

**Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live**  
*(The Gospel of John: Signs of the Messiah - 1:1-12:50)*

**John 1:14-18**

**Who is Jesus? (Part 4: Jesus: The One and Only)**

What makes someone unique? What causes them to stand apart from others? For 10 percent of the population it is that they are left-handed. Interestingly, scientists have discovered that left-handers make better artists. Lefties tend to find advantages and be drawn to careers in the arts, music, sports, and information technology fields. We vote for left-handers. A surprisingly high percentage of presidents were left-handed (Pres. Obama, Clinton, George Walker Bush, Gerald Ford, James Garfield, and Harry Truman). In sports that involved two players facing each other (such as boxing, golf, tennis and baseball) left-handers most often have the advantage (Golf legend Phil Mickelson; tennis ace Rafael Nadal; boxing champ Oscar de la Hoya). But on the downside, left-handers have a higher percentage of people who struggle with fear, are dyslexic, or struggle with psychosis. All in all, left-handers are truly unique. But the most unique person in all of history is none other than Jesus Christ. His unique qualities are endless... He was uniquely foretold, unique in his conception, unique in the place of his birth, unique in the miracles he performed, unique in his death, resurrection, and ascension, unique in his teaching through parables, unique in his perfection of character (his love, his willingness to endure excruciating suffering, his patience, his kindness, his holiness). He is superior to Moses, David, to Mohammed, to Mahatma Gandhi... He is unique in that he is the only way to heaven. He is truly one-of-a-kind, the "One and Only." Listen then as John gives his perspective on Christ's uniqueness:

**I. Jesus Is Uniquely the God-Man (John 1:14a)**

<sup>14</sup> *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father...*

**1. God came down and pitched his tent among you!**

1) We have no idea how astonishing, how riveting, how amazing, how unthinkable this message was to the first readers of this gospel. **One early church theologian wrote that as he read this verse, "My body shuddered. My mind was in amazement, and I was so agitated the whole day that I scarcely knew who I was. Nor did the agitation cease, but continued till it was at least soothed by a humble faith in him who was made flesh and dwelt among us."** 2) How could it be that the infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere present, holy sovereign Son of God would come down and pitch his tent, would make his home, would move into our neighborhood. Deity has taken on human nature. And walking among us is one who is fully God and fully man. One who shares our joys, our

sorrows, our struggles, our strengths, our weaknesses, and our testings. What is so amazing is how intimate this relationship is. God had pitched his tent among Israel in the wilderness, but now he would live, breathe, and walk and work among us. 3) But not only would he take up his residence; he would stay. (We think the idea of pitching a tent as being something that is transitory, but John's use of the same Greek term everywhere else refers not to a limited time, but forever! (See Revelation 12:12; 13:6; 7:15 and 21:3.) He forever lives, makes his home, in the hearts of his people.

## **2. God displayed his glory to you.**

Christ's entire time on earth was in a sense a display of his glory - of his divine perfections. They saw his glory, his explosive power, in the miracles that he worked. They saw the radiant dazzling brightness of his glory in the Transfiguration. But the greatest display of his glory was the cross and the resurrection! Satan's power would be broken; death would be conquered and life will spring forth from death. But perhaps in our lives one grand illustration of Christ's glory is the sights and sounds of the world that he has created.

**\*\* Hummingbirds** are the lightest birds in the sky. Of their roughly 240 species, the largest, an Andean "giant," is only eight inches long; the smallest, the bee hummingbird of Cuba, is just over two inches long and weighs a single gram. Alone among birds, they can hover, fly backward, even fly upside down. For such small birds, their speed is astonishing: in his courtship display to impress a female, a male Allen's hummingbird can dive out of the sky at sixty-one miles per hour. (Diving at 385 body-lengths per second, this hummer beats the peregrine falcon's dives and even bests the space shuttle as it screams down through the atmosphere at 207 body lengths per second.) Hummingbirds' wings beat at a rate of more than sixty times per second. Their heart constitutes up to 2.5 percent of its body weight—the largest per body weight of all vertebrates. A person as active as a hummingbird would need 155,000 calories a day. Each [hummingbird] is just a speck, yet each is an infinite mystery. You know that kind of awestruck feeling you get when you look at a great work of art? That sense of wonder, that sense of connection to something great and mysterious? It's the same feeling looking at a hummingbird."

**\*\***After a decade of research involving nearly 3,000 researchers, scientists have presented the first **Census of Marine Life**. The researchers discovered 6,000 new species, bringing the total number of known marine species to 250,000. The highlights ranged from the bizarre to the beautiful—600-year-old tube worms, herring that swim in formations as large as Manhattan, the "yeti crab" which features long downy claws like fur mittens, a jellyfish with a Darth Vader like helmet, and another jellyfish that uses "lights" to "scream" for help.

The scientists who worked closely with the project were constantly surprised—and even stunned—by the diversity, abundance and beauty of what Christians would call God's creation. One of the vice-chairs for the project said, "Life astonished us everywhere we looked. Despite their deep awe and wonder, the researchers cautioned that at least 20 percent of the ocean's volume has yet to be explored. One researcher confessed that even after ten years of hard work, they still only have "snapshots" of the diversity and beauty of creation under the sea.

## **II. Jesus Is Uniquely the Embodiment of Grace and Truth (John 1:14b)**

*...full of grace and truth.*

### **1. Jesus is full of grace toward you.**

The incarnation was the greatest possible expression of God's compassionate grace for his people. For Christ to live the perfect life and die an excruciating death for us is extravagant grace. As Harry Ironside wrote, "Grace is not only undeserved favor, but is favor shown to the one who deserves the very opposite." But John differs from Paul in his understanding of grace. The Hebrew, behind the Greek term for "grace," most likely points to God's steadfast love or loving kindness (*hesed*). \*\*\*As a 17-year-old Anne Graham Lotz, the daughter of Billy and Ruth Graham, was involved in a car accident. Speeding carelessly down a windy mountain road, Anne smashed into her neighbor, Mrs. Pickering. Anne was too afraid to tell her father about the accident, so for the rest of the day she kept avoiding him. When she finally came home, she tried to tiptoe around her dad, but there he was, standing in the kitchen. Anne tells what happened next: I paused for what seemed a very long moment frozen in time. Then I ran to him and threw my arms around his neck .... I told him about my wreck—how I'd driven too fast and smashed into the neighbor's car. I told him it wasn't her fault; it was all mine. As I wept on his shoulder, he said four things to me: "Anne, I knew all along about your wreck. Mrs. Pickering came straight up the mountain and told me—and I was just waiting for you to come and tell me yourself." "I love you." "We can fix the car." "You are going to be a better driver because of this." Anne says, "Sooner or later, all of us are involved in some kind of wreck—it may be your own fault or someone else's. When the damage is your fault, there's a good chance you'll be confronted by the flashing blue lights of the morality police. But my father gave me a deeper understanding of what it means to experience the loving, forgiving embrace of my heavenly Father."

### **2. Jesus is full of truth for you.**

The Hebrew, behind the Greek term for "truth," most likely points to God's covenantal faithfulness. The idea is that God demonstrates truthfulness or integrity in its fullest expression by his faithfulness to his promise in the sending of Jesus

the Messiah.\*\*\* When John thinks of grace and truth, he is thinking of unbridled love and faithfulness. Jesus's life, his incarnation, was a powerful demonstration of God's favor and a wonderful communication of God's truth.

**\*\*\* We live in a day when truth is relative and no system of ideas is recognized to be binding. We do not think in terms of what is true as opposed to what is false, but rather by what is true now (as opposed to the past or future) and what is true only for the individual. But when you come face-to-face with Christ, you come face-to-face with a life of truthfulness, of authenticity, integrity and a life proclaiming real absolute truth. When Jesus claims to be the resurrection and the life, the bread of life, the way, truth and life, you cannot simply react by saying "fine; that's good for you. I'm glad it helps you, but, after all, what you say is only relatively true. If something else helps me, then that is perfectly valid also." Jesus is truth!**

### **III. Jesus Is Uniquely the Son of God (John 1:15-18)**

Twice in the space of four verses, Jesus is declared to be the one and only, the unique without a like or equal, the single in kind Son of God. He is the only, irreplaceable, of inestimable value Son from God the Father. He is a Son not in the sense of being created but a Son who is exactly like God in all his attributes. This is the Father-Son relationship - a major focus in the book!. He who sat with or alongside of God, has now come to us as sent from God.

#### **1. Jesus is unique in his pre-existence (1:15).**

<sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

What do we make of the fact that Jesus was six months *younger* than John the Baptist and began his ministry *after* John the Baptist? In the days of John the Baptist rank and honor were tied to one's age. Thus, priority in time such as being the firstborn implied preeminence. But, Jesus far and away surpassed John. How could that be? In reality, Jesus existed long before John the Baptist for "all things were made by him." John the Baptist was saying that Jesus existed before him - indeed, before God created the heavens and the earth. (Read *The Message*)

#### **2. Jesus uniquely blesses you (1:16-17).**

<sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

"We all live off his generous bounty, gift after gift after gift." There has been a perpetual and rapid succession of blessings as though there were no interval tween the arrival of one blessing and the receiving of the next. And Jesus is the channel of all these material and spiritual blessings. Your health, your prosperity, your knowledge, your friendships, your good times, your talents are all a gift from him. Your eternal life, your Bible, your heavenly home, your forgiveness, your future

reign with Christ, your spiritual gifts... But there is more! Old grace has been replaced by new grace. The immeasurable blessings of salvation all began with the giving of the Mosaic law which graciously revealed God's holy exemplary character and his righteous requirements of his people. The law became a tutor that constantly pointed toward Christ. That Jesus would mark the final definitive revelation of God's grace and truth - the ultimate demonstration of God's covenant love and faithfulness. His ministry is far superior to that of Moses or Jacob or Abraham. Under the law, God demanded righteousness from people; under grace, he gives it to people. Under the law, righteousness is based on Moses and good works; under grace, it is based on Christ and Christ's character. Under the law, blessings accompany obedience; under grace, God bestows his blessings as a free gift. The law was powerless to secure righteousness and life for a sinful race. Grace was poured out with Christ's death and resurrection and makes the vilest of sinners righteous before God.

### **3. Jesus uniquely reveals God to you (1:18)**

<sup>18</sup> *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

Jesus, God in the flesh, was able to overcome the vast chasm that existed between God and humanity up to that point. For no one had ever seen God, not even Moses. Because God is a spirit (John 4:24), his essential being cannot be seen. Yes his glory was revealed in a partial and veiled way in times past, but it was never fully revealed until the incarnation (the burning bush, the Shekinah glory in the tabernacle, the fourth person in the fiery furnace, etc). Jesus fully reveals God to us! We could not see God because 1) he is a spirit and we could not see God because 2) we fell into sin and were expelled from God's presence. But Jesus took care of both those problems. He, being God, became a human being so that others could see God in him and being sinless, he died for people, so that their sinfulness no longer would keep them from entering into intimate fellowship with God.

All religions claim some sort of "revelation." Buddhism depends on the profound insights gained by Buddha during his moment of enlightenment while meditating under a Bodhi tree. Hinduism looks to the Vedas passed on to the first man at the dawn of time. Islam says that the angel Gabriel dictated to the Prophet Muhammad the very words of God. But Christianity claims something very different: a series of events [about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection] which are said to have taken place in public, in datable time, recorded by a variety of witnesses .... It is as if Christianity places its neck on the chopping block of public scrutiny and invites anyone who wishes to come and take a swing. For example, imagine I came to you claiming that my late great, great grandfather revealed himself ... in Times Square, New York, last Monday during the morning rush hour. His appearance stopped the traffic and left witnesses dumbfounded as he explained to them the truth about the

spiritual realm. The claim itself is one you could test to some degree. You could watch the news services, read eyewitness accounts, and check the New York traffic reports and so on. You might not be able to prove it beyond all doubt, but a fair-minded person would be able to arrive at a reasonable judgment about its truth or falsehood. If you found no evidence at all, you would be well within your rights to dismiss it. If you found good evidence, or at least more evidence than you would expect, then you could quite rationally accept it as true. This is what I mean by a testable claim. The central claims of Christianity are to a degree testable. You can apply the normal tests of history ... and find that we do in fact possess exactly the sort of evidence you would expect if the core of the Jesus story is true and decidedly more evidence than you would expect if the story were fabricated.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus is also unique in that he is the solution to your every problem. The famous theologian Emil Brunner once preached a message on the phrase “faith, hope, and love.” The points were these: Every man has a past, a present, and a future. Every man has a problem in his past, a problem in his present, and a problem in his future. The problem in our past is sin, but God has an answer to that problem. The answer is faith, faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem in our future is death, but God has an answer to that problem also. The answer to that problem is hope, hope in Christ’s return based on the fact of his historical resurrection and his promises. The problem in our present is hate, and God’s answer to that problem is love. It is the love of Christ lived out in the lives of those who trust him. I wonder if Christ has become the answer to the problems in your life. He is uniquely the only one who will ever solve them completely.

Why not stop for a moment and hand your problems over to Christ. Perhaps you’ve never seen Christ for what he really is: your only hope of salvation and the only master who can bring evil out of good, triumph out tragedy, life out of death. There is only one solution to a world careening out of control - the One and Only -Jesus Christ!