

Merry Christmas Brandywine!

I am excited to be with you at the 1st of our 4 Christmas Eve services we are having today.

And you know it's amazing...we are blessed to be taking this whole Sunday to focus, and worship, and reflect on the coming of Jesus Christ into our world. And I am going to contend this morning, that the arrival of Jesus Christ was <u>the greatest thing that has ever happened</u>. I know that's a hot take! Some might say the cross, or the resurrection are the greatest things to have ever happened, but in order for him to **die** for us, in order for him to be raised, so we might be **raised**, He <u>first</u> had to come.

And this morning as we dive into John chapter 1 verse 14-17, we are going to focus on one word that you may or may not be familiar with...that word being INCARNATION.



The word **Incarnation** literally means *"in flesh."* It is the *majestic* and *radical* idea within Christianity that the **Eternal Son of God** took on an additional nature "humanity" to be with us, to live among us, teach us, die for us.

And the entire history of mankind hinges on this moment.

Because you see the Old Testament foretold of this event. The Prophets prophesied about this, and then a little over 2k years ago at just the right time in Bethlehem... IT HAPPENED.

Heaven came down, as a baby, to bless the entire world. ARE YOU KIDDING ME!?!?!



Illus:

Do we have any sports fans here this morning? Everyone who knows me *(and our family for that matter)* knows that we are huge soccer fans. **It is** the best sport in the world......3.5 billion people can't be wrong #donthate.

But whatever sport happens to be your favorite, you cannot deny that that the best sports moments are the last second, last gasp wins.

When your team is down, and then seemigly out of nowhere they are able to pull victory from the jaws of defeat.

And the reason why this is so trilling is because of the radical shift in emotion from crushing loss/hopelessness to the elation the comes from an amazing victory.



Friends Christmas is humanity's amazing victory. And the reason why this story, the story of the INCARNATION hasn't been forgotten in the dustbin of history is because what happened in Bethlehem *defines* human history. It is a story we cannot forget even if we tried because it so accurately describes humanity's need.

Christmas is **the greatest thing that has ever happened**, and unlike a sporting event where you just watch from your couch or the stands not actually involved...Christmas <u>was</u> and <u>is</u> an invitation to get involved, for us to follow the incarnate Christ, who came just at the right time to turn a loss into a victory in my life and in your life.

And so on this Christmas Eve we are going to be looking at **3 Implications of the Incarnation** for our lives today.

Pray:



If you haven't done so already please turn in your Bibles or Bible apps to John chapter 1 we will be starting in verse 14.



Here in verse 14 we see that John once again describes Jesus as THE WORD....we have covered this in previous sermons, but to state it again briefly this title ["the word"] speaks to Jesus' pre-existence, His divine nature, His role in creation, and His position as the ultimate revelation of God to humanity.

Again it is the idea that the Heavenly has come down to be WITH US. You see when Jesus was born as a baby in a manger in Bethlehem, that is NOT when he came into existence. He has always existed with the Father in Heaven, but now on the first Christmas came down in a human body to dwell among us.



The word "dwelling" here means "tabernacled" or "pitched His tent." Meaning that this was not a short appearance, this was no pit stop, or fly by. God actually came here as a man among men to live.

We cannot discount the amazingness of this! How many of you have ever had a really tough day, and the end of the day your like, "I just can't take this planet/or these people anymore." I have that thought more than I should, but I am a sinful/fallen person just like everyone else. I can't imagine if I was sinless perfection choosing to come and make my dwelling here.

Could you imagine the President of the United States flying coach on Spirit Airlines to get places around the world? And when he arrives at his destination he stays at the Best Western...you'd say that's absurd....and I'd say maybe, but what is *truly absurd* is for the Son of God to pitch His tent among us.



Jesus Christ is the glory of God revealed to mankind, and He didn't just stop by, for 33 years he lived and loved, he cried, he sweat, and bled and died for you and for me. And this is why John goes onto say here that *"we have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son,"* for 33 years humanity got to see Jesus' *moral glory*, and so now we have a clear vision and can see exactly what Christlike character looks like.

Those 33 years were where we also see Christ's glory in the form of his miraculous works. The gospels record around 37 miracles that Jesus performed. From healing physical ailments to casting out demons, to multiplying food. Again, the Incarnation wasn't a sight seeing expedition. Jesus came to dwell among us, to feel our pain, to know us, ultimately for His glory to be revealed.



And that brings us to our first truth for this morning...**The** Incarnation proves that God desires us to be with Him.

There are many people who struggle with this notion, the idea that God desires to be with them.

They look at their lives and the sin, the mistakes and they conclude, *"if there is a God, he wouldn't want to have anything to do with me."*

But you see friends the Gospel record tells a completely different story. Jesus came in the flesh for that very reason, Jesus said in Luke chapter 5, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

God loves us. He doesn't need you to be good enough, because His grace is sufficient.



Jesus came in the flesh to preach a message of repentance. For us to turn from darkness and to walk in the light He provides. But you see, *we aren't the light*, *it's not about us*, its about us following the source of light out of darkness.

Jesus said in John 8:12 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

I could see us doubting an all powerful all knowing God's desire to be with us, if he never got involved, stayed far away, and didn't answer us when we called out.

But the truth is God didn't just say he desired to be with us...He sent his only Son to prove the depths of His love.



This is a concept that we don't truly understand and I don't think we will understand until we are in the throne room worshiping the risen Christ....the depth of God's desire to save mankind that he would sacrifice His only Son to accomplish this.

Because the truth is I love you all....but I'm not going to sacrifice my only son for you! But we serve and amazing God with a crazy amount of love.

Friends do not miss out on this love, believe in God's love for you. Read about it in His word and if you are doubting God's love, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to awaken your heart to see and sense God's deep love for you. John 1:15 (NIV) (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ")

Moving on in verse 15...

Read:

Verse 15 is referring to John the Baptist who was 6 months older than Jesus, and he also started his ministry earlier than Jesus did.

Typically when someone preceded a leader/teacher they would have preeminence....more time in more seniority.

But not here, John the Baptist says that "he [Jesus] was before me." Now John cannot be referring to chronological age, or age of ministry because I already stated, Jesus is younger in age and length of ministry than John, so what does he mean here? Clearly John the Baptist is making the argument that Jesus is before time itself.



John the Gospel writer gives Jesus the title, "the Word," which [again] means that Christ is the communication of God...the way we get to know more about God and His will is through "the Word" Jesus.

Then John says that "the Word" was "with God," "was fully God," and also that "the Word" created all things. This is a clear declaration of Christ's deity and *preexistence*, and by *preexistence* I mean that, before He became a man, before he walked upon the earth, Jesus was already in existence as the second Person of the Trinity.

But why does this matter, why is it important that Jesus existed before he was the baby in the manger.

Well one reason is because if Jesus was simply created like you or me, *what power could he claim over sin and death?* If Jesus isn't One with the Father and Holy Spirit, *how can He intercede on our behalf*?



And so what John the Baptist points to here is the basis of our second truth for this morning. **The eternality of Jesus gives us the hope of eternity.**



We live in a world where everything has had a beginning. The pew you are sitting in had a beginning, the car you drove here in had a beginning, everyone you have ever known was born and celebrates that birthday [their beginning], the idea of something or someone being eternal is foreign to us, so foreign in fact that we struggle to wrap our minds around the concept.

But a part of the beauty of the Gospel is that Jesus came and died so that we could be like Him...*in His eternality*.

The Bible clearly teaches that our relationship to Christ *determines our eternity*.



John 3:16, states that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have _____, that's right **eternal life**.

Friends if Jesus didn't already possess *eternal life* as the baby in the manger, how could He ever grant it to us?

If Jesus was created just like you and I, He might still be a good moral teacher, and an inspiration, but He would have no power over sin and death.

You see, John the Baptist and John the Gospel writer combine here to emphasize that Jesus was preexistent deity because it is important the we recognize His power to rip us from jaws of death, and to offer us everlasting life in His name.

[Pause]



Illus:

This man is named Bryan Johnson (no relation). He is a 46 year old Billionaire Entrepreneur and Futurist, that ABC News recently profiled because he is spending 2 million dollars on a project that he calls Blueprint that he claims will reverse his biological clock and return him back to the age of 18.

I am not sure why anyone would want to go back to being 18, but Bryan Johnson isn't just anybody. He plans to share his findings, so that you and I can also pay him 2 million dollars a year to biologically become our younger selves.

Now he's been at this for a little while now and he definitely doesn't look 18 to me, maybe he will look 18 by the time he is 50, who knows. Now obviously this is absurd, we cannot reverse the clock and live forever.



But Bryan Johnson is going to try because all of his hope is here, on this earth, with his billions.

Clearly he is afraid to die because in this life he's in control, he sets the agenda, everyone listens to him. But he instinctively knows that if he slips from this life and into the next, he will lose all that he has here and so he cannot let that happen.

As I watch the report of him last week I was really saddened for him, because if Bryan Johnson knew about the everlasting life Jesus offers everyone, he would have a new hope that surpasses this temporal existence and extends forever.

You see Church the plan to live forever has nothing to do with reversing our biological clock, and everything to do with receiving the Incarnate One and only Son.



As we continue on John shares about the blessings we Christians receive from being united with Christ.



The Word made flesh, the Incarnate Christ is the source of grace in the life of the believer.

The phrase here grace in place of grace simply means that because of Jesus' presence in our lives we can receive one blessing after another, after another.

One commentator described the grace of God like the waves continuing to come ashore. As you stand there at the shore line, one wave crashing after the other, is similar to the waves of grace that hit those whom Christ has redeemed.

[Pause]



John makes mention of the Law of Moses here, why? To highlight it's insufficiency!

The Law of Moses was not a display of grace. It commanded us to obey and condemned us to death if we failed. The Law told us what was right, but did not give us the power to do it. It was given to show us we were sinners but could not save us from our sins.

But the Good News is that Grace and Truth have come through Jesus Christ.

Jesus didn't come to judge the world but to save those who were unworthy, those who could not save themselves, to save even those who were His enemies.

This is grace my friends....heaven's Best for Earth's worst.



And that leads us to our final truth this morning. Jesus offers us the grace and truth found nowhere else.

Where do you go to find *GRACE* in *this* world?

Did you see a lot of grace out there as you were holiday shopping? I hope so. I actually saw someone in a parking lot *screaming* at another shopper who parked too close to them. As a member of the human race I can confidently affirm that Grace is not our specialty.

Grace is defined as <u>unmerited favor</u>, goodwill to those who do NOT deserve it. We all need this. And yet we often try to convince ourselves that we can do it ourselves, that we can be strong enough, we can be smart enough, independent enough etc...It can be hard for us to receive the grace Jesus offers us because in order to *fully* receive His unmerited favor, we have to surrender to Him. We have to give up the control to receive.



And it is at this point we often say to Jesus, "I like the unmerited favor part, but you lost me at surrender."

Illus:

This might sound a bit strange, but receiving the grace of God can be a bit like riding a roller coaster. How's that you might wonder? To illustrate that point this past summer my wife and I tagged along with our Student Ministry to Dorney Park. My wife and I were feeling good so we decided to ride **Hydra**. I don't know what were were thinking. This proved NOT to be a good idea.

Roller Coaster are a young persons game, and for some reason we still thought we were young enough to do this. My wife started out screaming and laughing, and then half way through she stopped and kept her mouth shut for fear she was going to...you know what I mean.



You see as we age our Vestibular System (the system that handles motion sickness) get less efficient. When we are young, this system generally handles all the twists and turns, just fine.

Now the good news is our Vestibular System can become more efficient through training, but the bad news is that training includes riding roller coasters over and over again until the effects of motion sickness go away. There is hope for Kaely after all! She will be back next summer to conquer Hydra, I am sure of it!

But you see, receiving Grace can be like riding a roller coaster in that we aren't in the drivers seat...we aren't in control...neither can we accurately predict all of the twists and turns that will come. Receiving the Grace of God can be uncomfortable, and anxiety inducing because we do not know how he will provide, and what form his unmerited favor will take.



But just like our Vestibular System can get better through exposure, so can our ability to receive God's Grace through exposure to His Son.

You see the Incarnation of Christ brought an amazing gift into the world...but John emphasizes in our text that His *grace upon grace* in our lives is the gift that keeps on giving.

Church what areas of your life are you trying to control/trying to manage apart from the Grace of God? Because we all struggle, in our marriages, in our parenting, we have work issues and health issues...it is overwhelming to try to bear this ourselves.



But here is the blessing...Jesus said in **Matthew 11:28 NIV.** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Jesus understands the burden of human existence, he made his tent here, allow His grace to wash over you this Christmas. Grace upon Grace upon Grace.

[Pause]



But its not just *the Grace of Jesus* that John emphasizes here in our text. He says in verse 17 that Grace and **Truth** came through Jesus Christ.

And it's important that John includes both **Grace** and **Truth** here.

Because it's vital that we understand that Jesus didn't show **Grace** at the expense of **Truth**.

You see although He loved sinners, He did not love their sins. He realized the **Truth** that our sins condemn us, and that is why we need a Savior.

Jesus was often telling people uncomfortable **Truths** about their need for a Savior, but He handled it so **Graciously** that people wanted to follow Him.



It is often difficult to get the balance right between Grace and **Truth**.

By a show of hands how many of you find it easier to be **Gracious**? Who are my grace people?

By a show of hands who are my **Truth** people? I am one of you! I find speaking the **Truth** easy, and I'm still working on the **Gracious** part.

Church, Jesus says that **He is <u>The</u> Truth** in John 14:6...before the Incarnation the Law of Moses was the authoritative standard for what righteousness was, what was and wasn't **True**, and now **Veiled in Flesh the Godhead See**...Jesus is the embodiment of **Truth.**

Which means that as we grown in our relationship with Jesus, we get more and more **Truth** because we are connected to its source.

Saint Augustine: On God becoming one of us Maker of the sun, He is made under the sun. In the Father he remains, From his mother he goes forth. Creator of heaven and earth, He was born on earth under heaven. Unspeakably wise, He is wisely speechless.

I want to close our time by reading a poem written some 15 hundred years ago by Early Church Father St. Augustine of Hippo.

The mystery of the Incarnation is something that has captivated Christians for centuries and here Augustine tries to capture the majesty of God becoming one of us.



Filling the world, He lies in a manger. Ruler of the stars, He nurses at his mother's bosom. He is both great in the nature of God, and small in the form of a servant.

Continue Reading:





This Christmas may you be overfilled with Joy by what has been done for you. God became a man to save the world.

Hallelujah, this is Good News!

