

The Word Became Flesh

John 1:1-18

Introduction

In 1987, one of the greatest rock bands of our time, U2, released their album, “The Joshua Tree.” “The Joshua Tree” album contains one of my favorite songs. It is called, “Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For.” In many ways, this song captured the angst that I often felt as I meandered through my teenage years, looking for truth, looking for something or someone who bring peace, rest, and satisfaction to my life. I sought it in sports. I sought it in relationships. I sought it in many different places, but I often found myself thinking of those lyrics, “But I still haven’t found what I am looking for.” I could not find what my soul desired and longed for. It wasn’t until I was 17 that God revealed to me that “what I was looking for was already here.” The satisfaction that my heart longed for was not going to be found in anything of this world.

Yet, even after coming face to face with the soul-satisfying love and grace of Christ as a junior in high school, there were times, even times still to this day, when I am prone to looking to other things as a source of satisfaction and joy. Sometimes I think to myself, “If the ministry was just a little more fruitful, I would be happier.” Or, “if I just had a little more education, a little more money, a little more respect, a little more influence, a little more of this or a little more of that, then I would be truly, completely happy and satisfied.”

Have you ever felt that way? Some of you may be feeling that way right now as you think about Christmas tomorrow morning. Some of you may be thinking as soon as I open that gift, my desires will be satisfied. Others may be thinking this morning that if your job gets better next year, or if you get that promotion, or if you close that deal, or if you find that “special someone” and get married, or if you could just have children, or if you could just have a little more of this and a little more that, then I will finally be complete. I will be happy.”

But what if I told you that what you are looking for, that the satisfaction, the joy, the completeness, the peace that you are still looking for, what if I told you that **what you are looking for is already here**? My goal this morning is to convince you in the power of the Holy Spirit that **what you are looking for is already here**. I am praying that the Holy Spirit would attend the preaching of His Word and compel you to believe that what you are waiting for has already arrived in Jesus Christ.

With that, let’s turn our attention to John 1:1-18...

John 1:1-18

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 was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 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. 15 (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.’”) 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

Exposition

I. The knowledge that you desire has already been revealed in Jesus. (Vss. 1-8)

We all desire to know what is really real. When all is said and done, we want to know the truth. While some might declare that we “can’t handle the truth,” we still want to know the truth. We want to know if there truly is a god. And if there is a god, we want details. We want to know who He is and what He is like. The apostle Paul tell us in **Romans 2** that our consciences bear witness to us that there is a God, who is holy, and to whom we will be held accountable. According to John 1:1-8, the God that we long to know has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. The God who made all things (Vs. 3), the God who brings life out of nothing (Vs. 4), the God who overcomes evil (Vs. 5), this God has made Himself known in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the God who made all things (**Col. 1:16**). He is the One who upholds all living things by the word of His word (**Heb. 1:3**). He is the One who appeared to destroy the works of Satan (**1 John 3:8**). This Jesus, the Word of God, the Son of the Father, the Sender of the Holy Spirit, this Jesus, is the light of the world (Vss. 6-8), which means that He came into the world to reveal God to a world sitting in darkness.

There is something about light I believe is worth noting from this passage. Craig Koester wrote, “Light comes gently with the promise of dawn, but glares down from the noonday sun; it gives the assurance of vision yet threatens exposure.” As the light, Jesus came not only to reveal God, but also to reveal the state of our relationship to God, which is why later in the gospel of John, we read that while the Son of God was sent into the world that sinners might turn from their rebellion and turn to Jesus in faith. Yet, this is the judgment that has come upon the earth, “the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness, because their deeds were evil” (**John 3:18**).

It is no surprise, then, that some people actually prefer darkness to light. As one young woman once explained her preference for darkness, she stated, “The darkness allows me to hide who I am and what I truly feel. In the light all things have a chance to be revealed Darkness makes it easier to hide. In the dark you cannot see what is coming next The darkness is a place where you can lose yourself. Lost in the dark is a great place to be because then you are free from what you were and can be what you want. The darkness is bliss.”

In other words, our problem with the light, that is, the knowledge that we desire is not that it is inaccessible, but rather, that is uncomfortable. The knowledge about God that we desire challenges us. It unsettles us. It scares us. It is not that we cannot find the knowledge that our soul desires...

T.S. - It is often that we do not want what has been clearly revealed to us in Jesus, which is what we find in the next section of verses, where we are taught...

II. The acceptance that you crave has already been accomplished in Jesus. (Vss. 9-13)

Verses 9-11 are simply staggering. The world that He made did not receive Him. How offensive our rebellion against God must be to Him? That we would breath His air, expend His energy, and exploit His patience by not receiving the One who made us and sustains us. Yet, this is exactly what so many of Jesus’ neighbors and enemies did to Him, and it is what some continue to do this day. But not everyone does so. Some, according to verses 12-13, were given the right to be accepted, to be named, to be called “children of God.” What a privilege?!? But from where does such a privilege come? Does it come from our pedigree? Does it come from our connection? Does it come from our hard work or self-effort? Can we will ourselves into the family of God? Not according to verse 13! No one gets adopted into the family of God because they lobbied for a spot. They didn’t not get accepted into His family because of anything in their flesh and blood. They were accepted because of God! Because they were born of God, they were given the right to be called Children of God.

And all of this, this blessing of adoption, is because of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul spoke of this adoption in Jesus more than any other biblical author. In **Galatians 4:5**, we are told that Jesus “redeemed those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” In **Ephesians 1:5**, we are told that God the Father “predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will,” which means that God the Father never envisioned any other way for someone to become a child of God except through faith in Jesus Christ. Now, I know that you have heard it said, “But we are all children of God,” right? All people are offspring of God in the sense that He is the creator of all people. Yet, when it comes to the family of God, it is only those who have trusted in Jesus Christ who are God’s children.

Some of you who are here today grew up in homes where you were loved unconditionally by your parents. The home was permeated with grace and mercy. But there are others who are here today that grew up in harsh homes, where you had no hope of “measuring up.” It did not matter what you did, your parents could not be pleased with you. And so, throughout all your life, you have lived with the burden of feeling the need to work hard to be accepted.

Such a struggle reminds me of a scene in the movie, *Gladiator*, when Commodus, who is the son of Marcus Aurelius, speaks with his dying father about how desperately he wanted to be accepted. Commodus says,

You wrote to me once, listing the four chief virtues: wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance. As I read the list, I knew I had none of them. But I have other virtues: ambition, that can be a virtue when it drives us to excel; resourcefulness; courage; perhaps not on the battlefield, but there are many forms of courage; devotion; to my family, to you. But none of my virtues were on your list. Even then it was as if you did not want me for your son."

"Commodus, you go too far," replies the emperor.

Commodus continues, "I searched the faces of the gods for ways to please you, to make you proud. One kind word, one full hug where you pressed me to your chest and held me tight would have been like the sun in my heart for a thousand years. What is this in me that you hate so much? All I've ever wanted was to live up to you, Caesar, Father."

I have no doubt that there are some here this morning that feel or have felt similar feelings toward your fathers. So, when you come to God, you expect nothing to be different. You expect to find a heavenly Father who demands that you work hard to be accepted into His family, but if you are paying attention to John 1:9-13 this morning, you do not find a heavenly father making demands for harder work, but instead, a heavenly Father who offers you a place in the family if you simply receive His Son, Jesus Christ. With God the Father, the acceptance that you crave has already been accomplished through Jesus the Son for all who believe in Him.

T.S. - And this is possible only because of what we find in verses 14-18...

III. The grace that you need have already been offered in Jesus. (Vss. 14-18)

The only way that God could ever accept us is through the grace that came down to us in Jesus Christ. Now, some of you may be thinking to yourself, "Yes, of course, it is all of grace, preacher. We love grace!" but are you ready to embrace grace for what it really is? Grace is a gift from God that in order to receive with thanksgiving, you have to admit, you must acknowledge your need for grace. To receive grace is to recognize that you are incapable of saving yourself. Grace is one of those gifts that requires humility to fully appreciate it and receive it.

Let me see if I can illustrate what I mean by grace being a gift from God that requires us to humble ourselves in order to receive it correctly. Please indulge me with a little Christmas gift giving story from Tim Keller. In his book, *Hidden Christmas*, he writes,

Christmas is about receiving presents, but consider how challenging it is to receive certain kinds of gifts. Some gifts by their very nature make you swallow your pride. Imagine opening a present on Christmas morning from a friend ... and it's a dieting book. Then you take off another ribbon and wrapper and you find it is another book from another friend, *Overcoming Selfishness*. If you say to them "Thank you so much," you are in a sense admitting, "For indeed I am [overweight] and obnoxious."

In other words, some gifts are hard to receive, because to do so is to admit you have flaws and weaknesses and you need help. Perhaps on some occasion you had a friend who figured out you were in financial trouble and came to you and offered a large sum of money to get you out of your predicament. If that has ever happened to you, you probably found that to receive the gift meant following your pride.

There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride to the depths that the gift of Jesus Christ requires us to do so. Christmas means that we are so lost, so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God himself could save us. That means you are not somebody who can pull yourself together and live a moral and good life.

Do you see now, what I am getting at when I speak of grace? God has not only revealed the knowledge that we desire and accomplished the acceptance that we crave, He has offered us the grace that we so desperately need! As verse 16 states, “from His fullness, we have received grace upon grace,” that is, grace in the place of grace. Waves of graces that continue to break and roll onto the shore of our needy life. We need this grace. We have no hope without it. This is the grace that we have been looking for, the grace of God that will bring the satisfaction, joy, and fulfillment that we so desperately search for in all the wrong places...

Conclusion

Which is to say again, “What you are looking for is already here.” In fact, as you have already seen, it is not even a “what” that you are looking for, but a “who.” You have been looking for someone who can satisfy the God-sized desire in your life that no one and nothing has ever been able to fill because you were made for so much more!

C. S. Lewis was right when he wrote,

The Christian says, “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

You do not have to keep looking for something in this world that will satisfy your desires. The knowledge you desire, the acceptance you crave, and the grace you need has come in Jesus. Everything that you are looking for is already here in Jesus Christ.

So why not stop looking elsewhere today and look to Him?

You don't have to find Him. He is not lost. He is not hidden. He is here. He has come that you might have life!

Why not turn your eyes to Him today? Why not humble yourself before God and receive the gift that He has given to you in Jesus Christ?

Lord's Supper

As an expression of our faith in Christ, the One who is our everything, we are going to receive the Lord's Supper in response to the Word of God. As our deacons begin to make their way down to the front of the sanctuary, I want to encourage you now to take a moment for self-reflection upon what Jesus did for you. He died. He was buried. He rose again for our sins, according to the scriptures. Take a moment now to silent thank God for His work on your behalf as we prepare to receive the bread and the fruit of the vine.

Distribution of the Bread and the Cup

Blessing for the Bread and the Cup

Reading for the Bread and the Cup – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Closing Prayer