**Meet Jesus**

John 1:1-18

***This prologue to the gospel of John*** is arguably the most beautiful introduction to any piece of literature ever. It is certainly the most SIGNIFICANT prologue. Think of other famous opening lines. See if you can name the work:

* It was the best of times, it was the worst of times… (Yep, Tale of 2 Cities)
* Fair is foul and foul is fair… (that’s Macbeth, I had to look it up)
* Look down, look down, don’t look ‘em in the eye… (Les Mis, nice!)
* This is my favorite book in all the world, though I have never read it. (Ok, that was a hard one, for advanced scholars only, try this one from the same book)
* The year that Buttercup was born, the most beautiful woman in the world was a French scullery maid named Annette (Right! The Princess Bride)
* A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away… (Obviously, Star Wars) or my personal favorite:
* In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.

***What does an opening sentence do?*** It sets the tone for the whole work. It engages your mind; it catches your attention. Look at what John the apostle is doing for us as he opens his gospel account.

“In the beginning was the Word.” John 1:1

In the beginning. Anyone familiar with the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament, would immediately hear ***Genesis 1:1***, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” So, it’s a familiar opening line; really THE familiar opening line. But with a twist!

“In the beginning was the Word.” ***Who is this Word?*** What is this Word? We know from Genesis one that God created the whole universe through HIS WORD. **He spoke**. “And God said, ‘Let there be light. And there was light.’” That’s the familiar creation account in Genesis.

And ***the “Word of the Lord” came to prophets*** throughout the Old Testament, enabling them to speak on God’s behalf with God’s authority. So there was a close association between God and His Word. But even with this background the Jewish people could not have been prepared for the next phrase.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1

Wait what? ***Now this “word” is sounding like a person***, which is why it’s capitalized in our modern translations. And John is overtly telling us this person, who is God’s own Word, was not only WITH GOD, but actually WAS GOD.

“He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:2-3

Ok, so this person who IS GOD was in the beginning with God, before creation. And actually this **Word of God was the AGENT of creation**. All things were made THROUGH HIM. In other words, when God said, “Let there be light,” the voice speaking those words belonged to this WORD of God.

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4-5

Obviously if this Word of God was able to create everything then ***He was the author of life*** and therefore the source of all life. And it’s not surprising to link that life to LIGHT since that was the first step in creation, to separate light from darkness.

This light, from the Word of God, who is the Creator of the World and one with God, continues to shine in the darkness of this world, and just as darkness always gives way before light, so ***the light of God’s Word continues to shine today***.

So much more could be said from this opening to John’s gospel. But I want to get us to the END of John’s gospel, so for now just look at **this summary** from the first 18 verses.

**John 1:1-18, Jesus is:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The Word of God  One with God (v. 1) | The Creator of all (v. 2) | The source of life (v. 4) |
| The light of the world (v. 9) | Rejected by Israel (v. 11) | The changer of hearts (v. 13) |
| The Word become flesh  The Son of God (v. 14) | The Giver of Grace (v. 16) | The Teacher of Truth (v. 17) |
| The Revealer of God (v. 18) | | |

***Jesus is the Word of God who is one with God***; the Creator of all things; the source of life and the light of the world. Though rejected by his own people, Israel, He is the One who can reconcile people with God to be adopted as His children and born again spiritually. So Jesus is the changer of hearts. He is the Word become flesh, ***the eternal Son of God, full of grace and truth*** who came to share that grace with all who would come to him. He did not come to abolish the Law of Moses but to fulfill it. And so Jesus is not just the teacher of truth, He is the revealer of truth and ultimately the revealer of God in all of His fullness.

If we fast forward to the end of John’s gospel, he tells us **his purpose** for writing this whole book.

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so 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 20:30-31

***John only records seven miracles in his gospel***, which we know is a low number since Matthew, Mark and Luke record at least 37 distinct miracles between them. So John’s selection of seven miracles is obviously a purposeful group to go alongside his presentation of the truth about Jesus, which also includes **seven “I am” statements of Jesus**. Today we will look at ***three of these signs and statements***. We have a little gospel book we just published that explains five of the signs and statements. Our main encouragement is to read the whole gospel of John and experience all seven signs and all seven “I am” claims of Jesus to feel the flow of the narrative and experience the drama of Jesus’ life and ministry.

Here is how John concludes his gospel account:

“Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” John 21:25

We saw his inspiring prologue. We can appreciate his structure around 7 miraculous signs and 7 “I am” statements. ***We understand his purpose***, to bring people to a place of believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God so that by believing you may have LIFE in His name. And we smile at his conclusion: much more could be said, but the world doesn’t have enough libraries for the books that would be written.

So let’s walk through just **three of the signs and statements** of Jesus in the gospel of John to strengthen our faith this Resurrection Sunday morning. We will see that Jesus is light, love and life. First:

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Light: “I am the light of the world”

“As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’” John 9:1-2

This was a **common assumption** in ancient times: that someone with a disability like blindness had brought it on himself or maybe his parents had.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Light: “I am the light of the world”

“Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.’” John 9:3

Jesus corrected the idea of karma and taught that ***God has greater purposes,*** even for suffering and sickness: to display His glory, His power and goodness.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Light: “I am the light of the world”

“Night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” John 9:4-5

Then Jesus mixed some dirt with his saliva and placed it on the man’s eyes. He told the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam and when the man did so, he was able to see. So, did Jesus create magical mud? Should we use mud to treat eye diseases?

No, the point is about JESUS. ***He is the one who can open blind eyes.*** He is the one who can reveal the truth.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Light: “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5)
   * As he opened the eyes of a blind man, so Jesus can show us the **Truth** about God

“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.” John 1:18

This brings us back to chapter one (v. 18). If you want to understand the truth about God, ***you need a miracle from Jesus to open your eyes***. If you want to come into a healed and reconciled relationship with God, you need the light of Jesus to illumine the darkness of your heart and mind.

Because **JESUS is the light of the world**. He shines into the darkest of hearts in the saddest and darkest of times and brings the light of hope. He reveals the truth about God and about us. By healing a blind man Jesus performed a miraculous sign to illustrate the claim of being the light of the world.

Our second statement from Jesus shows that not only is He light, He is also LOVE.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Love: “I am the good shepherd”

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

Jesus was very realistic. He recognized the darkness and pain in the world. And he knew that it traced back to the villain of the story, the serpent in the garden, the THIEF of joy and life. ***The devil can appear like an angel of light.*** His primary method is deception. He loves to twist the truth and lead people astray. He doesn’t advertise: “Follow me to death and destruction.” His approach is **like Wile E. Coyote** showing the Road Runner a better path. Come right over here to this nice untouched cake in the middle of the road. Don’t look up or worry about the crane holding the piano up over the cake. Just look at the cake. Mmmmmm.

***The deceiver doesn’t tell the young alcoholic***, “Now this sip is going to ruin you.” He doesn’t share with the gambler, “This is going to cost you your house.” He doesn’t tell the one clicking on pornography, “This will destroy your marriage and reputation.” He just offers the cake, not letting us see the poison baked into that cake, and the piano teetering ominously above it.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” That is the devil’s agenda. **You have an enemy**, but he is a sneaky one. He is crafty and deceptive. What he advertises looks like life and happiness. But it’s actually the road to death and destruction.

Jesus is the one who offers true life and love.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Love: “I am the good shepherd”

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11

The devil is a wolf, out to destroy people. Jesus is the good shepherd who intercepted that wolf and came to protect all of us wayward and vulnerable sheep. John gives us an example of Jesus’ loving ministry back in chapter five.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Love: “I am the good shepherd”

“When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be healed?’” John 5:6

There was a crippled man in Jerusalem who had been afflicted with his disability for 38 years. He had come to this pool in Bethesda, a part of Jerusalem where many with disabilities came in the hopes of being healed. Every so often ***something stirred up the waters*** and people believed, if you got into the pool first, you would be healed.

Unfortunately for this man, **no one was there to help him get in**. So, whenever the bubbles started up someone else got in first and he was not able to get help.

Jesus saw this man and asked him a kind of obvious question: ***“Do you WANT to be healed?”*** The crippled man explained that no one was there to get him into the water. And Jesus didn’t miss a beat. He didn’t rebuke the man for trying to get in the bubble water. He simply said:

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Love: “I am the good shepherd”

“Jesus said to him, ‘Get up, take up your bed, and walk.’ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.” John 5:8-9

What an amazing miracle! Jesus didn’t offer to sit with the man and wait for the waters to be stirred up. He didn’t talk about taking him to a doctor. **He simply told him to get up** and walk. And amazingly, the man was instantly healed!

Now, the religious leaders of the Jews got upset about this miracle, as they had with the healing of the blind man, because both were ***done on the sabbath***, when you weren’t allowed to “work.” So for this cripple to carry his bed was a violation in their rule book.

These two healing miracles provide **a contrast between Jesus and the Jewish officials**. Whereas Jesus was concerned with people in pain, the Jews were mainly concerned with the rules. Their religious traditions, instead of helping them to see the needs of people were actually preventing them from helping people.

But Jesus, as the good shepherd, ***was concerned about the WHOLE PERSON***. Not just their physical well-being, but above all their spiritual well-being.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Love: “I am the good shepherd”

“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.’” John 5:14

As the light of truth, Jesus helps us see the holiness and glory of God. And in the light of that truth, ***we see the reality of our own sinful hearts***. So, while all of us need physical help and healing from God, the more important transformation we need is of our hearts. Jesus made this clear to the man who had just recently been crippled. Yes, your physical body is better now. But you still need a spiritual transformation of your heart – and only I can give it to you, said Jesus.

And that’s **the main thing our Good Shepherd came to save us from**: the sin in our hearts.

A bad shepherd would see the wolves coming and run away to save his own skin. But our Good Shepherd saw the greatest danger to you and me was our own sin and he did not run away from that problem. He went straight to the cross to give his life in payment for your sin and mine.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Love: “I am the good shepherd”
   * As he healed a crippled man, so Jesus can change our **Hearts** and lives with His grace

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11

This is the greatest act of love: to lay down your life for another. Jesus willingly sacrificed his life to pay for your sin and mine. ***Will you let His love change your life?***

**Jesus sees every part of your life** and He is concerned about all of it.

* He saw the blind man.
* He saw the crippled man.
* He saw the Samaritan woman at the well who had been married five times and was right then living with a man who was not her husband.
* He saw a woman caught in an adulterous affair and about to be stoned.

Jesus sees. He knows. ***You can bring EVERY need***, every worry, every fear, every concern to Him. And your Good Shepherd will make you lie down in green pastures and lead you beside quiet waters. ***He will refresh and restore your inner soul***. He is with you through even the darkest valleys to comfort and support you.

But to really experience His love, you have to **come to Him with your sin**. You have to bring your whole heart, holding nothing back, and ***share EVERYTHING with him***.

It’s like **if you went to a therapist** to process some childhood pain. That counselor would encourage you to hold nothing back. The whole point is to be completely honest. It’s a safe place to open up and by speaking freely and openly you are likely to perceive things as you say them that you hadn’t fully seen before.

But the process of counseling ***requires genuine openness***.

And so does salvation. **You have to come to Jesus as you really are**. He sees it all anyway. As your good shepherd he loves you just as you are. But He wants to lead you to new places and better places. He wants to be with you all the time and begin to shape every part of your life.

That’s **what the light and love of Jesus do**: they reach into and fill every part of you. Does this feel like wonderfully Good News? That means you’re getting it! Jesus is opening your eyes to see the truth. One more claim of Jesus in this amazing gospel account.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Life: “I am the resurrection and the life”

“Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

John 11:21

Jesus was good friends with two sisters named Mary and Martha, as well as their brother Lazarus. While Jesus was out preaching and healing in other places, Lazarus got sick. The sisters sent word to Jesus that he was sick. But Jesus didn’t come, and **Lazarus died**.

Here is Martha trying not to blame Jesus, but ***pretty much blaming Jesus***. As he had a larger purpose for the blind man and the crippled man, so Jesus had a larger purpose for Lazarus and his sisters. He had shown his ability to open blind eyes and restore crippled legs. Now he was facing off with death itself. So he challenged Martha’s faith.

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Life: “I am the resurrection and the life”

“I am the resurrection and the life… Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:25-26

Martha believed in the resurrection of the dead on the last day, but she struggled to believe that Jesus could raise the dead NOW.

***What about you?***

Jesus poses this question to every one of us here today. “I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?”

* Some of you have ***lost a loved one*** to death recently. Do you believe that, because of Jesus, you will see them again?
* Some of you are facing ***serious health challenges*** right now. Do you believe in Jesus’ power to heal and His good plans for you?
* Some of you have major ***financial struggles*** and are worried about every dollar you spend. Do you believe Jesus can take care of all of your needs?
* Some of you are trapped in a ***pattern of sin*** in your life or of conflict in a relationship. Do you believe that Jesus can help you change?

***Whatever your problem***, whatever your fear, Jesus looks on you with love and says, “I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?”

Then he told Martha to have the stone removed from Lazarus’ tomb. **This was the real test**. Now it was real. She warned Jesus, “it’s been four days. There will be a bad odor.” But Jesus called her to trust in Him.

They rolled the stone away. Jesus prayed. Then he called out in a loud voice: ***“Lazarus come out!”***

And the dead man came out of that tomb.

As easily as you wake up your husband from an afternoon nap… Well, even easier than that. We sleep hard sometimes. Jesus simply called his name and Lazarus came back from death.

***Do you believe that Jesus can do the same thing for you?***

All of us will face death some day. Sooner or later. There is no escaping this reality.

Except with Jesus.

***He is the only one who defeated the grave.*** He showed his power over death here at the tomb with Lazarus. And later, Jesus showed his power over death when he walked out of the grave. Listen to how he said it back in chapter ten.

* + As he raised Lazarus from the dead, so Jesus can save us from **Sin** and death forever

“I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”

This is what our good shepherd did for us. ***He willingly laid down his life in exchange for yours.*** He knew you and I could not face death on our own.

* Only one who had lived a life of perfect righteousness could do that.
* Only someone who had been tempted in every way yet was without sin.
* Only the unblemished lamb of God could lay down his life and take it back up again.

***Only the Creator of all things*** in whom was life itself could come back from death.

Only this Jesus can save you from death.

***Do you believe this?***

**Three Claims of Christ:**

1. Light: “I am the light of the world”
   * Jesus can show us the **Truth** about God
2. Love: “I am the good shepherd”
   * Jesus can change our **Hearts** and lives with His grace
3. Life: “I am the resurrection and the life”
   * Jesus can save us from **Sin** and death forever

***Jesus is the light of the world***, the one who fully revealed the nature and goodness and glory of God. He healed a blind man to prove he can open eyes to let us see the truth.

***Jesus is love embodied***. He is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. He healed a crippled man to prove he is concerned about every part of our lives. Inside and out.

***And Jesus is life.*** He raised Lazarus from the dead, then raised himself from the dead to prove he truly is the Son of God and Lord of all things, having conquered sin and death.

That is the message of the whole book of John, and really of the whole Bible.

“But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Jesus is the Christ, the one true King. ***He is the Son of God***, eternally one with God the Father. He is the source of all life and therefore the giver of life to all who come to Him in faith.

***Do you believe this?***

**Thomas wasn’t there** when Jesus first rose from the dead and appeared to the other ten apostles. He refused to believe Jesus was alive unless he saw for himself .

Eight days later, though the doors were locked, Jesus suddenly appeared in the room with them and said, “Peace be with you.” He invited Thomas to touch the scars in his hands and side. ***He called Thomas to stop doubting and to believe.*** In response, Thomas fell down before him and said:

**The Claims of Christ:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Light: “I am the light of the world” 2. Love: “I am the good shepherd” 3. Life: “I am the resurrection and the life” | * Jesus is LORD!   “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” |

This is our profession of faith in Jesus: that He is Lord and God. We believe what John wrote and what the Bible repeatedly teaches: that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the light of revelation by which we know who God is. He is the love of God embodied, our Good Shepherd who laid down his life for us. He is the resurrection and the life who conquered sin and death for us.

***Have you professed Jesus as YOUR Lord and your God?***

**I was young when I received the light of Jesus**. I was raised going to church every Sunday and my parents taught me about Jesus.

I was around 12 or 13 ***when I experienced the love of Jesus***. I was struggling with the sins of many young teenage boys and felt terribly guilty about the difference between the good church boy people saw on the outside and the other me only God saw when I was alone.

I finally worked up the courage to share with my youth leader what I was dealing with. And to my great amazement he didn’t yell at me or rat me out to my parents. He sat me down and explained the love of God to me.

***God is the best Father of all.*** When we sin he is disappointed, But he is still our Father. Nothing can change that relationship once it is established by faith in Jesus.

Later I heard a preacher say ***“nothing you do can make God love you more; nothing you do can make God love you less.”***

God has loved us perfectly in Christ. You can’t add to it or take away from it. You can only accept it as a gift of grace or refuse this life changing offer. That’s why my youth leader helped me understand and appreciate. I had UNDERSTOOD that Jesus died for our sin. ***But I had to ESTABLISH my faith for myself.*** I had to take ownership of the truth I had been raised with and apply it to myself.

When the gospel truth of Jesus’ total forgiveness and infinite grace washed over me, I was a different person. Jesus changed me.

So as a child I knew the light of Jesus. As a teen I experienced the love of Jesus. ***And ever since I have been growing in my appreciation of the LIFE of Jesus*** He longs to share with us: His Power, freedom, goodness, holiness, compassion. Everything Jesus is He wants to share with you so others can experience it from you.

Light. Love. Life. Joy. Peace. Patience. Holiness. Goodness. Justice. Glory.

**All that Jesus is He offers to you.**

Have you received Him? Have you said yes to Jesus?

That’s how the relationship begins. He reaches out His hand to you and ***you just have to say yes.***

* Yes, Lord, please forgive all my sins.
* Yes, Lord, please change my sinful heart.
* Yes, Lord, please give me your Holy Spirit.
* Yes, Lord, I believe you died for me and rose again.
* I believe you are the light of truth, the love of God, the resurrection and the life.
* I believe you are the Lord of all things.
* And I want to follow you from now on.

Let’s pray.