

Drawn Into the Father's Heart - John 1

by Michael Flowers

Michael Flowers' sermon invites believers to embrace their identity in Christ and be drawn into the intimate love of the Father as they share His light with the world.

Duration: 24:43

Topics: "Character Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the prologue of the Gospel of John, which introduces key themes that will be developed throughout the rest of the book. The prologue describes an eternal beginning, emphasizing the communion of love between God the Father and His Son, the eternal Word. The speaker highlights the idea of 'new light' that comes from God's incarnate Word, connecting it to the terminology used in John's prologue. The sermon also explores the concept of Jesus as the true light, who shines in the darkness and gives light to everyone, pointing back to the Father.

Transcript

Lord, we've already heard the scriptures preach to us today. Lord, I'm so impacted by these readings. We give you glory for the scriptures, the holy scriptures.

Send your word implanted now, Lord, as we meditate, as we contemplate this passage in John. The great gospel of John. Thank you that the word has been made flesh and tabernacles amongst us.

Thank you, God, that you pitched your tent in our midst and you continue to, as it were, camp with us. Thank you that your flesh has become the temple where your presence resides. Thank you for pouring out your spirit upon all flesh in your great ascension.

Pour it out and continue to increase, O Lord, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. May be seated.

Where has this year gone? Is it just because I'm old that time seems to go faster? Yes, I guess so. I mean, every year it just seems like it speeds up and here we are again celebrating a new year. Well, it's actually the secular new year, isn't it? We've already had the celebration of the new year in Advent.

But this seems a bit more daunting, you know, this this one. This is where we make all those promises again, right? This is where we push, delete and start all over. Yeah, well, I'm with you.

I have a few things that I'm pushing delete and I'm going to start all over again as well. And it's a good thing because he gives us grace to do that. And that is our humanity.

We're always, in a sense, starting over and being restored. We're in the midst of being restored. And so we're a work in progress, aren't we? Yeah, I sure am.

Well, on this New Year's Eve, the lectionary readings calls us to contemplate something new. New creation. And I was really taken by today's college because it just jumped out at me on page four there, it says, Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light.

I really like that. The new light of your incarnate word that goes with in pairs with some of the terminology that we're going to consider today in John's prologue, or shall we call it his overture, his overture. The first 18 verses of John's gospel are usually referred to as the prologue.

But it would be more accurate, says Leslie Newbegin to call it his overture. Like the overture of an opera, they announce these verses, these 18 verses announcing brief form, the great themes which will be developed as the story unfolds throughout John's gospel. John, in a sense, tells his story from above, whereas Matthew and Luke and Mark tell his story from below.

And so let's ponder these words today in brief, these themes that are going to show up throughout the rest of the gospel throughout this year as we seek to let the story unfold in our own lives in 2018. And some of these themes are life, light and darkness, truth, grace and glory. And we pray that these themes would continue to unfold in the depths of our everyday lives throughout this new year as we contemplate these words.

Verse one and verse 18 provide bookends for what's to come. Verse one speaks of an eternal beginning, an eternal beginning in the beginning before the creation of the world, describing a communion, really describing a communion of love between God, the father and his son, his eternal word. He described as the word who was with God.

And was God in the beginning. In this first verse, we see our destiny, a destiny given more insight in the other book in verse 18. No one has ever seen God, the only God who is.

And here's a couple of translations we're going to play with. Yes, he says the only God who is at the father's side. Other translations would say in the bosom of the father, we read those, we've seen those, but some of the early Greek fathers translated it very, very literally.

And it would it would be translated like this. No one has ever seen God, the only God who is in the womb of the father, the womb of the father, metaphorically speaking, no doubt of this deep, intimate place where the source of all life exists, it's that womb of the father that Jesus came to call us back into, into that place of intimacy with him that had been broken when we had fallen, as the liturgy says, into sin and death. The father sent his son, Jesus Christ, to restore us and to bring us back, as it were, into the father's womb.

I love that this one, Jesus Christ, it says in verse 18 and it ends, he has made him known. And that's the word translated exegesis, he has exegeted, exegesis is one of those meticulous forms of scripture interpretation. Right now, I'm just expounding a few things.

I'm not really exegeting this passage. We'd be here all year. Right.

Got commentaries that thick, you know. Oh, but the son has exegeted, has made known the father. If you've seen me, Jesus says, you've seen the father.

You've seen the father. He comes to show us what God is like because the father. Yet this is Christ like.

The father is Christ like if you've seen me, you've seen the father, I'm drawn to this imagery about the father's womb as it speaks to the most intimate source of all life and existence. We are called through restored communion with Jesus into the communion at the father's side, hidden within the womb and the source of all life. This is where Jesus brings us back.

Now, that same word for womb. Is used to describe the gospel's author, John, and his special relationship with Jesus in John 13, 23, it says the one who reclined on Jesus. Breast on the breast or the chest of Jesus.

And it can be translated bosom chest. It can even be translated pocket for that fold of a garment that that folds over your chest. And there's, in a sense, a pocket created there in front of the heart.

We're in the pocket of the father. I like that we're in the pocket, the womb where we've been called to lay our heads on the chest, the breast of the father through Jesus. This is the image of the communion we're called to enjoy in Christ.

This is the reason why the word became flesh. The word made flesh brings us back to the eternal origins, as it were, the womb of the father. Our hearts are restless until we find our place in this womb.

You see, this place of intimate communion, nearness, reconciliation, eyelash to eyelash, as the Latin means in the womb of the father. Well, that's verse one and that's verse 18, pulling all of this together. Let's see what's in the middle.

Verse two tells us that all things were made through this word, this logos, the work of co-creation of the father and the son and the Holy Spirit in the first creation. It says that in verse four, in him, in the logos was life and this life was the light of all humanity. This life was the light of all humanity.

Here's some missional keys for us as we look upon the light of the world. The true light, verse nine says this, the true light, which gives light to everyone. Was coming into the world, this is his pre-incarnate being who was in the beginning, who created all things, shines his light in the darkness and says, let there be in everyone who is created in the image and likeness of God, this light informs of who God is.

If we would only listen, right, this light is indiscriminate. This light points back to the father. This light points back to the womb of the father through Jesus Christ made flesh.

John is telling us that the word, the logos before becoming flesh in Jesus Christ gives light to everyone. We have to trust that because as we share the gospel, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ and that light is accompanying us and that light, in a sense, has been imprinted upon every person in the image and likeness of God. And that is what we appeal to in deep respect of the other.

You, my brothers and sisters, are made in the image and likeness of God, whether you're in church or whether you're not. The image has been marred through sin and death. Yes, but we appeal to the living one who comes to restore that broken image in every one of us.

Amen. Oh, it's such a healing of creation. That's what salvation is.

It's not just Jesus living in my heart. He so loved the cosmos. That's the Greek word.

He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Amen. God loves all the stars and the planets and all that's material, because he said it's very good and I'm coming back to restore it fully because it's mine.

He created it. He's the maker. Of heaven and earth, I'm in.

Everyone made, therefore, and I'm going to say this again in the image and likeness of God are stamped. Let's get this with the image that provides access, that image, that stamp of the divine and all people, because he owns all people, because he created them. That stamp of his image gives us access to the light.

And to this life, it provides access to this life, the light of everyone, John says he is the light of everyone, a means of coming to faith in new birth. And Jesus Christ is that light accompanying the preaching of the word. And therefore, I'm going to say it again, all of our friends and neighbors outside the church, outside the church are stamped with this image and can and can't access this light if we only appeal to it, if we only appeal to it and speak to the treasure in everyone.

The creator calls his creation to join him in the womb, the womb of the father, a reconciliation of heaven and earth, that's what Christmastide is all about. Of God and humanity, be reconciled, Paul says in this great communion of love, be reconciled, cilia, eyelash to eyelash. The light shines in the darkness and is not hindered by it, is not bothered by it, and therefore, he calls us to arise and shine in the midst of the darkness.

Go into all the world and be that light, arise and shine, your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you, just speak that, you know, we have to preach the gospel to ourselves, right before we can ever preach it to anyone else. We have to preach it to ourselves daily. And, you know, I don't know about you, but when I get up, I need to preach this one arise.

That's the first word, arise and shine, right? And a little coffee can help arise and shine for your light has come, the word made flesh. And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you in the sun's radiance, right? Amen. Annie Dillard, the American writer and poet, says this, you don't have to sit outside in the dark.

If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will have to find that darkness is necessary. Yes, this reminds us of our vocation. Paul speaks of this in Philippians two to shine like stars in the universe, holding out the word of life.

We have to be in dark places to do that, or our light doesn't appear to be light. You see, we have to shine like stars in the universe, which is a very dark place without the stars, without the sun, without the moon, surrounded by this darkness. We're called into all the world in companionship with Jesus.

He says, I'm with you always, even till the end of the age. And so our vocation is a companionship, a communion with Jesus, offering that deep, rich call back to that womb of the father in which we live. If people get a glimpse of that, they want it.

You guys, this is in every heart. They want to be restored to the father. Everyone wants restoration.

Everyone wants forgiveness. Everyone craves for mercy. And that's what we're called to offer.

We're the channels of this reconciliation. We are called to be the merciful. We're called to be the salt of the earth.

In companionship, in communion with the radiance of the sun. Not in and of ourselves. And so called out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Darkness, why? Why this vocation, you must ask Ephesians two, I'm just going to read this passage to you as it preaches Ephesians two. We're called into this light. Which is the life, John says, this light is the life juxtaposed with death.

In a culture of death, in a condition of death and mortality, Paul tells us you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in all the sons and daughters of disobedience. See, this is that dragon. That's standing before the male child in the heavenlies seeking to devour it.

This is that dragon that we spoke of last week in Revelation 12. Following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we once lived in the passions of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

And here's the great but but. But God being rich in mercy, this is the father. Because of the great love with which he loved us, got to get that in our bones, even when we were dead.

And our trespasses and sins made us alive, made us alive together with Christ by grace, you have been saved and raised us up with him. Is this good and seated us with him? In the heavenly places in Christ. So that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Now, brothers and sisters, if you don't spend at least an hour with that, you won't get that. I mean, you just have to sit. You know, Paul just doesn't use commas and periods.

I mean, it's just all these run on things. I mean, you know, the whole chapter of Ephesians one is like that. I mean, but that's some heavy duty stuff right there.

Unless you're bored being a Christian. And then I would just say, repent, Christians should never be bored. If you've been bored this year, I want you to go into the new year saying, I will not be bored.

I will read the scriptures, because if you read the scriptures, you'll get your marching orders and you'll get your marching orders from a place of just incredible affirmation about who you are in Jesus Christ. If anyone is in Christ, new creation, you are new creations in Jesus Christ awaiting that newness for sure. But the promise is sure.

And the deposit, the down payment is there in the presence of the Holy Spirit right now incarnate in your body. And you've experienced an incarnation of the Holy Spirit, a divination sanctifying you and setting you apart so that you can be called out of darkness into this marvelous light so that you can hold out the word of life. Amen.

That's our vocation. Well, this proclamation in Ephesians two, and it goes on, I mean, the whole book, it's a proclamation of the gospel. It builds on John's themes of light and life and darkness and grace and truth.

How did all this happen? Takes us back to John. Now, how did all this happen? Seating us in heavenly places and giving us life when we were dead by the word becoming flesh. By this divinity taking on human flesh and descending and becoming a servant to the whole cosmos, Jesus Christ, the word became flesh and pitched his tent among us in order to demonstrate the great love of the father in his death on the cross.

While we were enemies, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, a demonstration of this great love. Perfect love cast out all fear. There he is in his glory on the cross, as John depicts Jesus in his gospel, his greatest glory is the cross.

And so as you say, the Nicene Creed, as you say, the Apostles Creed, you can stare at that and get the whole creed pretty much. In the Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ has ascended and Christ will come again. These are the very basic elements that are so often overlooked, my brothers and sisters.

And so in this coming year, let us walk in the light, let us live in this light as he is that light and in that light and be drawn into the history of this great story, that we would participate in this story, that we would participate as sons and daughters, that we would shine like stars in the universe, holding out the word of life. And in order to do that, let us lay aside all shame. Let us lay aside all sense of failure.

Let us lay aside all disappointments. And the sin that so easily besets us. Cast it away this day.

The frustrations that you experience, cast them away, begin anew, begin anew in the rich mercy of the father so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Happy New Year. Amen, amen, amen.

Let's stand together.

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