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Christmas Day

John 1:1-2, 14, 16-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.

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.

¹⁶ From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (NIV 84)

Theme: Jesus—A Glorious Gift

Have you ever asked for a Christmas present, but soon after you received it you regretted it? Your parents warned you about it, but you begged and begged for it, so they caved and got it for you. And it first it was exciting, but that excitement soon dwindled and eventually you didn't want nothing to do with it. Maybe it was the year's most popular toy, that wasn't all that it was cracked up to be. But more than likely it was some sort of pet—maybe not a dog or even a cat, but something like a bunny or a hamster. Again—you were excited at first to get this new pet for Christmas. But soon you found out that it was a lot of work—you had to feed and water it every day, make sure it got some exercise, clean the cage, line someone up to take care of your pet when you went on vacation. You really wanted it, but eventually you learned to regret it as it became clear that you didn't know what you were asking for.

In our first lesson for this morning Moses did something similar as he asked to see God's glory. How cool would that be—to see God's glory? Now it is true that the Bible talks about Moses talking with God face to face, but just a few verses before our first lesson Moses describes how the pillar of cloud would enter into the tent of meeting and then Moses would enter into the tent and talk to God face to face as a man talks to a friend.

Moses may have talked to God, but the pillar of cloud filled the tent so Moses didn't actually see God's glory. But he wanted to, so like an

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ignorant child asking for a pet for Christmas, Moses asked to see God's glory.

But there was a major problem with what Moses asked. He was a sinner, and because he was a sinner he could not look at God in his full glory and expect to live. God is holy and Moses was not so if God would have given him what he requested, Moses would have died. As God said to Moses, **you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.**

We like to think pretty highly of ourselves. We think we are good, smart, and noble. We tell ourselves that we can be anything we want to be, that we deserve to stand up with the best of the best. This is one of the many reasons why we see so many people today rebelling against authorities—it has been instilled in us that we are better than everyone else. And so we don't really give leaders and others the proper respect. At times we may behave in the same manner toward God. We complain to God. We tell him what to do and what not to do. Or we assume that we are good enough to stand next to God—that we deserve a place next to him like James and John asked Christ. But the fact remains we are sinners just like Moses. We are no better than Moses or anyone else. We sin against the Lord again and again. We may think that we have a reason to be proud and arrogant, but we really don't. Each one of us should confess sincerely with Paul that I am the worst of sinners. And even with just one sin we are not able to stand before the holy and almighty God. He is perfect and we are not therefore we can't see him and expect to live.

So God refused Moses' request. And rightfully so—it was an act of love. But he did allow Moses to see a glimpse of his back. This was enough for Moses. What a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love that he would allow a poor miserable sinner like Moses to simply see a glimpse of him!

And that certainly was a great gift. But the Lord gives us a greater gift than that today—he gives us a glorious gift in his one and only son.

About 1500 years after Moses, the Word became flesh. John wrote his gospel years after the other three gospels were written. He fills in the gaps, so to speak. And because Matthew and Luke already covered the historical account of Jesus' birth, John opts to give us a poetic and

beautiful description of the incarnation—God taking on human flesh. In verse one John writes, **In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** Who exactly is the Word? In verse 14 John reveals who the Word is, **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** The Word is obviously Jesus. He came down from heaven and took on human flesh and dwelled among us for a while. He is both God and man. The word for “dwelling here” indicates living in a tent—this is a clear reference to the Lord dwelling in the Tent of Meeting where Moses talked to him. In Jesus, God dwells among his people!

Look back at verse 1 again. It is made up of three separate phrases and they all teach us something about Christ. **In the beginning was the Word:** it may remind us of the first words of Genesis. But Jesus wasn’t just around and active in the creation of the world, as God he is eternal, therefore he was around before the beginning! The second phrase, **The Word was with God,** shows us that Jesus is separate and distinct from God and Father. They are two separate persons. And yet the third phrase, **and the Word was God,** indicates that while they are separate they are also the same. Jesus is God just as the Father is God (and also the Holy Spirit, of course). So Jesus is eternal, distinct from the Father, and yet he is one with the Father since Jesus is God! That is who became flesh—the almighty, eternal, and holy God. He came down to earth to be born of a virgin and dwell among us. He gave up his divine glory and splendor take up human flesh. By looking at him it seemed as if he was just a regular human. Think about that first Christmas night—the glory of the Lord appeared to the shepherds; but Jesus’ appearance was that just like any other baby’s. And yet, in Jesus we see the glory of God! As John wrote, **We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only.** Even when the Lord hid himself, he revealed his glory. By his teachings, and knowledge, by his miracles and his transfiguration before John himself along with Peter and James, Jesus indicated who he truly was—the Word made flesh. He wasn’t just a regular man; but God. Because Moses was a sinner the Lord had to hide his glory from him, but in Christ that glory is revealed to us, even while it is hidden!

John and the other Apostles saw his glory. But we see that glory too. All believers in Jesus Christ have seen the glory that came from the Father. We see it in Jesus through the eyes of faith. Just in the fact that God sent his Son into the world, we see his glory; we see that he is

gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness.

God took on flesh for one reason—to save mankind. By living a perfect life that we could not, by taking our sins upon himself, and by suffering through the eternal punishment that we deserve, he was able to serve as our substitute.

And because of the Word made flesh we have blessing after blessing—a better translation is grace upon grace. The undeserved love that God has for us is given to us again and again, piled up on top of itself. For it is grace that God took on human flesh, it is grace that he removed the guilt of all our sins, it is grace that he will take us to live with him in heaven forever; it is grace that we see his glory.

Moses wanted to see God’s glory, but the Lord’s answer wasn’t entirely a ‘no,’ but it was more of a ‘not yet, but soon.’ In his first letter John explains what we’ll see in heaven, **we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**

Because of the Word, we are now pure and holy. We can now stand before God without fear as we will see him as he is in his full glory. And that is a gift that we will not ever regret. Amen.

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 24-25)