

# Beholding His Glory

John 1:14

*Halifax: 22 December 2019 AM*

## **Introduction**

Ordinarily, I have made it a practice to break from my regular sermon series on the Sunday closest to December 25 to say something about the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- I want to do that today as well.

In fact, I want to take you out of yourself to behold the glory of the Son of God who became flesh.

- We are so narcissistic, so self-focused, that we can miss the glory of the Word made flesh—we can go right by Him without even noticing Him.

- You know how we are—so self-centred...

- so self-conscious—always worried about what others think of us and how we are coming across—what kind of impression we are making...

- so often irritated because someone did not give us what we want or notice us, or because they said something that irritated us or imposed on us.

- so often showing our malice by those little digs—little put-downs—little expressions of irritation, never mind the times when anger breaks out...

- so often walking by their needs, not even noticing their struggles or caring very much about them if we do notice because our trivial concerns are so much more important to us.

- so often when we do some kindness, it is more out of a concern to be noticed as someone who is kind than because we really care—or at least there is a lot of that mixed in...

- But the worst part about our self-centredness is how little we regard God.

- Our worship is rarely pure at all—we sometimes hardly think of Him in worship...

- And how often do we really live to please Him and to honour Him? Is it not much more often to please ourselves?

- How often do we really behold His glory?

- We were created to be full of the life and light of God.

- But instead of life, there is death and leech-like selfishness...

- And instead of light, there is darkness and distortion of God.

- Without life, we do not show forth His glory and beauty...

- Without light, we neither know nor proclaim His glory and beauty.

- Yes, we are fallen—instead of being filled with life and light, we are filled death and darkness.

But this morning, let us come away from our selfish thoughts and gaze upon the One who is full of life and light...

- the one who is the veritable fountain of all life and light...

- the one who has life and light in Himself.

Listen now as I read to you from John 1:1-18 where He is spoken of.

- Turn your gaze upon this beautiful One as we read of Him.

**John 1:1-18:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. <sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. <sup>7</sup> This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. <sup>8</sup> He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. <sup>9</sup> That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> But as many as

received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ” <sup>16</sup> And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy and infallible word.

You can see in verse 14 that it says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.”

## I. Who is this “Word that became flesh?”

### A. He was the Word before He became flesh.

1. This is clear from verse 14 because it says that “the Word *became* flesh”—
  - He was already the Word, but He *became* something He was not—He *became* flesh.
  - In fact, He was the Word long before He became flesh.
2. Verse 1 tells us that the Word *was in the beginning with God*.
  - **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God.”**
    - And “the beginning” here refers to the beginning of our world—the creation of us and our world.
    - Verse 2 states it again, **“He was in the beginning with God.”**
      - Long before He became flesh, even before any flesh was made, He was with God.

### B. We are also told He was God.

- Verse 1 says it quite plainly: **“the Word was with God and the Word was God.”**
  - The Jehovah Witness cult have tried to translate this, “the word was a god,” but there is no article in the original; it is equivalent to saying, “the house was brick” rather than saying “the house was a brick.”
- 1. As God, the Word is fully God, very God, all that God is.
  - You can’t be God and be less than God. You can’t be partly God if you are God.

2. Yet, He is also the only begotten of the Father, as it says in verse 14.
  - He is consistently called the “Son of God” in Scripture because He is begotten of God the Father—He is “the only begotten Son of the Father.”
3. This is one of the reasons that He is called the Word...
  - Because He is the One who comes forth from the Father.
  - He is the second Person of the Trinity who came forth from the Divine Nature to create the world and to redeem the world.

C. You can see in our text that creation is ascribed to Him.

1. Verse 3 says that absolutely everything created was created by Him.
  - It stresses it by stating it in two ways: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”
  - There is only that which was created and that which creates... only God and creation... and of all that was created, it was the Son who created it.
    - He is the Word, the divine person who comes forth to act.
    - Only God can create, and God the Son, the Word who was with God and who is God, created everything that has been created.
2. And not only that, but He is also the source of life and light in this world.
  - The world that He created is a world that has life and light in it.
    - Life is the ability to consciously engage with what is...
    - And light is the ability to see and understand what is.
  - He, the Word, the only begotten Son of God, has life and light in Himself and always has... He has known and lived in communion with His own glorious self...Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He sees and knows and engages with the Father and with the Spirit.
    - And as the Word of God, He puts life and light into the creation in men and angels.
    - Verse 4 says, “**In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**”
      - Those who have *life*, live to God, and those who have *light* know God.
      - He made us to live to God and to know God...
        - If we do not live to God as God, we are dead...
        - And if do not see God, it is because we are blind.
3. He is called *the Word* especially because it is He who imparts life and light to us—He is the person in the Trinity who creates us to see God and live for God.
  - As the Son of God, He came from the Father in the beginning to create a universe that had people in it who were endowed with life and light.
  - He gave us this wonderful gift that He has in Himself so that we could live to God and know God.
  - Verse 9 tells us that “**He is the true light which gives light to every man.**”
    - He is the Word because He is the Light—He bestowed wisdom and life on man.

**II. This opening chapter of the gospel of John declares to us that this life-giving, light-giving Word of God became flesh.**

- You can see it right there in v. 14: “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**”

- A. This is a remarkable thing.
1. The Creator who has life and light in Himself become flesh.
    - He became what He had created—the part of the creation that He created and endowed with life and light.
      - He who called us into being became what we are.
    - He is a pure Spirit, without a body, yet He took a body for Himself.
      - He did not, of course, cease to be God.
        - God cannot cease to be God.
        - God simply is—He cannot die—He cannot change or cease from being what He has always been.
      - But He did also become something that He was not...
        - He became flesh while continuing to be God.
  2. Verse 14 not only says that *the Word became flesh*, but it adds that *He dwelt among us*.
    - The Word *dwelt* means *tabernacled* or *tented* among us.
    - A human body, flesh, became His tent so that 2000 years ago He was conceived in the womb of a virgin and born at Bethlehem...
      - He pitched His tent among us—He acquired a body and lived among us and will continue to live in human flesh forever and ever.
- B. This means that we now have Him in our human nature—in our flesh.
1. He, the Son of God who gives life and light and who has life and light in Himself, is now among us in our nature.
    - We see what this divine person looks like when He is one of us.
    - He brings the divine life and light that He has in Himself into a human body.
  2. Think of it! We get to see what God is like as one of us...
    - We get to see what He is like with a human brain, with a human spirit, with a human will, with a human body.
    - We see Him when He is under authority as a man, made under God's law, even under the authority of His parents or the civil magistrate.
    - We see Him as one who is subject to tiredness, pain, hunger, thirst, suffering.
    - We see Him as one who is able to be tempted.
    - We see Him dwelling among sinners who abuse Him and hate Him and spit on Him—who misunderstand Him—disappoint Him.
- C. John tells us that in becoming flesh, He does not hide His glory but He actually reveals it.
1. In verse 14, John says that the outcome of the Word becoming flesh was that **we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth**.
    - In the Word made flesh, we see the character of God—the beautiful character of God—in a way that we can truly appreciate it and understand it.
      - Indeed, one aspect of His glory is hidden in a certain way—His glorious infinite, eternal, majestic, unchanging aspect... that bedazzles us.
      - As the glorious creator, He dwells in inexpressible light.

- If He appears to us in a way that reveals that aspect, even in part, we are unable to endure it—we fall on our faces—
    - Resistance is not even conceivable before such glory—only trembling, for He is our Creator.
  - But when He became flesh, we were able to see the character of this divine person—what does the one who has life and light in Himself look like when He becomes one of us.
    - We saw the beauty, not of His form, but of His character.
    - We see what we ought to be like... and what we would be like if we were truly filled with light and life.
      - It enables us to see what we are called to be and what we are able to be like by His redemptive work.
      - It gives us hope to see what we will be when He has completed His work of grace in us.
2. But it is only those who are given life and light who see His glory.
- a. In verse 10, John tells us that even though the world was made by Him, the world did not know Him when He came.
  - b. In verse 11, John tells us that **“He came to His own did not receive Him.”**
    - “His own” were the people of Israel whom God had prepared to receive Him.
      - He promised to them that His Son would be the son of Abraham and the son of David.
      - He gave them His oracles, He sent prophets to them, He gave them His law, He gave them His ordinances to prepare them, He chastened them to turn them away from idols.
      - He even sent a herald to introduce Him—John the Baptist—who called them to repent because He was at hand.
        - But He came to these His own and His own did not receive Him.
  - c. It was only those among them who were born of God that received Him.
    - They had to be given light and life by God because they too were spiritually dead and spiritually blind.
    - But by God’s grace, He did give spiritual life and sight to some of them:
      - Verse 12-13 explain: **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”**
    - God gave them life—
      - He gave them eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe.
      - They are the ones who saw the glory of the Word made flesh.

TRANS> And now, by God’s enablement, I want to show you the glory of the Word made flesh—if only God will give you light and life that you might see Him.

### III. What is that glory that we see in the Word made flesh?

- A. First, consider how we see the glory of the divine person displayed—His virtue, His excellence, His beauty are all seen in our flesh. We see His true character revealed.
1. We see Him always doing what pleases the Father.
    - a. He testifies that He always does what pleases Him, and the Father testifies that He is indeed well pleased with Him.
    - b. He describes doing the Father’s will as His very food—His satisfaction.
  2. We see Him as a sincere worshipper of God.
    - a. With what delight did He speak of the Father.
      - How natural were the words, “I thank You, Father,” on His lips!
      - How often He praises the Father, telling of His glory and goodness.
    - b. We see Him often at prayer, even while others are sleeping.
      - We hear that in the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.
  3. We see His faithfulness and loyalty when He is tempted.
    - a. Satan tempted Him more than any man has ever been tempted.
      - Satan does not have to work so hard in tempting us before we give in.
        - But with the Lord Jesus Christ, he employed all of his craftiness, all of his demonic wisdom and skill, and our Lord remained without sin.
        - He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.
      - 1) Satan appealed to the lust of the flesh when He was under extreme hunger—but He refused to turn stones into bread to satisfy His own desire without authorisation.
        - We give into lusts whether we are hungry or not.
      - 2) Satan appealed to the lust of the eyes, offering Him all the kingdoms of this world if He would align with Satan—but He would not ever consider it.
        - We will compromise so easily when we are inflamed with the promise of success—twisting what we know is right when opportunity for success comes knocking at our door.
      - 3) Satan appealed to the pride of life, tempting Him to do signs that would have been admired by all—to do what would have been sure to gain a great following. Yet, He utterly refused that temptation all through His ministry.
        - We live so often for show, for our own honour, to be seen.
        - We are more concerned about what others think of us than we are about what God thinks.
    - b. Most of all, we see Him tempted in Gethsemane.
      - How He despised the shame of the cross that He was called to bear!
        - He did not even deserve it for His own sins.
        - Yet, He submitted to His calling with rigorous devotion.
  4. We see His compassion for His neighbours.
    - a. Think of Him with the 4000 in the Decapolis—who had been with Him for three days and had run out of food...
      - He would not send them away without feeding them, lest they faint on their way home.

- b. See Him groaning and lamenting when He sees the sins and hardness of His enemies—even praying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” when they crucified Him.
  - c. See Him weeping over Jerusalem for not recognising the time of her visitation.
  - d. See Him healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, all with a warm affectionate heart.
  - e. See Him pleading with men to repent and believe, putting before them the sweet offer the gospel... “Come to me all you that weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest for your soul.”
5. We see His patience...
- a. Such patience with His disciples,
    - So often bearing with them and their folly...
    - Yet, also rebuking them, not in a selfish way, but to further their growth... to challenge them so that they would grow and do better.
  - b. We see Him with remarkable patience before His enemies...
    - 1Pe 2:23: **“who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously...”**
  - c. With what patience He bore His sufferings on the cross.
    - He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.
6. We see Him trusting God in hard times.
- a. On the cross, even when forsaken for a time, He continued to trust as He had from His mother’s breasts. He cried out for deliverance as the One bearing our sins.
  - b. When He faced rejection and His disciples were so weak, He continued to speak with confidence of His coming kingdom and glory.
  - c. In John 17 in His great high priestly prayer, He speaks of the glory that will come to Him and the Father by His suffering and death.
7. We see His boldness and courage.
- How Pilate marvels to see His poise at His trial before His crucifixion.
    - Pilate says, “Don’t you know that I have power to release you?” to which He replies, “You have no power at all but what is given you from above.”
  - There is no desperate attempt to clear Himself, just a calm repose and clarity of expression.
8. We see His wisdom as He answers His detractors.
- Not with the kind of wisdom that speaks in ways that are beyond the intellect of His hearers, but with the kind that crystalizes the truth in ways that they cannot honestly deny...that leaves them befuddled not because it makes no sense but because they want to escape from the truth and don’t know how.
  - Even His enemies declared, “No man every spoke like this man!”

TRANS> What love there is in Him for God, what unrelenting obedience, what love for His neighbour, what faithfulness to His calling!

- Here is the beauty of which a human being is capable.
- Here is hope for what we can be who have come to Him for eternal life.

But there is another way in which we see the glory of the Word made flesh.

- Not only do we see the character of the divine person in our nature...
- B. We also see the glory of the Word made flesh as the perfect provision for us as sinners who are in need of salvation.
- As the One who is both God and man in one person, He is just what we need to reconcile us to God.
  - We see His glory as the only Saviour.
1. Right away, in the opening verses, as the light—who by divine power not only shines when He invades our nature, but who also enlightens us in our darkness.
  2. Then as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in 1:29, able to do so because He is both God and man,
    - The only one who, as offered as a sacrifice, can take away our sins.
  3. Next, He is seen as the ladder (1:51) that connects heaven to earth so that we have communion again with God—messengers going between us and God upon Him.
  4. Then in chapter 2, the Word made flesh is the One who turns water to wine—taking water that was used for cleansing and turning it into what gives us joy.
  5. Then in 2:13, He is the very temple, who, destroyed, is raised up on the third day as the place where God and man come together forever... He Himself as God and man is the trysting place, replacing the temple made with hands.
  6. In chapter 3, He is the serpent lifted up on the pole to bear our sins—the Son sent from heaven that whosoever believes in Him might have eternal life.
  7. At the end of chapter 3, He is the bridegroom who has the Spirit without measure to give us His bride, the church.
  8. In chapter 4 at Samaria, He is the one who gives living water to us if we ask so that we never thirst again, He being the Saviour of the world.
  9. Then in John 5, He is the One who co-labours with the Father, His equal; and the One who has been entrusted with all authority to give spiritual life to those who ask and to raise all from the graves at the last day and to judge them...
    - This is the task of Him as the Word made flesh... being both God and man.
  10. He describes Himself in chapter 5 as the One who has the witness in Himself along with the Father's witness and John's witness and the witness of signs, showing that salvation is in Him.
  11. In John 6, He is the bread of life that God sent from heaven to give life to the world... a provision that we can receive.
  12. In John 7:37-38, He is the One who says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." The Spirit is given by Him.
  13. In John 8, He is the light of the world who speaks truth to the world and brings us to the Father.
    - He explains that He was before Abraham and that Abraham trusted in Him.
  14. In John 9, the Word made flesh is the One who gives sight to the blind that they may be saved—He brings light and life to us again.



15. In John 10, the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep and gives them eternal life so that they will never perish.
16. In John 11, He raises Lazarus from the dead and declares that He is the resurrection and the life.
17. And in John 12, He is the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, but is lifted up and draws the nations to Himself for salvation.
18. In John 13, the Word made flesh washes our feet and loves us to the end.
19. In John 14, He is the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Him.
20. At the end of chapter 14, He is the One through whose name our prayers are heard. The Word made flesh opens access to our Father in heaven.
21. In John 15, He is the vine to which we must be attached if we are to have life and without which we can do nothing. The Word made flesh is the only source of spiritual life.
22. In John 16, He is the One who gives us the Holy Spirit to connect us to Him as life and light that we may see and have eternal life. This is the Word made flesh.
23. At the end of John 16, He declares that He, the Word made flesh, is the One who overcomes the world and the devil so that we may be of good cheer.
24. And above all, in chapter 17-20, He is presented as the One who dies on the cross and is raised up so that all who believe may have forgiveness of sin and eternal life.
  - Man could not do this unless He were God.
  - And God could not do this without becoming flesh.

TRANS> So you see how His glory is seen as our provision.

- We will explore how He brings salvation to us more this afternoon.
- But now, having seen how the glory of His divine person is displayed by becoming man, and how the glory of Him as our provision is seen...
  - now let's look at a third way His glory is revealed by becoming flesh.

C. We see the glory of God in sending the Word to become flesh.

1. We see the glory of God's love in His willingness to do this for us.
  - What great love was this that He who made the world and animated man with light and life should come to save us when we had turned to darkness and death?
    - We see the Father's great love in giving His eternal Son and sending Him to do this...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...
    - We learn of the great love of the Son for us and for the Father in agreeing to do this—in obeying the Father before He had become flesh—and in agreeing to lay down His life for us.
  - The glory of the divine love is nowhere revealed so marvellously as in the Word of God incarnate.
    - That He should do this for mere creatures is marvel enough.
    - That He should do this for creatures that rebelled and that hate Him makes it all the more unspeakably glorious.

2. We see the glory of His justice in that we see in the Word made flesh what was required to save us.
  - If something less could have been done, God would never have sent His Son to become flesh and bear the eternal wrath and curse of God on the cross.
  - But divine justice is such that sin is so unacceptable to Him that nothing else would do—
    - Hell must be a very terrible place when we see that the remedy to deliver us was the Son of God crucified.
3. We see the glory of His wisdom in devising such a plan to save us.
  - With such sin and such condemnation for sin, who could have ever dreamed that any salvation could be devised—and who but God could have devised it?
    - It completely befuddled the great philosophers of the world.
    - Some it humbled to believe, and others, in their pride, refused to accept that God would do such a thing as become flesh to save His creatures.
4. We also see the glory of His power in delivering us from our bondage to be His.
  - We were ruined and lost, but He is able to transform us.
  - How the lives of sinners are changed when they come to Him.
    - Perverts are no longer perverted, but become faithful spouses.
    - Drunkards are no longer drunkards, but become grateful worshippers.
    - Proud men are no longer proud—they yield to their God.
    - Selfish men (whether lazy or oppressors) learn to love and serve others.
    - Ungodly men become disciples of Christ who please God.
    - Cursing ones become those who bless others and who bless God.
  - What power there is in the Word made flesh when He bring life and light to us!

**Conclusion:**

You see then how much glory is revealed in the Word made flesh!

- The great question for you is, *have you beheld His glory* as the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us?
- Are you among those who have received Him and believed on His name so that you have become His son or daughter?

If you have not, I call you today to look at Him and live!

- There is nothing complicated about it.
- Just be honest about what you are without Him and look to Him as the One who is totally equipped to save you...the very Word of God made flesh.