

NOTE TO TEAMS: The KJV does not contain a section of John 1:18 that appears in the CSB/NIV.

Looking Forward to Christmas

Session 4

December 22, 2024

Looking Forward to Love

Session Passages: John 1:14-18; 3:14-18

John 1:14-15

Connection to The Point. Christ came in bodily form to live among us and reveal God's glory.

The Prologue. The first eighteen verses of chapter 1 are known as "The Prologue" to John's Gospel. John started his Gospel at the beginning in Genesis 1:1 (John 1:1). He connected the incarnation of the Word, the Son of God, with the moment of creation when only the eternal God was, thereby emphasizing that the Word is the eternal God (vv. 1-4,10).¹ The One who brought all life into being (vv. 3-4) is also the source of salvation (eternal life) for those who believe in Him (vv. 12-13). John and other witnesses testified that they had personally observed the Word who had become flesh (vv. 14-17). The Word is the revelation of God the Father to humanity (v. 18).

The Word (v. 14). A key term in John's Gospel is the *Word (logos)*. He borrowed the term from Greek philosophy. Nonetheless, he did not use it as the Greek philosophers for whom the term referenced the impersonal, rational, guiding principle of the universe. In the first chapter of his Gospel, John used *logos* in reference to the Word, the eternal Person who was with God prior to creation, is God, and was the One through whom all things came into being (vv. 1-3). This is one of the major tenets of the Christian faith: that Jesus was and is God, the Second Person of the Trinity. (The Trinity is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—One God in three Persons.)

Became flesh**Was made flesh** (v. 14). The Greek term for *flesh (sarx)* literally refers to the skin that covers a human or animal body. It also can mean the physical body as a whole. Finally, it can refer to one who is or becomes a physical human being. In Jesus Christ, the Word, the eternal Son of God, became a person through the incarnation (see Luke 1:26-38). The Son of God became fully human but at the same time remained fully God. God entered into His created order in Jesus Christ.

Dwelt among us**Made his dwelling among us** (v. 14). The term for *dwelt***made his dwelling (skenoō)** literally means to pitch a tent. It refers to settling or taking up residence somewhere. The Word, the eternal Son of God, became one of us and made His earthly home among us. John may have been thinking of the Old Testament tabernacle where God's presence dwelt among the Israelites (Ex. 40:34-38). Only in this case, this was no tent of wood and cloth, but God in human flesh. John and others (indicated by the use of *us*) were witnesses to this.

We observedWe have seenWe beheld (v. 14). John and the other apostles were witnesses to the Word's incarnation in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Glory (v. 14). *Glory (doxa)* refers to the demonstration of God's presence and power. In John's Gospel, Jesus's glory is revealed through His miracles (signs, 2:11; 11:40-44) and His death and resurrection (ch. 17),

The one and only SonOf the only begotten (v. 14). The Greek term (*monogenes*) refers to someone or something that is the only one of its kind in reference to a specific relationship. In this context, it emphasizes that Jesus as the *Son* of God has a totally unique relationship with God the Father. There is no other like Jesus.

From the FatherOf the Father (v. 14). While other prophets and messengers were sent from God (such as John the Baptist, vv. 6-8), they do not compare to the Word who was sent directly from God the Father's presence as the Father's unique representative and revelation to humanity (v. 18). However, while God the Son comes from the Father, it does not mean He is less Deity than the Father. The Son is the same in essence with the Father, but also subordinate to Him in purpose and action as it relates to His earthly ministry.

Full of grace and truth (v. 14). The term for *full (pleres)* has the meanings of containing in itself all that something can hold and being complete, lacking nothing. In this context, it means that Jesus contains in Himself the characteristics of grace and truth in a fullness (perfection) only found in God. *Grace (charis)* refers to favor, gracious care, and good will toward someone as well as its practical application. *Truth (aletheia)* means having the quality of truthfulness. The term also carries the aspects of being upright, steadfast, and dependable. Finally, it can refer to reality itself.

John (v. 15). This is a reference to John the Baptist (see Luke 1:13-17; 3:1-18), who was the forerunner to Jesus, **“the one coming after mehe who comes after meHe that cometh after me.”** John himself **testifiedbare witness** (*martureo*, to confirm something based on personal knowledge and/or experience, bear witness) to the people he was not the Messiah, and that the Messiah **“ranks ahead of mehas surpassed meis preferred before me”** (see John 1:19-27).

He existed before meHe was before meFor he was before me (v. 15). John was physically older than Jesus (Luke 1:36). But Jesus, the eternal Word, existed before John the Baptist, and everything else in creation for that matter.

John 1:16-18

Connection to The Point. The grace of God is extended to us through Jesus.

IndeedAnd (v. 16). The apostle John shifted his focus from John the Baptist back to the Word. As the Word had dwelt with humanity (v. 14), now John detailed the purpose of the incarnation of the Word.

His fullness (v. 16). The apostle John shifted his focus from John the Baptist back to the Word. As the Word had dwelt with humanity (v. 14), now John detailed the purpose of the incarnation of the Word. The Greek term for *fullness* (*pleroma*) can refer to something that fills up, that which makes something full in the sense of being complete, that which is full of something, or something that is brought to fullness/completion. In this context, it refers to the divine Source from which God's unlimited grace springs.

We have all received (v. 16). *We* emphasizes that what John was writing is personal testimony and connects back to verse 14. It also indicates that John was one of a group of witnesses to the life and ministry of the incarnate Word.

Grace upon grace (v. 16). *Grace* (*charis*) in this context has the meaning of God's favor toward humanity as displayed through Jesus Christ in regards to salvation. *Grace upon grace* most likely is a repetition for emphasis, much like "holy, holy, holy" (Isa. 6:3).

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The law was given through Moses (v. 17). The profoundness of God's outpouring of grace upon grace in Jesus is further emphasized by the contrast with God's law. God gave the law through Moses but the law was not embodied in Moses. The law represented God's standard of righteousness but it was incapable of saving people from sin, death, and separation from God.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (v. 17). *Grace* and *truth* are the same words used in verse 14. Jesus embodies both grace and truth in that He is the perfect revelation of God. Furthermore, God's gracious gift of salvation is conditioned on the truth that it is only available through repentance and faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This is the first time John explicitly connected the Word of God with Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God (v. 18). As emphasized in the Old Testament, no one can see God in all His glory and live. When Moses asked to see God's glory, he was only allowed to see God's back and not His face because "humans cannot see me and live no one may see me and live for there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex. 33:20-23),

Who is himself God (v. 18). This is another emphasis that Jesus is the Word who is God (1:1), the one and only Son of God (v. 14). Because He is God, the Word is the only One capable of fully knowing God in all His glory. Again, this emphasizes an essential truth of the Christian faith: Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is Himself the eternal God.

At the Father's side **Which is in the bosom of the Father** (v. 18). This anthropomorphic image emphasizes the intimate nature of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. The term for *sidebosom* (*kolpos*) literally refers to the area of the body from the breast to the leg, particularly when one is seated. Here it is a metaphor for the unique closeness of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. They are one and have been so since eternity past. While no human being has ever fully seen God, the unique relationship between God the Father and God the Son qualified the Son alone to perfectly reveal the Father to humanity. **Revealed/Declared** (*exegeomai*) means to show the way, to describe in detail, to report or expound. In Jesus Christ God has made Himself known to humanity, becoming part of humanity through the incarnation (v. 14) and providing the way (14:6) for people to be forgiven and reconciled to God the Father (1:10-13; Phil. 2:5-11). **Is in closest relationship with the Father** (v. 18). This phrase can also be translated "who is at the Father's side." The Greek term for *in closest relationship with* (*kolpos*) means bosom, breast, or chest and refers to the area of the body from the breast to the leg, particularly when one is seated. In this context, it emphasizes the unique closeness of the *relationship* between God the Father and God the Son. They are one and have been so since eternity past. While no human being has ever fully seen God, the unique relationship between God the Father and God the Son qualified the Son alone to perfectly reveal the Father to humanity. **Made him known** (*exegeomai*) means to reveal, show the way, to describe in detail, to report or expound. In Jesus Christ God has made Himself known to humanity, becoming part of humanity through the incarnation (v. 14) and providing the way (14:6) for people to be forgiven and reconciled to God the Father (1:10-13; Phil. 2:5-11).

John 3:14-18

Connection to The Point. The love of God is evident in the gift of His Son Jesus.

Setting of John 3. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious supreme court. Having heard about Jesus's teachings and miracles, Nicodemus approached Jesus one night seeking to find out more about Him. In response, Jesus explained that out of His love for humanity, God the Father had sent Jesus to make it possible for people to be forgiven of their sins and reconciled to God.

Moses lifted up the snakeserpent (v. 14). This is a reference to an event during Israel's exodus from Egypt. While in the wilderness, God had punished the Israelites for their harsh complaints against Moses and Himself. God sent poisonous snakeserpents among the people, and many Israelites were bitten by the snakes and died (Num. 21:4-6). When the Israelites repented, God told Moses to make a bronze brass image of a snakeserpent and mount it on a pole. If the Israelites who were bitten by the snakeserpents looked up at the bronze snakeserpent they would be cured (vv. 7-9).

Son of Man (v. 14). This title is found over eighty times in the Gospels. *Son of Man* was one of Jesus's favorite ways of referring to Himself, and He used the title in three ways. First, Jesus used it most often in reference to His second coming. He will come in great power and glory to judge humanity (Matt.

16:27; 25:31-46; 26:64; John 5:27-29), gather His people to Himself (Luke 21:36; Mark 13:26-27), and establish His messianic kingdom (Matt. 25:31). This aspect relates to the “son of man/Son of man” described in Daniel 7:9-14.

Jesus also used Son of Man to refer to Himself in relation to His suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). Finally, Jesus used the term in relation to His ministry and how the Son of God had humbled Himself by becoming human so He could give His life to save those who put their faith in Him (Matt. 20:28; Luke 19:10).

Must be lifted up (v. 14). Jesus compared Moses lifting up the bronze snake/brass serpent to the Son of Man being lifted up (on the cross). But the magnitude of Jesus being lifted up is infinitely greater than Moses lifting up the bronze snake/brass serpent. Whereas through the bronze snake/brass serpent God restored the Israelites to earthly life, through Jesus being lifted up He provides eternal life for those who put their faith in Him.

Everyone who believes/Whoever believeth (v. 15). Salvation (eternal life) is open to everyone who *believes/believeth (pisteuo)*. Belief in this instance is more than merely intellectual assent to a proposition. It involves complete faith and trust in the Source of eternal life, Jesus Christ. God desires that all people come to repentance and be saved (2 Pet. 3:9) and has taken the initiative in sending His Son to make salvation possible. But the individual must put his or her faith **in him** (Christ) to be redeemed. Faith in Jesus is the only way a person can be forgiven of his or her sins, reconciled to God, and receive eternal life (John 14:6).

Eternal life (v. 15). *Eternal life* has aspects of both quality and quantity. It consists of both an experiential, transformative knowledge and relationship with God in the present as well as resurrection from the dead and eternal fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the future.

For God loved/For God so loved (v. 16). *Loved (agapao)* means to have an interest in and affection for someone as well as taking practical actions to express this love. Rarely found in Greek literature outside of the New Testament, this Greek term “was used by believers to denote the special unconditional love of God and . . . to designate God the Father’s love for Jesus (John 3:35), God the Father’s love for an individual believer (John 14:21), and Christ’s love for a disciple (John 13:23).”²

First Corinthians 13 may be the best description of this love. The apostle John in his first letter declared that love is so much a part of God’s nature that “God is love.” God the Father expressed this love in sending Jesus to be the atoning sacrifice for sin, and this love should characterize believers’ relationships with one another (1 John 4:7-11).

The world (v. 16). The Greek term translated as *world (kosmos)* has a variety of meanings including orderly arrangement, the material universe, all human beings, the planet earth in the sense of the inhabitable world, and humanity in general. Here it refers to humanity in the sense of the totality of all people in bondage to sin and therefore in need of redemption.

He gave (v. 16). Because of the depth of His love for humanity, God the Father initiated the process of redemption by sending His one and only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for sin. Jesus, God the Son, accomplished salvation through His death and resurrection. Salvation is a gift of God's grace. It is neither deserved nor can it be earned.

One and only Son Only begotten Son (v. 16). This phrase emphasizes Jesus's unique relationship with God the Father as the eternal God the Son, as well as His being the representative sent by the Father to reveal God to humanity and accomplish salvation for all who will believe in Him (John 1:14,18; 3:16).

Believes Believeth (v. 16). The Greek term (*pisteuo*) is the same word used in verse 15. The only condition necessary for receiving salvation is repentance and faith in Jesus's atoning work on the individual's behalf. True belief or faith requires a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. It leads to a transformed life through the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit.

Will not perish Shall not perish Should not perish (v. 16). *Perish* (*apollumi*) means to experience ruin or destruction. It can also mean being separated from something one possesses, in this case losing one's life (see Matt. 10:39; 16:25). Those who place their faith in Jesus will not experience the second death of eternal separation from God like those who refuse God's offer of salvation (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:11-15).

To condemn the world (v. 17). God's purpose in sending **his Son** was not to *condemn* (*krino*) the world (humanity). *Condemn* means to reach a decision or pass judgment on, in this case judgment for sins against God, the consequence of which is eternal separation from God in hell.

But to save the world through him But that the world through him might be saved (v. 17). *Saved* (*sozo*) can mean to rescue, keep, or preserve someone from afflictions, dangers, disease, or death. It can also mean, as here, to save someone from eternal death and destruction. God's purpose in sending His Son into the world of humanity was to make the way of salvation possible. The only way that was possible was *through him*, meaning through Jesus's atoning sacrifice on the cross. *Save the world That the world . . . might be saved* does not mean that every person will be saved. Rather, it means that salvation is open to "everyone who believes in him whoever believes in him whosoever believeth in him" (v. 16), that is Jesus Christ.

Anyone who does not believe is already condemned Whoever does not believe stands condemned already He that believeth not is condemned already (v. 18). *Condemned* translates the same term used in verse 17. This is the consequence of refusing God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. In contrast to those who put their faith in Jesus and thereby have fellowship with God and eternal life, unsaved people are separated from God and spiritually dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1-10). Those who reject Jesus testify to this reality through their unbelief and at death receive the consequences for their unbelief—eternal separation from God.

In the name of (v. 18). To believe in the *name (onoma)* of **the one and only Son of God** God's one and **only Son** **the only begotten Son of God** is to declare that one belongs to and worships the Son of God. It is to identify oneself as a disciple of Jesus Christ. New believers are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as a declaration of their faith in and union with Him (Acts 10:47-48).

1. Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 102–103.
2. David Lanier, “Love,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 1031.