

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

John 1:4-18

Key Verse 1:14

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The purpose of this gospel is spelled out in John 20:31: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The Bible is no ordinary book. It is the book of life. Let us approach this book, knowing that by believing in Jesus we may have life in his name!

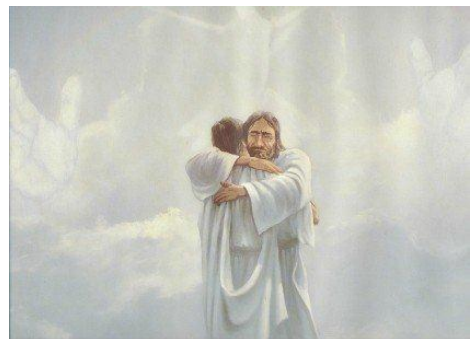
In today’s passage, St. John tells us that in Jesus is life. He says Jesus is the light that shines in darkness. Finally we learn that Jesus is full of grace and truth. May God bless us to know Jesus personally as we study the word of God today!

I. IN HIM WAS LIFE (4-5)

In verses 1-3, John declared that Jesus is God. Jesus was with God in the beginning. As a person in the Trinity, Jesus created all things. *“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made”* (3). Jesus is the Creator God. He created everything including our lives. We are here because Jesus put us here.

Jesus is the author of life. Look at verse 4. *“In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”* This verse teaches us that life is not the result of random chance. “In him was life.” Life comes from God. My life was created according to God’s absolute plan and purpose. Our lives are not our own, but belong to God. We are the stewards of the life that God has given to each of us. This is an important truth to accept because our attitude towards life depends on whether we believe it or not.

Sadly, many people today refuse to accept the truth that life comes from God. They consider life as their own. There are serious consequences of this. If we regard life as our own, we try to find a meaning in life from things of this world rather than God. The Bible says, “In him was life,” but we replace it with “In money is life” or “In pleasure is life.” A man named Levi tried to find life in money. He decided to become a tax collector. He cheated people to pocket some of the tax money for himself. They hated him for selling out his conscience. But he didn’t care because he thought money would make him happy. But he wasn’t happy. He had no friends. He was lonely. He was miserable, until Jesus came to him and said, “Follow me.” Levi got up and followed Jesus (Mk 2:13-14). He no longer chased after money. He became a disciple of Jesus. Did you know that



Levi became St. Matthew who wrote the beautiful Sermon on the Mount? He found life in Jesus!

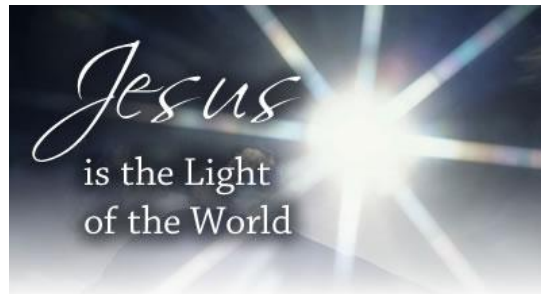
There was a woman in Samaria who thought that her life would be complete if only she met her prince charming. She met a handsome man and married him, believing that she would live happily ever after. But her prince charming turned out to be a jerk. Her life was miserable. Their marriage ended in divorce. It was painful. But soon she found another man. She married him thinking this man would make her happy. But the marriage failed again. She married another man and another one after that. A total of four marriages failed. She was getting old. Now she was living with a boyfriend. She was not happy. She was still thirsty for love. She was lonely. She was miserable, until Jesus came to her and asked, "Would you like to drink living water from me? You will never be thirsty again." She took the offer and found life in Jesus.

These stories are real life examples recorded in the Bible. You might say, "Yes, but they lived a long time ago." Well, let me give you examples from here and now. In fact, I was a Levi. I grew up in a family of subsistence farmers. I thought money would make me happy. So I became extremely selfish. I decided to major in business. But God, in his mercy, reached out his hand and rescued me before I went too far. He called me to be his disciple. My life was turned around 180 degrees. There is also a Samaritan man among us here. He used to be popular among young women. He tried to find life by doing sinful things with them. God also rescued him from his destructive path. Jesus called him to be a shepherd for young college students. He discovered that in Jesus is life.

When we believe that life comes from God, we say, "I am here because of God. God created me according to his absolute plan. I came from God and I will go back to God according to his time schedule. During my life time, I enjoy God's blessings and do the good work of God" (Eph 2:10). We can have a clear purpose and direction in life. We live for the glory of God knowing that when we are done in this world, we will meet our Creator Jesus in heaven to reign with him forever and ever. Life is a precious gift from God. We should not abuse or degrade our life by using harmful substance or engaging in sinful activities. Instead, we joyfully walk with God everyday through prayer and meditation of his word.

Look at verse 4b. "... *and that life was the light of men.*" Jesus is the light that shines light into our life. In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." Without Jesus we remain in the darkness of sin. The sun in the sky is very bright. When the sun shines, the whole world is very bright. Yet even the sun cannot brighten a person's heart who is in the darkness of sin. Only the true light, Jesus, can help him or her. When a person receives Jesus in his heart, a new life begins in him. He can rejoice in him. He can live his life the way God created him for. He can be a shining star for the people in darkness.

Look at verse 5. *“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”* The words, “the darkness has not understood,” indicate mankind’s rejection of the light. The Greek word for “understood” also means “overcome” (Jn 12:35). To human eyes, the darkness seems to be prevailing over the world. But that is not the case. The true light, Jesus, defeats the power of darkness. If you turn on a light in your room at night, darkness disappears. No matter how dark the darkness may be, it cannot overcome the light. The love of Jesus can heal any person who is damaged by sin. On the other hand, if we choose to remain in the darkness of sin, we are lost. We try very hard to go somewhere, but we don’t know where we are going. We grope around without a direction. Only Jesus the light of men can show us the way to the Father and eternal life in heaven.



II. JESUS, THE TRUE LIGHT (6-13)

The author John introduces John the Baptist as Jesus’ witness (6-8). At that time, John the Baptist was very popular, because of his pure life and straightforward preaching. Many people of his time began to wonder if he was the Christ (Lk 3:15). But John the Baptist clearly testified that he was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light (Jesus).

Look at verse 9: *“The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”* John once again declares that Jesus is the true light and that he gives light to every man. Jesus came to this world for that purpose. There have been many small lights in history. Some were flickers of truth; some, faint glimpses of reality. Buddha was like a street lamp to people who were suffering. Socrates was like candlelight to people who were looking for truth. Confucius was like a lighthouse to people who were looking for a moral compass. Mohammed was like the flashing light of a sword to people looking for God’s mercy and salvation. None of these men could be the true light because they were merely human. They were not from God. They were not God. Only Jesus who came from heaven is the true light. Only Jesus can defeat the power of darkness and show the way to the glorious kingdom of God.

Look at verse 9 again: *“The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”* Jesus gives the true light to all those who come to him. John Newton was a slave dealer. In order to make money, he lived in the darkness by selling people’s lives. One day while reading the Bible, the light of Jesus came into his heart. He was brought from darkness to the marvelous light of Jesus. He was so moved by the grace of Jesus that he wrote the famous hymn: “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me!”

What was people's response to the light that came into the world? Look at verses 10-11. *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.* The Creator God came down to his created world. It was only natural for his creation to welcome the Creator. But his own did not even recognize him. They did not receive him as their creator. Even animals recognize their owners. But the sinful humanity did not recognize Jesus. This was true especially with the chosen people of Israel. This is what God said of his chosen people: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Isa 1:2b-3). This broke the heart of God. Still God did not abandon them. He sent many prophets to help them to come back to their sense. Finally, he sent his own Son to save the sinful humanity. And he promised that any sinner can become part of his family by believing in Jesus. Look at verses 12-13. *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

A pastor lost his three-year-old son by accident. He filed a missing children's report and tried his best to locate his son. A week passed and then a month, but there was no sign of his son. Every day was a torture for him without his young son. Finally, after two years, he was thrilled to locate his son in a foster home. When he brought his son home, he lavished on him the best food, clothes, and toys that he could buy. The problem was that his son would not recognize him as his father. The boy had forgotten him. The father noticed that the boy would eat very fast and often hide food in his room, a habit he picked up as he was moved around from one foster home to another. And worse of all, the boy would not call him father. The pastor was deeply hurt by this, but he decided to love him unconditionally. Then after a year, the boy finally opened his heart and called him father. He embraced his son and cried for joy. Through this experience, the pastor came to know the broken heart of God toward the sinful humanity. God created each of us in his own image. But we failed to recognize him. We did not call him Father with affection. Instead, we rebelled against him by living a sinful life. God's heart was broken.

Amazingly, God still loved us so much that he sent his one and only Son Jesus. Through Jesus, we can come to know the heart of God. We come to know the love of God. Through Jesus the light of life, our spiritual eyes can be opened to see God and call him our Father. How blessed we are to be able to know the Father God and be part of his family! We don't have to be like missing children, moving around foster homes.

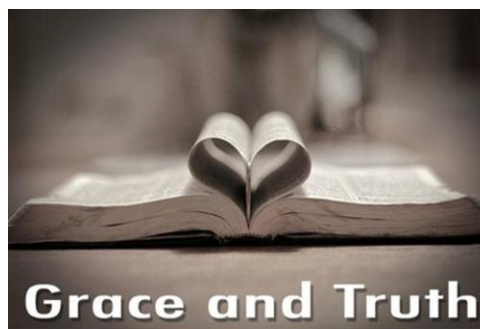
III. JESUS IS FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH (14-18)

Look at verse 14. *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."* The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We call this

“the incarnation of Jesus.” Jesus is God incarnate. God became a lowly human being. To come to this world, Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. Why did Jesus have to come to this world in such a humble manner? Why did he have to come to us at all? It was because we could not climb up on a ladder to reach God. So God came down on the ladder to be with the sinners.

Look at verse 14 again. *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* Jesus came to make his dwelling among us. In order to help us and to save us from our sins, Jesus came to live with us as a human being. John was so moved by this. We can almost feel his excitement and gratitude by reading this verse. More importantly, John wants us to know about Jesus’ grace and truth.

First, Jesus is full of grace. Jesus’ life on earth revealed God’s grace. The religious leaders of Jesus’ time were legalistic and self-righteous. Once the Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. They asked him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” Jesus said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (Jn 8:7). Each one realized that he couldn’t be the first to throw a stone at her. They went away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Then Jesus asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin” (Jn 8:10).



When Jesus invited Levi to follow him, Levi was so happy that he threw a dinner party for Jesus and his disciples. As they were enjoying the party, the Pharisees came and criticized him for hanging out with the despicable tax collectors and “sinners.” On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mk 2:17). Jesus’ life in this world revealed God’s marvelous grace. Finally Jesus died for our sins on the cross to give us the ultimate grace of salvation.

Second, Jesus is full of truth. Jesus did not come to this world only to show us God’s grace and compassion. He came to reveal God’s truth. What is truth? Truth is what is true. There are several characteristics of truth. Truth is something that never changes, even when circumstances change. Truth must be universal, applying to everyone in the world. Where is such a thing in this world that stays constant forever and applies to everyone? Everything in this world is temporary. Nothing in this world stays constant forever. Nothing in this world can be everything to everyone. Therefore the truth cannot

come from this world. The truth must come from God who is eternal. In John 14:6, Jesus declares: *“I am the way and the truth and the life.”* Jesus is the truth that shows us the way to the eternal kingdom of God.

So what truth did Jesus teach us? Jesus showed us the truth about God that he exists and that he is the Creator of the universe. He taught us the truth about the word of God. He said: “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Mt 5:18). Jesus also taught us the truth about mankind. He revealed how mankind was originally created in God’s image, but is now lost in sin. He told the parable of the lost sheep to show how mankind abandoned God and became helpless. Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son teaches us how man squandered his precious life and talents in sinful pleasure, but how God is waiting for him to return with repentance.

Look at verse 15. *John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”* John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus. But John testifies that Jesus was before him because Jesus is the Creator God. Look at verse 16. *“From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.”* Jesus came to bless us. What kinds of blessings? The Jews were proud of the law given to them through Moses. The law of God was a blessing to them as it taught them what is right and what is wrong. The problem was that the Law could not save sinners. The grace and truth of Jesus are the best blessings because they give us forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Jesus is the source of true blessings to all mankind.

Look at verse 18. *“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”* No one can see God, because God is spirit. But we can come to know God through Jesus. God has revealed himself through Jesus who came into this world in human form. May God bless us to come to know God personally through Jesus, as we study the Gospel of John together!