

# A Word for All Seasons

by John Vissers

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*The sermon emphasizes that Jesus is the Eternal, Incarnate, and Saving Word of God, bringing hope and meaning to our lives during all seasons.*

**Duration:** 29:43

**Scripture:** John 1:1

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "The Word of God", "The Incarnation"

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## Description

John Vissers delivers a profound sermon titled 'A Word for All Seasons,' emphasizing that Jesus is the eternal, incarnate, and saving Word of God. He reflects on the significance of the prologue of John's Gospel, illustrating how Jesus, as the Word, brings meaning and context to our lives amidst a world filled with transient words. Vissers encourages the congregation to recognize the power of Jesus' message, which is not just for the Christmas season but for all seasons, inviting them to embrace the transformative nature of Christ in their lives. He highlights that through receiving Jesus, believers are granted the right to become children of God, emphasizing the personal and saving nature of God's Word. The sermon culminates in a call to invite the living Word into their hearts, ensuring that their words carry hope and life.

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## Transcript

Let's now turn to the lesson for the morning from God's Word, and in your Bibles turn with me to John chapter 1, where we read what is known as the prologue to the gospel, a wonderful passage which we read frequently during the Advent and Christmas season, but one that is filled with so much meaning and so much for us, and so let's look at this this morning as we read God's Word. John chapter 1 at verse 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through Him all things were made. Without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God. His name was John.

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 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.

Yet to all who received 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. 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. 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.

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the one and only who is at the Father's side has made him known.

Amen, and may God bless to us this reading from his Word. Let's pray together, shall we? Prepare our hearts and our minds, O Lord, this morning to receive your Word. Silence within us any voice but your own voice, that hearing your Word we may also obey your will for our lives through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. The Christmas season is filled with so many familiar words. We sing the familiar words of the Christmas carols as we gather in our special services.

We read the familiar words of the Christmas story week in and week out as we prepare ourselves for the celebration of Christmas. We write the familiar words of greeting in our Christmas cards and in our Christmas letters that we send to family and to friends. We wish people a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We speak of peace on earth and goodwill to men. Words of hope. Words of joy.

Words of peace. Words of comfort. And in a very real sense, these are seasonal words.

We use them, these words, once a year. And then after a few weeks, we pack them away often with our decorations off our Christmas tree. They've done their service for another year.

We kind of pack them away in the closet and we don't have to worry about using these words again until next year. Until Advent and Christmas rolls around again. And the sad thing is that many people never discover that the words of Christmas, these words that are so familiar, these words that for many of us are so familiar that they have become tired and worn out, that these words point to another word.

To a word for all seasons, the Word of God in Jesus Christ. In a world of tired words, the Bible points to the Word. The Word that really matters.

The Word that makes all the difference. The Word about which this season really speaks Jesus Christ. And that's what the opening verses of John's Gospel are all about.

In the opening verses in the prologue, John, the Gospel writer, speaks about Jesus as the Word. As the Word of God. Last week, we considered the promise of salvation.

And we saw how Jesus was the promise. The promised one who has come. This morning, we consider the Word of God centered in Jesus Christ.

And I want us to look at this passage and to reflect together on what it means to think and to understand and to believe that Jesus is the Word who comes to us during this Christmas season. And first of all, I want us to notice in this passage that Jesus is the eternal Word. John reminds us that Jesus is the eternal Word of God.

This is clearly stated in verses 1 to 3. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning, and through Him all things were made. Without Him, nothing was made that has been made.

Powerful, profound words to describe Jesus Christ who is the Word of God. The eternal Word. You see, John's Gospel begins in a unique and in a rather unusual manner.

Mark's Gospel begins with the account of John the Baptist and with the baptism of Jesus. Matthew begins his account of our Lord's life with the announcement to Joseph and the visit of the wise men. And Luke starts his Gospel with the announcement to Mary, the trek to Bethlehem, and the visit of the shepherds.

But in John's Gospel, the Christmas story peaks around the corner of the universe. And the life of Jesus is rooted firmly in all eternity. You see, the Jesus of Christmas is not simply a babe in a manger, but He is the Lord of the universe.

The text says that He was with God in the beginning. He is the eternal Son of the Father. He is the eternal Word of God.

He is the Creator of all that is, and in Him all things hold together through the Word of His power. He is Himself divine. Theologians describe this as the pre-existence of Christ.

That Jesus is the eternal One who had an existence prior to His coming into this world to His birth as a baby in Bethlehem. And the background to this idea of Jesus being the Word of God is found in the Old Testament. You notice that John chapter 1 begins in a way that is very familiar.

In the beginning. What does that remind you of? Genesis chapter 1. In the beginning. And in the Old Testament, the Word of God is that through which all things were brought into being.

You see, the Word of God in the Old Testament is not just the way that God communicates. It's not just that God speaks and His Word goes forth, but it's the very action of God Himself. God speaks and it is done.

Let there be light, God said, and there was light. And the Word of God is the creative force which brought the universe itself into existence. In the beginning, God spoke and it was done.

And what John is saying is that Jesus Christ is this eternal Word. This eternal Word of the Father through whom all things have been brought into existence. And then there's also in this passage the background of the Greek world, the word logos.

And for the Greeks, the Word was the reason behind the universe. The reason behind everything that exists. And so what John is saying here is that the Word of God is that which brings meaning to life itself.

And that Word is Jesus. And there never was a time, John says, that this Word of God did not exist. Jesus is the eternal Word of the Father.

He has always existed, the Eternal One, the Eternal Word. And John's words are echoed and they bounce around throughout the pages of the New Testament. Think, for example, of the Apostle Paul.

In Colossians 1, verse 15, Jesus, he says, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for by Him all things were created. Things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

Now this is a scandal to many in our day, but it was also a scandal to the first century to say that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father. Or think of the writer of Hebrews, who expresses it this way in Hebrews 1, in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son. Jesus is the final Word whom He appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe.

The Son, He says, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word, the eternal Word, the final Word. We live in a world where words are here today and gone tomorrow. Where often words don't amount to very much.

Our lives are filled with clumsy words that often don't mean very much, words that have no power. The information explosion has created a verbal inflation in our culture and daily as we live, day by day, an ocean of words floods into our lives via the telephone, via our television sets, our radios, our newspapers, the faxes we send and we receive, the email which we heard about already this morning, the internet through our personal computers. You see the information superhighway floods us with information and with facts and with words after words after words, but none of them last very long.

They're here today and they're gone tomorrow. By noon, when you pick up your morning paper by noon, if you don't get to read the paper by noon, it's already yesterday's news and most of the words that we hear and that we read and that we experience day by day don't amount to very much. In 1986, Ted Koppel of Nightline won the Broadcaster of the Year award in the United States and in his acceptance speech, this is what he said, what is largely missing in life today is a sense of context, of saying or doing anything that is intended or even expected to live beyond the moment.

We have become so obsessed with facts that we have lost all touch with truth. Consider this paradox, I love this, almost everything that is publicly said these days is recorded. Almost nothing of what is said is worth remembering and it's in this kind of a world, it's in this kind of a situation, it's in this kind of a culture that we hear this word from scripture that Jesus is the eternal word of the Father.

That he is the one who gives context and meaning to all of the other words of our lives. That he is a word worth remembering, a word that means everything, a word that communicates, a word without which every other word is meaningless. A word which created us, a word for every season of life, the eternal word of God in Jesus Christ.

Have you heard that word during this Advent and Christmas season? Is that the word you hear through the reading of the stories, through the singing of the hymns and the carols, through your conversation, through the the receiving and the sending of cards and letters? Do you hear that word? But secondly, the

opening verses of John's Gospel also speak about Jesus as the incarnate word. Verse 14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory. The glory of the one and only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is the language of incarnation, which means literally the word became flesh. The eternal word of God stepped out of the infinite reaches of eternity and into human history. The word became flesh.

John declares that the eternal word of God, the one and only begotten Son of the Father, took to himself a genuine human nature and lived a fully human, genuine human life without ever ceasing to be what he is. That is the eternal Son of God. The eternal Son of the Father.

And in verse 14, John uses the word in the language of dwelling or dwelt. And the word that's used there, the word dwelt, literally means that God pitched his tent in our midst for a while. God pitched his tent in this world for a while.

God lived for a while among us. And it brings out the idea of the Old Testament tabernacle, where God could be found among his people in the tabernacle as they traveled to the promised land. There God's glory dwelt.

There they could meet God. There the presence of God was felt and experienced day by day as a living reality. And what John is saying is that all of that glory, all of that power, all of that presence is found in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate One.

John's Gospel then describes the coming of our Lord into this world as a downward movement. The eternal Word did not remain as an abstract idea or a universal principle, but in a personal way stepped into human history, into our space and time. And in Jesus Christ, God became part of the pain and the loneliness and the suffering and the misery and the poverty and the helplessness of human existence.

He came to live, the Bible says, the life that we could never live. He came to die the death that we could never die. And he was raised to new life as the pioneer of a new life for the children of God.

And the Christmas story reminds us that the God that we worship is real. That in Christ, we handle and touch and encounter things unseen. A God who comes to us in the nitty-gritty of daily life.

The story is told about a little boy who deeply admired his father. His father was away fighting during the Second World War. And one Christmas, as he was missing his father, he stood for a long time just gazing at his father's picture one Christmas day.

And as his mother came into the room, he said, Mother, do you know what I wish more than anything else this Christmas? I wish that my father could step out of that picture frame and be here with us and be real to me today. That's precisely what God has done in Jesus Christ. God steps out of the picture frame.

God steps out of the far awayness and the distance of eternity and becomes real to us here and now. Do you know this morning the reality of that nearness? The Lord who is near. The Lord who has come in Jesus Christ.

The Word made flesh. Has that Word found a place in your heart? And then thirdly and finally, I want you to notice that John's Gospel in this prologue, in this opening passage, reminds us that the Word of God in Jesus Christ is a saving Word. It is a Word of power.

It is a Word which changes things. It's a Word which turns everything upside down. And it's a personal Word to you and a personal Word to me.

Verse 12. Those who receive and believe this Word are given the right to become the children of God. And a little later in verse 29, a verse we did not read, John the Baptist announces that this Word who has come, the Incarnate One, is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

You see, the Word of God in Jesus Christ is God's personal address to you and to me this Advent and Christmas season. And God does not speak to say nothing. He speaks to get our attention.

He speaks to bring reality to our lives. He speaks to introduce hope and meaning to our daily experience. He speaks to bring salvation to our souls.

God has spoken and His Word to us is Jesus Christ. I don't know how many times in my conversations with people I've encountered this kind of a response or reaction. You know, I would believe in God if only God would show me a sign.

If only God would speak to me in some real and in some personal way, then I would believe. Then I could trust. If only God would speak to me, then I would know what to do with my life.

It reminds me of a Woody Allen movie in Love and Death. Woody Allen says this, if God would only speak to me just once, if God would only cough, if I could just see a miracle, if I could see a burning bush, or if I could see the seas part, or just once if I could see my uncle Sasha pick up the check, then I would believe. Well, we can understand those feelings.

An unambiguous sign from God would surely make all the difference. But my friends, what John's Gospel declares to us is that that sign has been given. That Word has been spoken.

And it's been spoken in Jesus Christ. And that Word has been clearly addressed to us. And it has the power to judge us.

And He has the power to save us. Sometimes we take words for granted. We forget how powerful words can be.

Words have the power to hurt us. And they have the power to heal us. As children, we sing, sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me.

The problem is it's not true. Words can hurt and words can sting. Someone says something, just one word, an accusation, a lie, and it wounds us deeply forever.

Or in the midst of discouragement and despair, someone can bring a word of hope and it can transform our gloomy feelings. And it makes all the difference. Words can turn life around.

And God's Word to us is one, a Word of judgment and a Word of salvation. And when confronted by that Word, we are forced to face ourselves as we really are in our sin, in our need, in the crisis of our daily existence, our need for God, our desperation to have a Word that will give us meaning. A Word that will make all the difference.

But as we hear that Word, we hear it also as a Word of salvation, which brings comfort and hope in the midst of our pain. A Word which gives meaning and direction to our lives. During this Christmas season,

we're going to use a lot of words as we continue to sing the carols, as we continue to read the stories, as we continue to hear and receive words of greeting from others and give them ourselves.

We're going to use a lot of words, my friends. My question to you this morning is simply this. Will all of those words find their meaning for you and the One who is the Eternal and the Incarnate and the Saving Word, Jesus Christ? Have you heard that Word this morning? A Word for all seasons, not just this season, but all seasons.

And may I invite you in your own words, in your own heart, and in your own mind, to invite the living Word of God in Jesus Christ into your life so that the words you use and hear this Christmas will not be tired and not be meaningless and not be the same old thing, but full of hope and full of joy and full of life. The contemporary Christian artist, singer, musician, writer Michael Card has a wonderful song called The Final Word. Last week I quoted his song The Promise.

Hear these words. You and me, we use so many clumsy words. The noise of what we often say is not worth being heard.

When the Father's wisdom wanted to communicate His love, He spoke it in one final perfect word. He spoke the Incarnation and then so was born the Son. His final word was Jesus.

He needed no other one. Spoke flesh and blood so He could bleed and make a way divine. And so was born the baby who would die to make it mine.

And so the Father's fondest thought took on flesh and bone. He spoke the living luminous word. At once His will was done.

And so the transformation that in man had been unheard took place in God the Father as He spoke that final word. He spoke the Incarnation and then so was born the Son. His final word was Jesus.

He needed no other one. Spoke flesh and blood so He could bleed and make a way divine. And so was born the baby who would die to make it mine.

And so the light became alive and manna became man. Eternity came into time so we could understand. He spoke the Incarnation and then so was born the Son.

His final word was Jesus. He needed no other one. Spoke flesh and blood so He could bleed and make a way divine.

And so was born the baby who would die to make it. Let us pray. Let's just pause for a moment of silence and hear what God the Holy Spirit through the Word of God is saying to us this morning.

Speak Lord for your people are listening. Lord Jesus Christ, we praise you this morning that you are the eternal Word of God, the Incarnate One, the Savior of the world. Come into our lives, we pray, in a fresh way this day and make all our words words that point and speak of the living Word.

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