

## The Great Gift John 1:14

Well, we come to emphasize the true wonder of Christmas and the true purpose of Christmas tonight. Individuals are often asked, what does Christmas mean to you? And they give all sorts of answers about family or friends or football or food. Some Christian responses is that the angels announced to the shepherd that God was bring peace to our world and you can have that inner peace no matter what you are going through just by trusting in God. Others say that Christmas is all about joy. God gives us joy that transcends our trial and circumstances. God is there in the midst of all our suffer and pain. Others say it is all about love and as we think about God loving us we should love others.

And let me say that so many hear these reasons, especially the ones that are Christian responses and shake their heads in approval. But there are a couple of things that are missing in those responses. One is that none of them, no matter how lofty, never mention the coming of the child and the glory of the child. None of them mention Christ. There is no Christmas message or Christmas hope without Christ. And it is incredible to think the one central personality of Christmas is missing from Christmas. The other thing that is missing in all those responses is the purpose of why he entered our world and humanity. We do not just have the birth of Christ, but we have the life of Christ lived like none other has ever lived, and then we have the death and resurrection of Christ. Often we say correctly, he was born to die. What we don't mean is he was born and therefore the natural course of life at the end he would die, but his purpose for coming was to die — it had purpose and it had reason.

So what I want us to do is just look at this verse, see the reason why we are here. The outcome really is peace, joy and love but that peace and joy and love are based on the coming, life and death of Jesus Christ — the greatest and most necessary gift given to humanity. So let us look just briefly tonight at two points. One the coming of Christ, and then the purpose of his coming.

### 1. This Christmas we need to see the glory of the one who came. V.14a.

This verse is talking about someone who has existed before birth. It is an extraordinary verse. And it is one that we do not dwell enough on, and it is a miracle. It is something we cannot explain naturally. And it is so much more than the virgin birth. It is about the eternal and the inexhaustible one taking on temporality and limitation. We can describe the truths that we are about to look at accurately but our minds just cannot fathom the truths or comprehend them. We just do not have any categories to really understand the incarnation. And so we know that this is God's doing. The One who created everything has done something that our natural order cannot explain.

With those thoughts in mind, see if you can see something of the wonder of what is being communicated here in verse 14, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**” Now think about what is being communicated here. When John talks about the “Word,” who is he talking about? And most people if they do not know could probably guess that he is talking about the One we call Jesus Christ. But here is another question — why does he use the word — Word? Why not say Jesus? And that is a great question, and the reason is because he is trying to communicate something

so extraordinary about the One who came. Notice there are two parts in this clause. It talks about the Word, and it also talks about what he became or took on. It is indicating who he is and was before he came. And who is he? He is the Word. At the start of the gospel of John, in verse 1 we read, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** Notice the Word was with God and was God. It is the truth of the Trinity — three persons in one being of God. That is another mystery for another day. The truth I want us to see is the Word is God — eternal God and forever God. The Greek term here is “logos.” And John is communicating that this One who has come is none other than the great Creator God. The term was used often in the Old Testament, a Hebrew word — the Word of God created the heavens and the earth. God spoke words and everything came into being, and it is a term that speaks of the Grandeur of the One who came. So think of it, the One who came is none other than the eternal and uncontainable God who created and sustains everything.

And so our verse says — **“And the Word became flesh.”** Now think of it because these two terms — Word and flesh are an infinite distant apart. The word is eternal and glorious, flesh is not so. Think of what he means by flesh because he could have easily said that the Word became man and that would be accurate. The word “flesh” here speaks of blood, bones, skin, material and also a soul. It speaks of the totality of who we are as far as our makeup and also that this humanity can be broken. And it is limited.

And when he says the “Word became flesh” he is not saying that the Word stopped being God. The Greek here is very specific and the meaning is that he took on something. It might be a man might become a dad. He doesn’t cease being a man but he takes on something. Here it is even more glorious — the Word becomes the Word-man or the God-man. No metaphysical explanation can indicate the wonder of how this took place. This is a work and grace of Creator God and not of man. The wonders of this verse and the contrast between Word and flesh are so immense. The one who space and time could not contain enters into confinement, into that little body, and enters the passing of minutes and years. The one who has all power and authority is now in a feeble and breakable flesh — none other than a little baby. The one who all of heaven praised and glorified is now among the livestock in that stable, and would later be scorned and ridiculed and beaten and tortured. The One who knows all things, now will learn the basics of life as he becomes one of us. The One who never sleeps or grow weary will need sleep and will know the fatigue of our existence. The One who is independent of all is now dependant on a young mother named Mary. He takes on our humanity with all the limitations that we have in the here and now.

And at the same time he is God. He is none other than the great authority. All things still function according to his will. He still is all powerful and all glorious. Colossians 1:17, **“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”** He never ceases to be what and who he is — the Word, the Eternal One, very God. Now here is the question — how can the one we call Jesus be completely and exhaustively God and at the same time be completely and exhaustively man? Because you would think that his humanity would some how make him less God, or that his deity would just overwhelm his humanity so much so that his humanity would be lost. But the truth of this verse is a mystery and such a glory to consider — Jesus is the

God-man. Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:16, **“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”**

You see this is what we are celebrating this Christmas. Listen to the words right at the end of this clause, **“and dwelt among us.”** That is the astonishment of Christmas, and something worth celebrating and certainly remembering. It was the coming of the One who entered our humanity and limitation. He was like us but so unlike us. He was fully human but at the same time completely God. He entered this world of sin and shame and evil and wickedness. He entered not only your world but he entered into your humanity. And we could dwell on the glory and mystery all night long. You cannot celebrate or understand Christmas without this truth of what we call the incarnation. I cannot understand how so many want to take Christ or at least take him more and more out of Christmas. There is so much to really be in awe of and be amazed and astonished, but I want us to continue. Because God is a God of purpose. He does everything for reason and purpose. Jesus doesn't just come to somehow experience humanity or to give us an example of how to live. But he comes to give peace, joy, and to love us as no one has ever loved us. And you cannot understand the enormity of peace, love and joy unless you understand the purpose of his coming, because these are all by-products of his coming.

2. So to celebrate Christmas we need to understand why the Word came. V. 14.

We talk so much about beauty. We can see beauty. It might be in a person, or in a landscape or mountain range. It might be in the perfectness of a new born baby, or in a sunset or sunrise. God has given us the ability to enjoy and notice beauty. And if we say that Jesus is altogether beautiful, and that his beauty draws us to him what do we mean? Here is the thing, there was nothing in the physical makeup of Jesus according to Scripture that would draw us to him. He was very normal looking, and if we lived that in that day and age could walk past him and not notice him. There was nothing in his physicality that would have drawn us to him. No, the beauty of Jesus is in who he is and what he does. It is in the very nature of the God-man, which leads to what he accomplishes for sinners like us. There really is a beauty in his holiness and in his care and concern for sinners who did not deserve his care and concern. Often we do not see the beauty of Christ because we do not see how ugly we are in our sin.

But think about what John is saying here. Every single word is so ripe with meaning, **“and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** Notice the word “seen.” It is not talking about something mystical or seeing something that was not there. But we have observed with our own eyes. We are witnesses of something, and it is talking about the historical life of Jesus. Now what did they see that John and others want us to know? And the answer is we have seen his glory. Now think about it, because what is glory in this context? And it is the total life of Jesus. It is seeing the Word was actually made flesh and dwelt among us. It is seeing his worth and preeminence. Glory is one of those words that is hard to really grasp or define. Glory is to see something of such high renown or something of so much worth that it takes our breath away. There is a beauty in glory. You cannot look

away. And when we speak of Jesus, it is not talking about a material beauty but the beauty of his being or character or who he is.

Moses asked God to show him his glory, and remember he hid him in the cleft of the rock and passed by him. Moses didn't look at God or on God. He couldn't, but the glory of God that Moses saw was revelation, was the announcement of Who God is. Listen to Exodus 34:6-7, "**The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'**" This is who God is. This is what Moses was allowed to see, and he could see the very character of God in how he treated and interacted with himself and the people of Israel.

So John says, "**and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**" So what was the glory that John and others saw? The glory of the God-ness in Jesus. Notice the glory of the only Son from the Father. The meaning here is the absolute uniqueness of the relationship here. From the Father means there is a Oneness. God is One in being but three in persons. It was evident in all that Jesus did that he was one with the Father, the exact imprint of the Father, and the representative of the Father. And how did they see His God-ness? And here it is — in his humanity. The living and invisible God becomes observable. They beheld and could see his life. And he is full of both grace and truth. Full has the meaning of not half or three quarters but to the full measure, not mixed by anything. We are a mixture of God and evil. God is not. Often theologians talk about the simplicity of God. God is one in nature. He is all love. All his attributes are loving. He is all truth, all his attributes are exercised in truth. He is all holy, all his attributes are holy. We are complex, because we are mixture of everything, love, goodness, evil and wickedness.

So this is what they see in Jesus. He is all grace and all truth. And so think about how different Jesus is than us. Jesus is gracious. Grace means that he gives individuals not only what they don't deserve but they actually deserve the opposite. Jesus came to fellowship and be with sinners. He is compassionate and caring and loving. He related and fellowshiped with the type of people no one else wanted anything to do with. Think of all the grudges and all the broken family relationships that happen to be in our lives. Think of the people that we want nothing to do with. Think of how ungracious we are because we couldn't be bothered. Jesus is full of grace, not partial grace. He cannot be anything but gracious. Without it we have no hope.

And Jesus is full of truth. Again, we truly cannot perceive how different Jesus is than us here. He is full of truth, and it is more than no error or no wrong conclusions came into the mind of Jesus, but there was never any sin. Sin is so much part of our existence we do not stop to see the beauty of the one who was truly holy. He honoured God in every moment. Always did the highest good. Never had a sinful thought or even entertained sin in his life. Never lied or lusted, but perfectly delighted in his Father above. How these first century observers and those who came close to Jesus must have marveled and just been in awe of his life. He truly was and is full of grace and truth. Think how we in our ugliness lack grace and truth. Do you see anything of the

beauty of Christ this Christmas? Do you ever marvel in the one who came and lived that human life just like you are living a human life, but so different? None of us could even remotely say that we are full of grace and truth.

The rest of the gospel of Jesus is an explanation of what John in particular saw in Jesus as far as this grace and truth, because this grace and truth culminates in something we started with, and that is he lived a life of grace and truth for a reason. The reason was he came to die. We know all about that death because Christians mark his death every Easter. He was taken and put on a cruel Roman cross. But here is the astonishing thing — he did it because he was full of grace and truth. Our sin before a holy God deserves to be punished. God indicates that the wages of sin is death. And you and I are in deep and eternal trouble because none of us are full of grace and truth. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is judgment that awaits each of us on the other side of this life, and that judgment is from an all just God.

But what if the God of all eternity, the Word entered our humanity, and he lived a perfectly sinless life, one that could be characterized as glorious — as full of grace and truth. What if this One was never under the penalty of death and judgment because he never sinned? What if this one voluntarily took the place of one who is guilty before God? Listen to what Peter writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter 3:18, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”** He suffered once, and notice he is called “righteous” and notice who he dies for the “unrighteous.”

This is the greatest gift, and this purpose for the coming of Christ is the meaning of Christmas. One came to die for people like you and me. And think of it, now we have categories to understand peace, love and joy. They all have meaning and depth because they are all defined by the beauty of Christ and his work. We have not judgment and wrath from God but now through Jesus’ life and sacrifice we have eternal peace with God. For those who trust him no one has ever loved us like our God. To enter our humanity to die in such a way would be something if Jesus died for his friends but in he dies in love for his enemies — people like you and me. The love of God oh how rich and pure! And then joy. There is a joy in Christmas that is not based on temporary presents or a well cooked meal but on the eternal gift of God. Eternal life is given to any and all who trust in him, and nothing can take it away.

Many people define Christmas in so many ways. We often ask, what does Christmas mean to you? But here is the thing — we don’t get to define Christmas. The author of Christmas, one who came in human flesh, he gets to define the glory of this season. And the definition he gives truly gives life, hope, peace, love, and joy. If you have never put your faith in him, receive that gift of eternal life tonight. If you are a believer marvel at the beauty and the glory and the grace and truth of Christ. He truly is altogether beautiful!