

Grace & Truth John 1:14-16

I. INTRODUCTION • Reading – 1:14-17

A. *Never Apologize*

1. One of the rules of public speaking is to *never apologize* as you begin.
2. So, take this not as an apology, but as an *explanation* . . .
3. Today's message is less a sermon with a main theme as it is just a basking in the glow of Jesus.
4. There's no real exhortation or call to action in what we'll look at, other than what the Spirit speaks *to you about personally* as we work our way through the text.

B. *Sitting At His Feet*

1. As I prepared this on Friday, studying & meditating on this passage, I felt very much like Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet, content to just be there in His marvelous presence.
2. If you're one who takes notes, if you use your Bible like a desktop, and have a notebook or use the bulletin insert we provide to take notes on –
3. I want to ask that today, you put the pen & paper away, sit back, & just enjoy being in Jesus' presence.

II. TEXT

A. V. 14

1. John begins his story with words reminiscent of Creation in Gen. 1.
2. Lifting a concept rich in meaning for the philosophers of that day,
 - a. He calls Jesus the "Logos/the Word" – The One who both created the universe & gives it its purpose.
 - b. But up till v. 14, the reader *could* assume John was speaking of some kind of cosmic principle
3. In v. 14 he makes it clear he's speaking of Jesus he says . . .

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

4. If you thumb through the *technical* commentaries on the Gospel of John you'll find the scholars are *baffled* by John's use of the Greek language.
 - a. Sometimes his words are among the most eloquent & moving in all ancient literature. At *other* times, his abuse of grammar is appalling.
 - b. The commentators wonder how someone who could rise to such lofty heights could then plummet to such atrocious depths.
5. John took liberties with the rules of grammar when those rules clouded the facts, when keeping them would obscure the truth about Jesus.
 - a. Human language is an *imperfect* thing.
 - b. In attempting to describe a perfect & infinite God, language must sometimes give way to what seems awkward.
 - c. And so it is with several of John's descriptions of Jesus.
6. But "awkward" is *not* how the scholars describe what we find in v. 14.
 - a. No—this is one of those passages that's nothing short of brilliant --

- b. One of the loftiest summits ever reached by a human author.
- And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us >**
7. After making it clear in the preceding vs. that the Word is the eternal God who created all things, John here says He *became human*.
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8. The first, great doctrinal challenge to threaten the Christian Faith was a heresy called *Docetism* which denied the *humanity* of Jesus.
- Most cults today deny the *deity* of Jesus. They want to make Jesus into little more than a great man.
 - It comes as a bit of a surprise that the first heresy to trouble the Church denied, not his deity, but His humanity.
 - In light of all the miracles Jesus performed, in the face of the resurrection, the people of that time found it easy to accept His deity!
 - It was His humanity they struggled with. Here's why . . .
 - The science of the day was dominated by the Greeks who said that matter was inherently evil while the spirit was good.
 - So God, being perfect the perfect Spirit, could *never* take on a body.
 - Because their *science* didn't allow for the Incarnation, they rejected it, & said that Jesus *just appeared* to have a body; it was an illusion, a phantom.
9. John wrote his gospel years *after* M, M, & L, when the error of Docetism was already growing.
10. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he used *exactly the right words* to refute the error of the Docetists.
- He couldn't have been more precise: After making it crystal clear in vs. 1-13 that Jesus is the one & only eternal, creator God,
 - He says He *became human*; but not just in a *spiritual* sense.
 - He says the Word became "**FLESH**" – He had a real, tangible body.
 - The word he uses for "flesh" borders on the crude: A good modern day idiom would be "dirt-suit."
 - He wanted to make sure his readers understood that Jesus had a real body of flesh & bones, no different from ours.
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11. The Incarnation isn't something we can fully understand!
- How does the infinite, perfect, glorious God become a First Century Jewish peasant?
 - How does the Lord of Heaven, the Object of angelic adoration, take on the form & experience of the son of a Jewish teenager?
 - How does the eternal Word shrink down to the inarticulate cries of a hungry infant?
12. The Incarnation is a mystery man will never solve.
13. But here's the thing – The Incarnation, is not *a puzzle to solve*; it's *a truth to enjoy*.
- Our failure to comprehend it, doesn't in any way alter the *reality* of it.
 - God became man. The Eternal Son of God became the human son of Mary.
14. But there's more, for John says He, "**dwelt among us.**"
- This word "dwell" is unique; it referred to *a tent*.
 - Not the kind of tent we think of, the kind you store in the garage & use once every 5 years when you go camping.

- c. This was the tent of the *ancient* world, the *home* of the Bedouin.
 - d. While *we use* tents as temporary places to spend a few nights, they lived in theirs full-time. They were their *permanent homes*.
 - 1) They would take them down & move them to new pastures from time to time,
 - 2) But it was always the *same tent*.
 - 3) A family might live in the same tent for generations being passed on from father to son.
15. This is why John uses this word – Jesus’ physical body was the *tent* His soul lived in during the Incarnation.
16. But as John used this picture of the Incarnation, speaking of Jesus setting up His tent among us, his Jewish readers would remember the camp of Israel during the Exodus.
- a. There was one *very special tent* among all the others – the tent of meeting; the tabernacle, where God & man met.
 - b. God told Moses to set the tabernacle in the heart of the camp, with the 12 tribes set around it.
 - c. Being at the center, everyone had easy access to come and fellowship with God. God *wanted* to be at the heart of their lives.
17. This is why God *became* man – Why the Word became flesh & dwelt among us –
- a. So we would realize how passionately God loves & yearns for us to know & experience Him.
 - b. He isn’t some far off disinterested deity who spun up the universe like a top then turned away to more important matters.
 - c. In Jesus, God has come near; *Close*. He’s set up His tent right next to ours & says, “Let’s live together, you & I.”
18. Some of the fondest memories many of us have as kids is when we went camping.
- a. We’d set up the tent at a campground in a National Park or at the beach.
 - b. Then for a week we’d just hang out together.
 - 1) Cookouts, s’mores, roasted marshmallows, scary stories round the campfire.
 - 2) All sleeping together in the tent at night.
 - 3) Sometimes friends would get campsites next to us & we’d make a little commune.
 - 4) It was one of the high points of our lives—camping out, diggin’ life!
19. That’s the *true flavor* of what John is saying here.
- a. There came a time in history when the eternal God entered the campground of this world & set up His tent smack dab in the middle of humanity.
 - b. And while here, those who camped out *with Him* got to really dig life because they came to find out that He made the campground & life is all about Him.
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20. Then John says –
- ... and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,**

21. When most read this, they assume John is referring to the *Transfiguration*, when for a brief moment, the glory Jesus had known *before* the Incarnation was restored to Him.
- John was one of only 3 disciples Jesus invited to witness that incredible sight.
 - But that's *not* what John is referring to here.
 - He's speaking of the glory that was revealed in the *humility* of the Incarnation.
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22. There's one kind of glory that dazzles the eye with *brilliant light*.
23. There's *another kind* that stuns the heart with its *beauty & moral excellence*. That's what John means here.
24. I say that because of what he says about Jesus' glory throughout the rest of his gospel.
- For instance, look at v. 11 of ch. 2.
 - After telling us about Jesus turning water to wine at a wedding where the wine had run out, John says:

This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

- As we saw in our study last Wednesday—this first miracle was done *in secret*.
 - The only ones who knew about it were the disciples & the servants who filled the pots with water.
 - The newlyweds & reception guests who benefited most from it never knew.
 - They couldn't; because that was the whole reason why He performed the miracle in the first place – to keep the newlyweds from the embarrassment of running out of wine at their reception.
25. John sees in this quiet work of power—meant to save a young couple from a shame-filled future, a manifestation of Jesus' glory.
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26. When Jesus comes again, the heavens will open, & as the lightening flashes in the night sky, every eye will see Him, shining with the brilliance of the noon-day sun.
- His glory will fill the heavens & earth & dazzle billions of eyes.
 - But no less real is *His* glory in the humble expression of love & compassion being shown right now, this moment, in the streets & homes of New Orleans as our relief team works in rebuilding lives.
27. John doesn't locate the glory he's referring to in the cloud of light that shone round Jesus in the Transfiguration.
28. He says it was demonstrated in the grace & truth that marked His every word & move.

. . . and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

- Can I share a little more Greek with you? Does this tech-talk bore you?
 - This word "full" – it means filled up, to cover every part, complete, lacking in nothing.
29. When John says Jesus was *full* of grace & truth, he means that Jesus is the

embodiment of these things.

30. What God wants us to know about *grace*, we find revealed in Jesus.
- What we need to know about *truth* is summed up in Him.
 - In heaven's dictionary, if you look up 'grace' or 'truth' you'll find Jesus' picture.
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31. Grace is one of the richest words in the entire Bible.
- And chances are you've already heard the *technical definition* for grace; Unmerited favor.
 - If you're a good Evangelical Christian you know that God's grace means His blessing poured on us in Christ, not because we deserve it but because He loves us.
 - That's a safe, tame definition for grace. But it *doesn't go far enough*.
 - The Greek word 'charis' was one of those words that requires a whole page in the dictionary to adequately describe.
 - At its heart it spoke of *that which delights & creates joy*.
 - When charis was added to something, it made it *attractive, & lovely*.
 - God's charis referred to the work He did for someone that resulted in a permanently delightful change in them.
 - It was His favor touching them as the hand of the potter fashions the lump of common clay into a beautiful & precious vase.
32. Grace isn't just some dry, stodgy theological construct that describes how we're saved.
- It's the heart & hope of the Gospel.
 - We don't just say a prayer of faith in Jesus, then muddle our way through life as best we can while we wait till we die & go to heaven.
 - Grace means that *our entire lives* are covered with good.
 - Ever day is another adventure of God's favor making us into something marvelous, something *eternally gorgeous*.
33. Look at v. 16 -

B. V. 16

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

- Jesus was full of grace & truth, not just for Himself, but for *us*.
- That's why He *became* flesh & dwelt among us, so that our lives could be turned from mortal to immortal.
 - So our fallenness could be reversed
 - And our brokenness healed.
- Years ago, my step mother found a set of cups at a garage sale.
 - They were old & badly tarnished with a thick crust of scum on them.
 - The owner had no idea what they were; they just looked like junk so he set it out on a table & asked a couple bucks for the set.
 - My step mother knew them for what they were, paid him the 2 bucks and brought them home.
 - She went to work on them, carefully washing them, scrapping off the scum, then applying liberal doses of metal cleaner.
 - After a couple hours of work, 8 beautiful silver goblets stood on her kitchen counter.

- e. They were old & elegant, made with a care & craftsmanship not seen today.
 - f. Though the glory of their original creation had been hidden because of carelessness & a lack of appreciation for their worth, it was restored by the caring & diligent hand of one who knew their worth.
4. You & I are the tarnished and scummy silver goblets God's grace is restoring.
 5. Jesus came with the needed tools & cleanser—grace & truth.
 6. And His fullness has poured out onto us who believe.
 7. Look at the last phrase of v. 16 – **“and grace for grace.”**
 - a. As God's grace comes to us in the person of Christ, it makes room for & leads to *more grace*.
 - b. In Romans 5:20, we read – “Where sin abounded, grace super-abounded!”
 - c. We all know that one sin leads to more. Sin paves the way for more of the same.
 - d. What we need to understand is that the same principle applies toward grace.
 - e. Grace leads to *more* grace; & that grace to *even more* grace, which grows *exponentially*.
 8. A moment ago I said that at the heart of the Greek word for grace is the idea of that which makes something attractive.
 - a. Here John says that Jesus' fullness of grace & truth has come upon us, with grace making way for more & more grace.
 - b. Think of it this way ladies – Someone gives you a gift certificate for a manicure at a ritzy & exclusive spa.
 - 1) You arrive & they place you in the chair & start to work on your nails.
 - 2) They do such a good job and it feels so good, you doze off.
 - 3) When you awake 5 hours later, you find they've gone ahead & given you a full body treatment; facial, pedicure, massage, tone & pack, cellulite removal, stretch marks erased, the works!
 - 4) When you look in the mirror, you hardly recognize the total babe staring back at you.
 - 5) A certificate for a free manicure has led to a complete make-over & you are gorgeous! Grace for grace.
 - c. Men, you take your '82 Ford Pinto with oxidized paint & ripped upholstery in for a free tune-up. You found a coupon in the paper & “free” is about all you want to spend on the hunk of junk.
 - 1) They tell you they're really busy; you can pick up your car at the end of the day. A friend gives you a ride home.
 - 2) When you return at 4:30, they hand you a brand new set of keys.
 - 3) When you protest, they say that they have a surprise for you.
 - 4) You follow the cashier's directions out to the lot & find a shiny new Hummer H2 sitting there with the manager holding the door open for you.
 - 5) A coupon for a free tune-up has turned into a mighty fine vehicle upgrade. Grace for grace.
 9. We come to Jesus for forgiveness of sins & the promise of heaven. He turns it into a whole new & better life right here, right now. Grace for grace.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Full

1. The Summer before my Senior year of high school, 6 of us buds went back-packing for a week in the Sierra; from Kearsarge to Taboose Pass.
2. Two sets of parents dropped us off & two more picked us up.
3. My parents were on the pick up end, which was a good thing, because my mother was always mindful of food.
4. She'd called the other mother & said that after a week in the mountains, us 6 guys would probably be pretty hungry.
 - a. She had no idea!
 - b. The one topic we'd all talked about for the last 2 days was what we were going to eat when we got home.
 - c. We each rehearsed our entire menu for the next several meals.
 - d. The more we talked, the hungrier we got.
5. We hiked out of the mountains in the mid-afternoon and down to the campground near Hwy 395. An hour later, our parents showed up.
6. They opened the back of both station wagons to ice chests full of sodas, which we plowed into like crazy men, the 6 of us had one in each hand.
7. Then they brought out Oreos and we tore through 3 bags while sitting in the shade on a tarp.
8. One of the guys said, "Ah – that was good! Hey guys – I just thought of something else I'm gonna' have when I get home – watermelon."
9. My mother said, "We brought watermelon." My parents went to the car and brought 2 huge watermelons to the picnic table. We ate both to the rinds.
10. One of the other guys said, "Watermelon makes me hungry for some fried chicken."
11. The other parents went to their car and returned with several Tupperware containers full of fried chicken. We ate it all.
12. Well, this went on, with each guy saying something he wanted – and sure enough, our parents had brought up everything they said!
13. That night we had burgers & hot dogs and brownies, chips, grapes, & more soda.
14. Dessert was apple & cherry pie. And when we were done, we were so full – it actually, literally HURT! No I really mean it. We weren't just uncomfortable – we were in pain.
15. We were so full, we couldn't go from standing to sitting or sitting to standing without help. We gave a new meaning to the word '*gluttony*.'

B. His Fullness

1. I tell that story because I hope it helps you understand what John is saying here.
2. Just as our parents had anticipated all our needs, and brought abundant provision for us, Our Heavenly Father knows what we need & has made abundant provision in His Son.
3. He traveled from Heaven to Earth to pick us up and take us home – but he knows our current hunger and how to satisfy it.
4. He's full of all the grace & truth we need.
5. And He's opened them wide to us to enjoy & says, "Come! Eat! Feast on Me & you will find rest for your soul."

6. In light of such a gracious offer, & in light of the abundance that awaits, we don't have to just *sample* the rich bounty of God. We can dig in with both hands.
7. Taste & See – the Lord is Good!

C. Balance

1. I realize that a message like this can sound awkward and a bit selfish in light of what Wes Shared with us last week.
2. Innocent men, women, and children are being brutalized in the most hideous manner in Uganda – and I dare to talk about the rich blessing we can enjoy in Christ.
3. But the blessing John speaks of here has little to do with material prosperity or a comfortable lifestyle.
4. The grace & truth that comes to us in Christ is for all circumstances; for all conditions.
5. It is most needed in the face of injustice & abuse.
6. The grace & truth of God turn victims in victors.
7. That's precisely what we see in Jesus Himself.
8. God is working His glory into us – the glory of the Son.