

New Years Day 2017

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Date: 01 January 2017

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] And if we could all please turn to John chapter 1.

John chapter 1 and we read from 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 is not understood, or the darkness is not overcome. 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.

[1 : 32] 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.

Now this was John's testimony, when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask Him who He was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, I am not Christ.

[2 : 51] They asked Him, Who then are you? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet? He answered, No. Finally they said, Who are you?

Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, I am the voice of one calling in the desert.

Make straight the way for the Lord. Now some Pharisees you had been sent questioned him, Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?

I baptize with water, John replied. But among you stands one, You do not know, He is the one who comes after me, The thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

This all happened at Bethany, On the other side of the Jordan, Where John was baptizing. The next day, John saw Jesus coming towards him, And said, Look, The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.

[3 : 50] This is the one I meant when I said, A man who comes after me has surpassed me, Because he was before me. I myself did not know him, But the reason I came baptizing with water, Was that he might be revealed to Israel.

Then John gave his testimony, I saw the Spirit come down from heaven, As a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, Except that the one who sent me to baptize with water, Told me, The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain, Is he who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

I have seen, And I testify, That this is the Son of God. And so on, To the end of the chapter. May God add his blessing to that reading of his word.

We're now going to pray again, And Don McSween is going to lead us, I think, in prayer and call. So he says, I want to thank you, Lordas will definitely believe that.

I'm invited forward to making shit. MRAS COORE So he is one of whom you have listened And he gave him a gift, And he did not change you, He did not learn To bring God to the kids into their shifts.

[5 : 24] Let their dream ass ■■■■■■■■■■ Behold, the Free Lord have boats in the territory, of which quiet them.

Without a partial blake, there will be a northersers that they occupy. And then, they will all be the bitter ones yet.

But because I do everything I want, because I'll let them Omeera in there. We did not believe that the leader in the Galle regulations of German■ in the Middlebury area are always used to share But ultimately everything would bring up and we would have to take a thumbs up and make sure Lord, and that mercury poured ■■■■ knowledge and in the way that.

Our support community had a Hamasavet Heurenege glassham for me to enjoy it by countless times this earthquake, We've come through people to Win assunto.

So, when there comes any want as a widespread address that's cemetery? We've met a charity to win and let the world know when the Chinese are relevant.

[6 : 56] We've coming toiano followers, But we are continuing our daily life as we follow the same kind that connection when it's over área.

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ain that can beaa the blood of the river, and everyone Eyiquem and the gotham.

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[10 : 07] ...

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[11 : 23] . . . The source of the old prophetic fire. Fountain of life and love.

Come Holy Ghost, removed by thee. The prophets wrote and spoke. Unlock the truth. Thyself the key. And seal the sacred book. That's our prayer as we come to God's word.

Amen. The source of the old prophetic fire.

The dead of life and love. Holy Ghost, removed by thee.

The prophets wrote and spoke. Unlock the truth.

[13 : 02] Thy sound, the key. Of seal the sacred book. It's by thy way, celestial love.

Through all your nature's might. On earth is ordered, still is blue.

And let there now be light. Through himself we then shall know.

If thou within us shine. I'll surround with all thy saints below.

The dead of love divine. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[14 : 15] Just a brief prayer. Our Father, as we have sung, we would come and pray in accord with the words that we have sung. You are the God who is unable to unlock the sacred book for us.

Without the help of the Holy Spirit, we are at a loss to be able to understand or see or hear or speak. So we pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.

As we meditate upon the word. And we meditate upon the word in order that we would know you. We do this, Lord, not to fulfill an academic exercise.

Not to acquire head knowledge. But we pray that through the word that we study, you would meet with us and reveal yourself to us. And we pray that we would be enabled to say that we know you. That you are our God. And that we are your people. And all these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. If you could turn and preach to John chapter 1.

[15 : 19] The passage that we read together. This time of the year tends to be a time of the year where there's a lot of social functions.

There are a lot of things that we get invited to. A lot of places that we go to that we might not go to otherwise in the course of the year. And we've probably all been in a situation where we're at a

social function.

Whether it's a dinner or a party of some kind. And people are mingling. And people are getting to know each other. And you look around you and you listen.

And there's conversations happening everywhere. But you feel that you are actually not able to speak to anyone. Sometimes we're conscious in these situations.

Everybody else is mingling. But we feel like a spare part. We feel like we're being overlooked. Maybe sometimes we can be at work.

[16:25] Whether it's in the office or the bank or on a boat or whatever. And we're grafting away. We're putting everything into it. But no one ever seems to notice.

And you just have this sense. That everybody else is recognised. But you're overlooked. I don't know if it's occurred to anybody as we've been going through John's Gospel.

For those who are visiting, we've been going through John's Gospel now. The first opening verses of the Gospel for the last five or six weeks. And we've gone through the first 18 verses really in the run up to Christmas.

But there's one person in these first 18 verses who's very clearly in the verses. But we've almost entirely overlooked them. Who's that?

It's John. But I think John would have been fine with that. I think John would have been fine with the fact that our focus has been on Christ.

[17:33] The questions that we've been asking as we've come to this passage is, what does this say to us about God? What does this say to us about Jesus? The Word made flesh.

So as we've progressed through the verses, without a mention barely of John, I don't think there would be any objections from John's corner.

In fact, that's not just speculation. That's knowledge. We know that would be the case because John resolved that that would be the case. This is the 1st of January.

It would be interesting to do a wee survey of resolutions. What resolutions there might be in the hall here. What resolutions people have made. The beginning of the year to take forward into the year.

This is the day traditionally that we think about and we may make resolutions. What was John's resolution? Think about that. What was John the Baptist's resolution?

[18:33] Not so much around New Year's resolution, but an every year, every day resolution. Well, it can be summarised very succinctly.

John's resolution was largely to be one who would be overlooked. John's prayer in chapter 3, this will, I guess, come to the next few weeks.

His prayer, in summary terms, was more about Jesus and less about me. He must increase, says John.

Christ must increase. I, self, must decrease. So, in the weeks past, we haven't looked at John.

Today, though, we are going to look at John. And as we look at John the Baptist, John will do what John always does and he will help us to look past himself and he will help us to look past ourselves and he will tell us again and again and again to look to and fix our eyes upon Christ.

[19:47] So, three things about John the Baptist as we look at chapter 1. The first thing is John knows who he is.

The second point is that John knows who he is not. The third point is John knows who Jesus is. So, that's the map for the day.

We'll spend more time on the first point. John knows who he is. Secondly, John knows who he is not. And thirdly, John knows who Christ is.

So, first of all, John knows who he is himself. Now, most of the time in our lives, we're just so busy getting on with life and all the fury and the activity of daily routines that we don't often stop and think and ask these big questions.

Who am I? And, you know, what am I here on this planet to do? But New Year, to a degree, acts as a prompt. There's a day or two, maybe even a week or two at the beginning of the year where perhaps we're just a bit more thoughtful than we usually are.

[21:00] We may think a bit more about who we are and who we might want to be. So that's the question we would preface this with.

Do you know who you are? John knows who he is. Do you know who you are? And do you know on the first day of this year what your life is all about?

Why you're here? Well, John very clearly did. And as we look and listen to John, we learn that John is one who was created.

He's one who was called. Verse 6 makes clear to us that John was created. There came a man who was sent from God.

John's origin, John's source is in God. He knew where he came from. He knew that he wasn't just a lump of DNA and bones and flesh and tissue.

[22 : 11] John knew that he was a created being who had a father who had made him and who loved him and who was calling him to come close.

And that's the first point to note in application. What John knew and what we see in John as we observe him is true of us.

The Bible teaches us that God is our creator. You and I are created beings and we are created in the image of God.

Genesis 1.27 says, So God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God he created them. Male and female he created them.

And that's something we need to be reminded of often. In a world where we are increasingly told that we are not created. The Bible is that correct.

[23 : 20] Psalm 39 we could have gone to and read of the fact that we are fearfully and we are wonderfully made. We are created.

And that means that we are people of great worth. Sometimes in the world we are made to feel like we are worth nothing. As we come to God he shows us how much we are worth to him.

He shows us he tells us that our lives here are no accident. Our lives mean something. Our lives have purpose.

Our lives have value. The one who created you calls you. He calls you not only into being but he calls you into fellowship into communion with himself.

That should astound us. Every time we hear that that should astound us. That the God of heaven and earth who called everything that we see into being in a moment determined to make us.

[24 : 40] and calls us as individuals to know him. And he sent his son into this world to take the sin away.

The barrier between man and God Jesus came to take it away. Why? So that we who had become so far from God because of our sin could be brought close again and know him.

John knew who he was. He knew that he was created and he knew that he was called. John didn't just know where he had come from.

John knew why he was present on planet earth. he knew that he was on the world as one who was verse 6 sent from God.

Why was he sent from God? Verse 7 tells us the answer to that one. Simply he was sent from God to be a witness. Now we're well used to this kind of terminology and this imagery on television.

[26 : 00] We might have experienced it in the flesh some of us. You think about the court case scene. And the court case is underway and the case is being presented and then there's a witness.

And that witness who has a key role is called to come and take the stand. They're called to give an account perhaps of the one that they know that they are giving a reference to or perhaps they're being called to give an account of the circumstances that they've witnessed, that they've seen.

And John is one who knew that his life was about being a witness. his life was about being a witness to the one who came after him chronologically but was before him eternally and who surpassed him supremely that of Christ.

And so John was crystal clear that for every day that he was given on this earth his life was about helping others to see and to understand and to believe and to come to know Christ.

That was his calling. That was his purpose. And that's your purpose also.

[27 : 24] That's something for us to take into the new year. what is your life about and what is my life about? It's not about making as much money as we can possibly make.

It's not about getting to the highest rung of the ladder in our career that can possibly be at. It's not about all these things that the world places such a huge emphasis on.

Our purpose in life, God's purpose for us, first of all, is to come to see and believe in Christ.

And then to bear witness to the Jesus that we have come to know and love and trust so that others through our testimony will believe.

Why are you here? One, to see and to believe in Jesus, the one who can give us eternal life, and secondly, to bear witness to the one that we have come to trust.

[28 : 33] That's our purpose. God of the universe, the judge of the universe, he calls us to be witnesses. That's our job description.

God says, now that you believe in my Son, if you're one who believes in the Son, go and tell others to believe in the Son.

The Lord says to us, even in this chapter, now that you have been rescued from hell, if you're trusting Christ, now that you have been assured of heaven, go and tell other people so that they too can be sure that they will be saved.

I am calling you, says the Lord, to be witnesses. I created you, and now I'm calling you to be witnesses to Christ.

Jesus, remembering Acts chapter 1, as he was ascending to heaven, the last words, the words that ran out in the ears of his disciples as he ascended was, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

[29 : 57] So you and I are called, not just me, but all of us who are believers are called to be witnesses. Whatever circles we move, and whatever offices whatever workplaces we may populate, whatever family circles we are part of, whatever we are doing day by day, our primary calling is to be witnesses, good witnesses to Jesus.

We are called to tell the world about Christ. So John the Baptist knows who he is. He was created by God, for God, and he was called by God to be a witness.

The second thing is John knows not only who he is, but John knows who he is not. One of the commentators when I was studying this passage says that he makes the observation that Jesus by his own declaration, Jesus is the great I am.

John's gospel is full of Jesus saying I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life, I am the bread, I am the good shepherd and so on. Jesus is the great I am. John by contrast, says one commentator, is the great I am not.

And John knows he is not. John was crystal clear that he was not the Christ. And as John's ministry in this world began to attract attention, as the crowds began to throng, as people came to investigate who is this man and what message is he bringing, as a buzz of excitement was around the whole ministry of outreach that John was engaged in, as John's reputation was building and people were following him and his celebrity status was starting to rise, people started to ask the question, John, are you the one we're looking for?

[32 : 02] Are you the promised one? Are you the one we should be looking to and trusting and spending time with? Remember it was 600 years since the people had heard a prophetic whisper and anticipation was building, where is the promised one?

Where is the Messiah? And then there's this unusual man who comes onto the scene and the religious authorities don't quite know what to make of him, so they sent a deputation to ask John directly, who are you?

Verse 19, now this was John's testimony, when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, I am not the Christ.

John knew that he was not the centre of the universe. John knew that he was not God.

And in that location, bizarre as this might sound to some at first, you and I need to know who we are not. You and I need to know that we are not God.

[33 : 33] Because the greatest idol of our culture is not made of wood or stone or gold, it doesn't sit in temples or on mantel pieces. The greatest idol in our culture today is the self, me, myself.

and we are encouraged in the culture that we live in to take on the role, the place, the position of God in our lives.

So what I want to do, I'll jolly well do it. What feels right to me, why shouldn't I have that pleasure? Me first.

If it suits me, if it fits with me, let's do it. John, both by virtue of his lifestyle and his witness, reminds us that we are not God.

Our lives are not about pleasing ourselves. Our lives are about pointing to the one who is God. And there's actually a great freedom in just absorbing that simple, profound fact that we are not Lord.

[34 : 51] God. How many people do we know, how many people can we actually think about just now, who are just stressed out to the max?

Whenever you meet them, they're like a chicken in a storm, that's the phrase, I can't know what the phrase is, but they're flapping around all over the place, stressing out over everything, on the verge of a nervous breakdown it seems, because they're trying to take on the role of God and Lord of their lives.

They're hanging on to the steering wheel of their lives as if they could control every twist and turn and every path and route, trying often without success just to keep control and keep things steady when we can't.

Tim Keller says, you are not qualified to be God. You are not qualified to be God.

We need to know that. And when we realise that, when we ask the Lord Jesus to be the Lord and King of our lives, what relief, what freedom, what peace we have, what purpose we have.

[36 : 13] Do you want to know how you can experience real joy in 2017? It's not about elevating self. It's about elevating Christ.

It's by making our chief end, our first resolution, our primary desire, not the glory of self, but the glorification of Christ and his kingdom.

We had a similar thread on Wednesday evening. We were in Psalm 31, just in the order of things as it was. And we have there the picture of David the psalmist. He's living with the constant threat of intense danger and harm.

He's living in the most turbulent of circumstances, and yet he's able to say in that psalm, I trust in you, O Lord. I say you are my God and my times are in your hands.

Can you say that? Got into 2017. Honestly. Can you and I say that? I trust in you, O Lord.

[37 : 32] You and not me and not anyone else. You are my God. And so whatever happens, I can be at ease. I can be steady.

I can be joyful with the knowledge of the fact that my times, however long and short they might be, they're in your hands. John knows who he is.

And John knows who he is not. And finally, John knows who Jesus is. And John bears witness witness to the fact that Jesus is not just another prophet, not just another teacher, not just another philosopher.

John bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the long awaited Christ. He is the one that they were looking for. And John bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

So let's think just for two minutes in conclusion about that. John knows who Jesus is. Do you know who Jesus is? this morning. Because we have such confusion in our current day about who Jesus is and why he came.

[38 : 50] There's confusion in the world, there's confusion in the church. Jesus is the long awaited Christ. The word Christ was not the surname of Jesus.

The word Christ was a name that was reserved for the one and only. the promised one, the anointed one, the long expected one, the one in whom all our hopes and dreams are realized in.

And John could not and John determinedly would not take that title to himself or give it to anyone else. The name Christ belonged to Jesus and Jesus alone.

and still today, the name Christ belongs to Jesus and Jesus alone. The one who was promised who can forgive our sins, the one who was promised who can save our souls, the one who was promised who can give us soul satisfaction is Christ and none other.

And so you can take whatever name of whatever worldly leader, you can take whatever name of whatever other religious deity that might be out there in the whole scene of world religion, and you put them alongside Jesus and to lift the words of verse 8, Jesus is the one who comes before them and who surpasses them.

[40 : 28] Because he is the Christ. He is the Lord. He is the one and only. He is the only one who is worthy of your life and worship and mine.

I remember hearing the testimony of somebody sitting here this morning actually, and he was speaking about how he came to faith. One of the key moments in his coming to faith was being at a rock concert and seeing thousands of people, like a huge sea, in a hall.

And as he kind of stood back from it, God had been working on his life prior to this, as he stood back and observed this scene of worship and adulation directed towards this band on a stage, he knew in his heart this band were not worthy of that kind of worship.

