



The Parish of Darfield

All Saints, Darfield and St Michael, Great Houghton

Sunday 14th February 2021

1st Sunday before Lent

Sermon Supplement

At our Facebook service on Sunday 7th February, Carol Hunter led us through part of the first chapter of the Gospel of St John. With her permission we include a transcript to allow a wider audience the opportunity to share her thoughts.

Gospel of St John Chapter 1 verses 1 to 14

1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 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 testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Father, what comes next, may it honour your name.

What would you say is the most important need for the church in our land today? Perhaps you would say we need more godly ministers who will teach the truth of God's word faithfully and clearly. God knows that we need more godly leaders to build up the people of God. Perhaps you'd say it is money or workers that we need most? Think what we could do and the people we could employ in our churches, if only we had more money. That would certainly be very useful. Perhaps you'd say we need better training in evangelism and handling the Bible? Surely that would help the church? No doubt it would. Perhaps others would say we should do better in holiness and personal moral uprightness? With all the uncertainty in the church at the moment, isn't there a great need for clarity and consistency? Certainly in a culture that is moving away from its Biblical moorings, a church which lives by God's standards would be a healthy witness. But time and again as we read the Bible, whilst all these things are vitally important for the health of the local church, the one thing that undergirds them all, and the one thing that is most important for a church to develop is the knowledge of God. We need a deeper knowledge of God. We need to know God better. Because what empowers good preaching, what enables devoted service, what drives passionate evangelism, and what fuels godly living is the knowledge of God. For when God's people truly know God and love and desire the glory of His name, then all these other worthy things follow naturally. And the reason? Because knowing and enjoying a relationship with the God who made us is the very purpose and meaning of life. This is how the first question of the Westminster Catechism puts it: "*What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.*"

And it is the knowledge of God that is the heart of John's gospel.

John's purpose in writing is that we come to know God for ourselves and if we do know Him, to know Him better. And how can we get to know Him? Through Jesus Christ. Come with me for a moment to the end of the gospel and to **chapter 20 vv 30-31**, because here we discover why it is that John is writing. He says: "*Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*"

John's aim for us is to believe in Jesus, or as the word can also mean, to continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that we might have life in His name. To know Jesus is to know God.

Many of the problems we face in the Christian life can be overcome and coped with by a greater and deeper knowledge and love for God. Perhaps we are facing doubt or lack of assurance. Then we need to come back to God and see His loving and gracious character. Perhaps we are feeling totally

overwhelmed and crushed by life's circumstances. Then we need to come back to God and see His power to keep us and help us through. Perhaps we are feeling weighed down by feelings of guilt or shame. Then we need to come back to Him and see how He deals with our sins and longs to forgive us. It's the knowledge of God that the church and we as individuals need to grasp again if we are to grow and press on and have an impact on our communities. And that is why John begins his gospel by taking us right to the heart of the matter when it comes to knowing God. For the way to know God is to know Jesus Christ. And John begins his gospel with this wonderful prologue which we are looking at this morning, 15 verses of profound teaching on the person of Christ. And the question we are faced with is this: Do we know this Jesus personally? Do we have a relationship with Him? And if so are we growing in deeper love and knowledge and awe of The One presented in these pages. Because if we are, then we are doing what we were designed for and meant to do. So let's step into John's gospel and find out what he teaches us about Jesus, The One who reveals God to us. And we'll discover 3 staggering facts about Jesus which I pray will deepen our love for Him and warm our hearts.

The Person Jesus is The Power Jesus has and The Promise Jesus gives

So first let's see the person Jesus is, in verses 1-2: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."*

John begins his gospel by talking of Jesus as the Word of God. It's a description of Jesus that John only uses in his prologue. There will certainly be many others, like the Christ, or the Lamb of God, or even by the end, Lord and God. But Jesus as the Word is only ever used here in this chapter. It's as if John is beginning his book by summing up everything there is to know about Jesus in this one title,

The Word. So what does he mean? Well John reflects the very first words of the Bible in Genesis 1. *"In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth."* And what is the first thing God does? He speaks. That is how He creates. *"God said 'Let there be light,' and there was light."* And throughout the Bible, when God speaks something happens. And that is how He reveals Himself to us. In fact, the phrase, *"thus says the Lord"* comes 3808 times in the OT (I haven't counted them all. It was probably some poor student doing a PhD). But it shows how important God's speech is. He reveals who He is and what kind of God He is by speaking. And so when we read in John 1 that Jesus is the Word of God, then we are being told by John that Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God. He is God's ultimate communication, His total and final self-expression. So if you want to know what God is like you look at Jesus. In Christ, we see God.

So what does John say about this Word? There are three things he highlights. **First, Jesus is from the beginning.** *"In the beginning was the Word."* That does not mean that he was at the start of creation. Rather He was from the very beginning of all things. He is eternal. He's at the start of the universe and beyond that too. So we can say of Jesus that was no time when He was not. He's always been there. As Hebrews puts it: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."* But why is that? Well **secondly, Jesus is with God.** *"The Word was with God."* There has been an intimate loving relationship between God and the Word for all time. Mutual loving relationship is at the very heart of God. And how can that be? Because **thirdly**, not only is He with God, but also **Jesus is God.** *"The Word was God."* And at this point our feeble minds begin to struggle to cope with the incredible concepts John is showing us. John is saying that Jesus is God and He has been with God from the beginning. How can Jesus both be God and with God? Well that question can only be answered by saying that God is three in one. He is three persons and yet one God. That is the doctrine of the Trinity. And unless we say both things, then we are failing to do justice to this deep doctrine which is taught all the way through the NT. That is the nature of God that God has revealed to us. No human mind can fathom such deep mysteries. Rather we must bow in adoration of this awesome eternal God.

We might not understand it, but God calls us to trust in Him. And in Jesus the Word, God has shown Himself to us. He's eternal, He is with God and He is God. Is that the Jesus we worship? He is nothing less than the awesome eternal God who has been for ever and will be forever. That's the person Jesus is.

The second thing that John teaches us is the power Jesus has in verses 3-5. And Jesus' identity means that He holds extraordinary power. He has power in **creation**. Let's see what John says in verse 3: *"Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has not been made."*

God the Father created everything that exists by and through His Son Jesus. Nothing exists that was not created by Jesus Himself. Every time God said *"let there be"* He was doing it through his Son, the Word who was with God in the beginning and was God. Paul goes even further when he says: *"All things were created by Jesus and for Jesus."* The entire universe was created through the Word of

God, Jesus. Jesus has incredible power. Just think for a moment of the creative power of Jesus in bringing the universe into being. It's not like you or I creating something. When we make something it is made out of something that already exists. Wood which makes shelves, or clay to make a pot. But Jesus created out of nothing. He simply brought everything into being with His word. And when you consider the order and cosmic scale of our universe it really is incredible power which keeps everything ticking over nicely. One scientist has put it this way. Imagine that the universe was a building like our churches. And then imagine that we placed into this building 100,000 million particles of dust with a tiny gap between them. Well just one of those dust particles would be the Milky Way, the galaxy that the earth is part of. But let's magnify one of the 100,000 million dust particles, say our Milky Way, and let's make it the size of Africa. If you were to place a ten pence piece on a street in Cape Town, what would that 10 pence piece represent on this scale? The moon, perhaps, the earth, the Sun? No, that 10 pence piece represents our solar system, everything from the earth to Pluto. One tiny fragment of the Milky Way, which in itself is one of hundreds of thousands of millions of galaxies in the universe. And Jesus brought them all into being and He sustains them with His powerful word. That's power isn't it?

And it's not just in creation that Jesus has awesome power. It's also in **salvation**. Verse 4: "*In Jesus was life, and that life was the light of men.*" Jesus is the light and life of the world. Apart from Him we are nothing. As we read on in John's gospel we discover that only in Jesus is true life and light. He is the Light of the world. He is the resurrection and the life. He alone can give us life beyond the grave and life with God forever. Now given who Jesus is and what sort of power He wields, He is totally worthy of our trust and adoration. He is The One who is perfectly able to keep us despite all the ups and downs of this life. It's very easy to lose sight of Jesus' greatness and power when we are going through tough times isn't it? Or even simply to become accustomed to it. Or if we are feeling discouraged and overwhelmed, it's tempting to think that nothing can help. But there is One who has the power to help and to keep us. He doesn't promise to take us out of the difficulty, but He does promise never to leave us and to bring us through, if only we will trust Him. For He has the power of creation and life and light. Jesus is totally trustworthy and has the power to keep His promises. And in these times, we so need to grasp hold of that comforting truth.

Never before have we faced challenges like this last year ~ and it's continuing ~ the storms of covid. The greatest storms reveal where our trust really is and Jesus has the power to get us through. Jesus is the one who gives life and light, life in creation and life in the new creation beyond the grave. Is this the Jesus we know and worship? Is this the Jesus we are trusting with every fibre of our being? There is no-one else worthy of our adoration or praise. The power Jesus has.

Finally and briefly, the promise Jesus gives. Because the result of Jesus coming into the world to die on a cross for us is something wonderful that Jesus promises to us in verse 12:

"Yet 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."

Sadly many people will reject this incredible offer that comes in the person of Jesus Christ. Even though the world was made through Jesus, yet it did not receive Him and in fact rejected Him. But to those who believe in Jesus, and trust in him, Jesus gives the right to be become children of God. And that is something that comes about not through human achievement, but through a miracle of God Himself. That if we trust in what Jesus has done for us, then we can be forgiven and washed clean and adopted into God's family. And it's a promise that God has kept for millions down the centuries. And even today you can claim that promise if you have never done so before. Because today, for another day, the door is still open.

So, is this the Jesus we know and love? The wonderful thing about knowing Jesus is that the more we know Him, the more we'll discover there **is** to know about Him.

In the Chronicles of Narnia by CS Lewis, Lewis tells how Lucy came back to Narnia after a while, and found that she believed Aslan, who represents Jesus, had grown larger. "*Aslan, said Lucy, you're bigger.*" "*That is because you are older, little one,*" He answered. "*Not because you are?*" she asked. "*I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.*"

Nothing beats knowing Jesus, the one who is God.

So let's bask in the knowledge of His identity as God Himself, His power as The One who creates and brings us life and light. Let's bask in the knowledge of The One who died for you and me, and The One who promises us adoption into God's family. For knowing God in Christ Jesus is the heart-beat of faith. And it's what life is all about.

Remember the first Catechism?:

For the chief end of mankind is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Amen