the way that it must be? Man, don't you watch the news and see how ruthless people are to one another and you see how broken our world is and then you look inside yourself and you see that you're not how you're supposed to be?

And you think, it shouldn't be this way. There shouldn't be any more sin. There shouldn't be any more tears. There shouldn't be any more suffering. And then we read that and say, yes, that's been placed there because that's the way God intended it to be.

And for one day, those of us who are in Christ, we will experience that eternally. And God wants you to experience that eternally. no more sin, no more death, no more crying, no more guilt, no more shame.

And all of this is possible because God came to dwell with us. God came to live for us. He came to die for us. Rising from the grave for us so that we who have put our faith in Christ will one day dwell with Him forever and forever and ever in a new heaven and a new earth completely free from sin and completely free from its consequences.

[24 : 07] Life as it should be. Abundant life. Eternal life. Filled with nothing but everlasting joy forever and ever. That is the amazing reality contained in that truthful statement that Jesus Christ is God with us.

And that fact leads us to the next important thing that is essential for our understanding of who Jesus is and what He's done. Just as Jesus is God for us, He is God revealed to us.

The rest of verse 14 and verse 18. John says, And we have seen His glory. Glory is the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

And then in verse 18, No one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side. He has made Him known. So though there were instances where Jesus put His divine glory on display, it was veiled by His human flesh.

Peter, James, and John received a sneak preview of the unveiled glory of God on the Mount of Transfiguration where there, Matthew says, His face shone like the sun and the garments became white as light.

[25 : 20] This is interesting because, you know, light is a secondary quality. A lemon is bright, right? Bright yellow. But if you went into a cave, what color would it be?

It would be black because it's a secondary quality. It's reflecting the light that it receives from the sun. It's not a flashlight. So here's the thing about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

This light is not a reflection. It is emanating from within His being. Showing that this is not simply or merely a man, but somebody who is so much more.

Jesus revealed His deity in that way and again, He did so through the many miracles that He performed. He cured people of all kinds of ailments and diseases. He brought dead people back to life.

He demonstrated His power over nature, I should say. He calmed the storms. He multiplied the loaves and the fishes. He walked on the water.

[26 : 26] However, I think that John's point here is that in Jesus, what is fully on display is the true nature of God.

What is God like? What's His character like? Two attributes that John mentions here of God's nature that are highlighted are also closely connected to our salvation.

What is God like? He's full of grace and He's full of truth. The Bible says that salvation is holy by believing God's truth in the gospel.

And by believing in this truth, one receives His saving grace. Paul reminded the Ephesians. In Ephesians 1.13, In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promise of His Holy Spirit.

In Colossians 1.5, he defined the gospel as the word of truth. Paul expressed to the Thessalonians his thankfulness that God had chosen you as the firstfruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

[27 : 43] People are saved, Paul says to Timothy, when they come to the knowledge of the truth. On the other hand, the Bible says that those who perish will do so because they did not receive the

love of the truth so as to be saved.

So Jesus was the full expression of God's grace and the full expression of God's truth. Therefore, He said of Himself in John 8:31 and 32, So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

Again, in John 14:6, Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Just as Jesus was fully man and fully God, so was He full of grace and full of truth. Have you ever noticed that people in our society right now, especially, are really lacking in these two areas? Not very gracious and not very truthful. As a matter of fact, you know, what really bothers me these days is that somebody will have something good happen for them and there is somebody who makes it their objective to ruin whatever good is going on in that person's life.

[29:13] We see it with the NFL draft with Kyler Murray. You know, somebody, he's going to be the number one overall pick, somebody took it upon themselves in their free time to dig through all of his old tweets and posts to find something to try to sabotage his career and it's happened to so many others.

People are so ungracious in our society. You know what, too? They're very untruthful. It's hard to know who to trust in the world that we live in, in the world of fake news, right?

We have a presidential election that's coming up and we know that these people will tell us whatever they think we want to hear so that we will vote for them and whether they'll do it or not, probably not.

We know that politicians don't tell the truth, yet, we look to them to fix what's wrong with our world. How crazy is that? Man, our nation lacks grace and it suffers from a lack of truth.

And this attitude to me characterizes the attitude of the Pharisees that Jesus always came up against. They were self-righteous.

[30:35] You know, those who are so ungracious and so untruthful, well, they think that they're okay, that they're self-righteous, that they're good. We've already talked about that.

That was the case for the Pharisees. Hey, we don't have problems. We're the ones who do everything right. But on closer inspection, as Jesus pointed out, as a matter of fact, you're not sons of God.

He said, you're sons of hell. So right now, Christians have a wonderful opportunity. Right now, as we live in a nation that suffers from a lack of grace and a lack of truth, this is our moment.

This is our time to model the characteristics of our Lord and Savior, of our God, to be people who are known as gracious and truthful.

And when they see that, they will see something that they're not seeing any place else. So let's seek to serve the very least of these.

[31:42] Let's seek to speak the truth in a loving way. Is this not what we're called to do? We are called to be lights. We are called to be a city on a hill that shines brightly for all to see.

And I'm telling you that if we live as people who are marked by grace and truth, people will see Jesus Christ in us. And they will know that He is full of grace and truth.

So there's two facts about the Lord Jesus Christ that are essential for our understanding of who He is and what He's done. He's God with us. He's God revealed to us. And we see in verses 15 and 17 that He's God for us.

John bore witness about Him and cried out, This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me because He was before me. For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. You see, the law was given to reveal to us just how much we don't measure up to God's standard.

[32:56] Just how hopeless we are to try to save ourselves. It's there to show us just how incapable anyone is of being able to save themselves by their own good works or their own good merits.

It's there to convict sinners to reveal to us that we are at the mercy of God. We need His forgiveness. We need to experience His grace if ever we are going to be saved.

And the fact is that we sinned against God and God would have been justified if He would have done nothing about it but left us to die and suffer in our sin forever. But He's gracious.

So gracious that He gave His only Son. Galatians 4, 4-7 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who are under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father! So you are no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir through God.

[34 : 04] This is great news. We have been recipients of amazing grace and marvelous truth. And so again, we should be known for our graciousness.

We should be known for our truthfulness. We should be distinguished from the rest of the world because of that. When people come to our carnival, they should see these people are different because it should be clear.

But unfortunately, it's not so clear in the church. I want to close with one last story that I read recently from John Sartle on Ligonier.com and the title of his article is Grace in Law.

And this is what he had to say. It's pretty lengthy. He said, a young friend of mine was working for a Christian institution that professed to adhere to biblical orthodoxy.

She came from a godly home. Her parents taught her and her siblings to celebrate daily God's wonderful grace in their lives. She was a thinking young lady who lived an exemplary life through high school and college.

[35 : 19] One evening, she came home with a young man she had been dating for some time to tell her parents with tears of contrition that she was pregnant. Her parents were crushed but reached out to her and the young man in grace.

They wanted to get married and after much counseling to confirm their commitment to each other their vows were made and the union was celebrated in a worship service. The evangelical institution where she worked let her go a few weeks later.

By the testimony of her employers her work was excellent but they were under pressure from their constituents to let her go. Before a watching world this organization that gave allegiance to the doctrines of reformation chose the law over grace.

They had an opportunity to demonstrate grace and they failed. And he continues on. We live in a fallen world where life is messy. Legalism shuns the mess.

Grace meets the mess. Grace embraces the prodigal and throws a party. So I ask you reader and I ask myself have we really chosen Christ over the law or is it Christ and the law?

[36 : 38] Have we chosen grace over the law or is it grace and the law? What was it Paul said? You are severed from Christ. You who would be justified by the law we can't have it both ways.

Oh dear reader we must learn Jesus saves and Jesus alone. The unmarried couple living next door to you do we go and tell them that they ought to be married or do we tell them there is a father who gave his son for sinners?

Jesus and the Holy Spirit not only save but they clean up lives much more thoroughly than we can. And he concludes by saying I am not giving license to the Christian to sin with or am I giving license to the Christian to ascend with abandon?

You know that I am not. Usually people who make such accusations are evangelical closet legalists running in their pride to the law because they think it shows them to be superior.

When he denied Jesus in the courtyard Peter did not say well Jesus told me I would do this and I know he will forgive me this is no big thing. We read that he went out and wept bitterly.

[37 : 46] Jesus did not fire Peter instead he met him for breakfast on the shore of Galilee. This is a wonderful opportunity for the church to be the church and right now our nation needs the church to be the church.

This isn't a place this isn't an institution of law this the church is an institution of grace and it's an institution of truth and we know people whose lives are a mess and a wreck but guess what law can't save them.

Our shunning them is not going to help. We go and we declare the good news of Jesus Christ as recipients of amazing grace we exemplify amazing grace to a world that is in desperate need of it and our hope and our prayer should be that as we do so we have an opportunity to share Jesus Christ that men and women and children would know that he is full of grace that he is full of truth that he is the way he is the truth and he is the life.

and he is the truth Thank you.