

**February 23, 2013**

**Slide Children's Time** – Ask children to come up to the front.

**Title:** A Voice in the Wilderness

**Theme:** Preparing for the coming King.

**Object:** Some cleaning equipment. (mop, pail, broom, etc.)

**Scripture:** 3 “At that time John the Baptist came to the desert of Judea and started preaching. ‘Turn away from your sins,’ he said, ‘because the Kingdom of heaven is near!’ John was the man the prophet Isaiah was talking about when he said: ‘Someone is shouting in the desert, prepare a road for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!’ ” (Matthew 3:1-3 The Message)

Do you always keep your room neat and clean? Are all your toys picked up? Are there any clothes on the floor or hanging over the back of a chair? Did you make your bed this morning? Are any "dust bunnies" hiding under the bed? If you knew I was coming to visit this afternoon, would you have to rush home to make sure everything was cleaned up?

My mother was a very good housekeeper, and although our house always looked great to me, I can still remember what happened if my mother found out that company was coming. She brought out the broom, the mop and pail, sponges, window cleaner, bathroom cleaner, dust rags, and furniture polish. Then she called all the children together and assigned each of us the jobs that we were to do. When we were finished, she checked to make sure that not a speck of dirt remained.

Can you imagine what it would have been like around our house if we had been

expecting somebody really important -- someone like a king or queen? Well, that is what our Bible lesson is about this morning - the coming of a King. Not just any king -- the King of Kings! Jesus!

The Bible tells us that in the days before Jesus began his ministry, a man called John began preaching and telling the people to prepare for the coming King. When John told people to prepare for the King, he didn't mean that they should go home and sweep the floor, pick up their toys, and make their beds. He meant that they should prepare their hearts. How, how can someone prepare their heart? They prepared their heart for the return of the King by repenting of their sins and turning their hearts toward God in prayer. When they did this, John would baptize them in the Jordan River. That is how he got the name, "John the Baptist."

It is important for you and me to make our hearts ready for the coming of the King also. We do this by confessing our sins and asking God to forgive us. If we will do this, the Bible tells us that God will forgive us and make our hearts clean. Then we will be ready for Jesus when He comes.

Let's pray together. Father God, every day we do things for which we need Your forgiveness. We ask You to forgive us and make our hearts clean so that we will be ready to welcome the coming of the King of Kings -- our Lord Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Go back to your seats and we will sing from our hearts.

John 1:14-18

Sermon #7

**Slide** Grace - Truth

**Blank** We left off studying verse 14 of John chapter 1. What a verse it was. Look in your bibles as I read, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus, God, very God, as we read in verses 1 to 5, became a man that mankind might know God and see God’s glory through Jesus. Later in the Gospel according to John; Jesus says of Himself, **Slide** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His **only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

(John 3:16) Your translation might say “only” or “one and only”, the word has a deeper meaning. The Greek word is **Slide** μονογενής *monogenes* meaning “unique” or without equal or one original with no others. This is important to understand for this word *monogenes* is used by John twice in the 5 verses of 14 to 18. **Blank** In verse 14 we read, “we saw His glory, glory as of the **only begotten from the Father**” Jesus is the “unique” Son of God, He is the only one and there is no other like Him – ever! God is “unique” for He is the one and only pure being ever and Jesus is like God the Father in that He is pure and complete in Himself. Jesus is “unique” because He does what no one else can do – He shows us the glory of God.

Remember in Exodus when Moses asked of God, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” And God said to Moses, “I Myself will make all My goodness (My Glory) pass before you ...” But, God added, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”

(Exodus 33:19-20) Mankind experiences all the glory of God the Father in God the Son. Jesus is “unique” in His person, birth, doctrine, works, miracles, death, resurrection and in His future triumphant return. In verses 15 to 18, the focus of our study this

morning, the Apostle John emphasizes 4 things: **Slide** (1) Jesus is “unique” in His origin; **Slide** (2) He is “unique” as the channel of God’s blessings; **Slide** (3) He is “unique” as the source of grace and truth; and **Slide** (4) He is “unique” because is the only One in whom mankind may see the glory of God. **Blank**

John the Baptist testified to Jesus’ uniqueness in that even though John was 6 months older than Jesus, John declares, “He existed before me.” John is speaking of the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has existed with God the Father, for He is one with God and He is God from eternity past and will exist for eternity future. This takes us right back to verse 1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The “beginning” is referred to in verse 1 is the beginning of creation, for there is NO beginning of God – God is eternal.

Verse 15 says, “John (the Baptist) testified about Him (Jesus) and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ ” John the Baptist was created for one purpose and that was to herald or proclaim the long awaited arrival of the Messiah and to call people to repent of their sins so that they might receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The problem at John’s time is the same problem that exists today. John referred to the authority of the Old Testament scriptures – they spoke of the coming of the Messiah, but now that the Messiah had come and this required people to believe in the authority of the scriptures. The scriptures no longer predicted the future, but spoke of the present. The scriptures were closed 2000 years ago and bear the authority of history and the witnesses of many people as to who Jesus was and is. The question then is, “can you, each of you, move from history to present belief, believing in your heart?” For many this is a problem. **Slide** Charles Spurgeon put it this way; “I would recommend you either believe God up to the hilt, or else not to

believe at all. Believe this book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at best. It is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much.” **Blank** One of the great themes that Apostle John weaves throughout his gospel is that one must believe in the deity of Jesus; it is not an intellectual exercise, but faith that affects each person to their very core.

If you believe in your heart that Jesus is God, then John’s next statement in verse 16 comes to life, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.” You understand that Jesus uniquely is the source of all blessings. It is through Jesus the Messiah that God the Father makes Himself known and gives all blessings to His creation. John the Baptist saw the glory of Christ and knew His grace. John the Apostle knew Jesus and saw the glory and grace of God the Father in Him. In verse 16 this refers to the phrase “we have all received”, but this phrase goes beyond both Johns and those who knew Jesus when He walked this earth and includes all those who have come to believe in Jesus as the Christ to this very day. A story out of the Old Testament that illustrates “grace upon grace” is found in the Book of Hosea. Hosea is found in the Old Testament between Daniel and Joel. Hosea whose name means “Salvation” or “Deliverance” was a preacher chosen by God to live out God’s message to the people of Israel. God told him to marry a woman, Gomer, who proved to be unfaithful to Hosea. The story of Hosea and Gomer illustrates the relationship between God and Israel. God had taken Israel to Himself as a bride and wife and she had proved to be unfaithful spiritually. Just as Hosea was to remain faithful to his unfaithful wife, Gomer; to love her and care for her, even after she had left him, so too, God remains faithful even when people turn away to serve

other gods; the god of money and materialism, the god of nature, the god of career and advancement and the god of self.

The time came, some years after Gomer had left that she fell into poverty and ended up living with a man who could **not** provide for her. At this point in time God said to Hosea, “I want you to go to the marketplace and buy the things that Gomer needs, because this is the way I do things for my people. They run from me and I pay their bills.” We read in Hosea that Gomer had been unfaithful and had conceived her children in disgrace. Gomer openly said, “I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink...” Gomer did not acknowledge that it was God who gave her the grain, the new wine, and oil. It was God who provided the silver and gold. So it is with people today. We run from God, but He pays the bills and takes care of us. God takes care of each one of us and we need to learn that Jesus Christ is the unique source of all material and spiritual blessings, and this is true even when we fail to acknowledge God’s goodness or thank Him.

I know you will find this hard to believe, but before God saved me I was not a nice person – I was like Gomer. I cared for my career and myself and had little concern about Joyce and my children. Like Gomer, I left Joyce and sought another. During this time I finally had to come to terms with who I was and what I was doing. Not a pretty picture – I can tell you. It was during this time that God got a hold of me in a miraculous way, but that is another story, for another day. I was spiritually dead and God brought me to life. When I asked Joyce to take me back, she said, “no.” But then God interceded and told Joyce to take me back for He had made me new. Like Hosea, Joyce was faithful to God and was obedient to His command and she took me back, and God rebuilt our lives as He said in the Book of Joel, **Slide** “Then I

will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust ... You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you..." (Joel 2:25-26) **Blank** God keep His promise, as He always does, and give me a heart of flesh where there had been a heart of stone. Both my marriage and I were as 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "... behold, new things have come." Jesus is a blessing to true Christians for through His Spirit He enriches our lives by empowering us to turn from sin – this is **grace upon grace**. May I and may you, never take for granted the sacrifice Jesus paid that we may again be called children of God and this is done by Christ and by the grace of God. It is God's gift to those who come to believe in Jesus as Lord.

With this understanding of God's grace through Jesus we have the foundation for moving on to verses 17 and 18. We read, "**For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.**" Here Apostle John records two more things about the uniqueness of Christ. First, he says that Christ is unique as the source of grace and truth in verse 17. This verse suggests a contrast that gives the words "**grace and truth**" a slightly different meaning from the earlier verses. The contrast is between the Law and all its rules and regulations and the new era of salvation by grace through faith. Remember the great verse in Ephesians we studied, **Slide** "**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.**" (Ephesians 2:8) This is a great contrast, for under the law, God demands righteousness from all people; under grace God freely gives righteousness to people. Under the law righteousness is based on Moses and good works; under grace righteousness is given based on

Christ's atoning sacrifice and Christ's character. Under the law, blessings come from obedience; under grace God bestows His blessings as a free gift. The Law saves no one! As Christians we flee from sin and strive to keep God's law because of our love for Christ, not because of the burden the Law imposes. In the Book of Acts we read,

**Slide** "... let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him (Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39)

God's grace in the Old Testament was applied to the believing Jews who anticipated and had faith in the coming Messiah. **Blank** In the Messiah, Jesus Christ, God's salvation truth was fully revealed and accomplished – in Ephesians 4:21 Paul says, "truth is in Jesus." So for believers we draw on the grace and truth of God given through Christ like an ocean of divine grace where we are washed clean before God by wave after wave of Christ's grace and our spirits are refreshed and we are given the strength to not only endure in the tempest of this world, but we blossom in the midst of the stormy seas of the world itself. This brings to my mind the words written by Horatio from the depth of his heart and soul.

**Slide** "When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul."

Many of us have sung this hymn, but like Paul Harvey use to say, "Here is the rest of the story." This hymn was written after several traumatic events in Horatio Spafford's life. The first was the death of his only son in 1871 at the age of four. Shortly after his son's death the Great Chicago Fire ruined him financially as his investment properties went up in flame. The fire even destroyed the building his



law firm was in. Wanting a time of rest for his family, Horatio planned to sail to Europe with his family. He sent the family ahead while he was delayed on business matters concerning zoning problems following the Great Chicago Fire. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship sank rapidly after a collision with another ship, all four of Horatio's daughters died. His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram that began, "*Saved alone . . .*" Horatio quickly sailed to meet his grieving wife and he was inspired to write these words as his ship passed near where his daughters had died.

Horatio and his wife Anna later had three more children. In 1881 they set sail for Israel and helped found a group called the American Colony; its mission was to serve the poor. They found grace in the storm, they let the waves of God's grace heal their very souls and they served God's children the rest of their lives. As our study of verse 17 says, this is the "*grace and truth we realized through Jesus Christ*" and Christ alone. **Blank**

Again, verse 18 tells us that Jesus is unique, "*No one has seen God at any time; the only* (one and only, unique, there being no other) *begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*" This verse says Jesus is *the only begotten God*. This declares that Jesus is God. On the other hand no one has seen God the Father for being pure spirit He is invisible to physical eyesight. Not even Abraham, "the friend of God", not even Moses, "whom the LORD knew face to face" could see the divine glory of God in its fullness. No one in the ancient world would disagree that no man has seen God. **Slide** Plato said, "*Never man and God can meet.*" **Blank** Yet, John did not stop with his first statement of verse 18, he continued. Yes it is true that man cannot see God and live, but the Word or Jesus Christ, God the Son, came to mankind in a way that enabled people to know God, Jesus "*explained Him*

(God the Father).” In Jesus Christ the very character of God may be known. In fact, there is no true knowledge of God apart from knowing Jesus Christ as Lord. This is made clear by Paul in his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes, <sup>13</sup>“For He (God) rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. **Slide** <sup>15</sup>*He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* <sup>16</sup>For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in Him (God the King or Majesty) all things hold together. (Colossians 1:13-17) **Blank** So we come to understand that God, who cannot be known unless He reveals Himself, became most fully known because Jesus, for Jesus “*explained Him.*” When one asks the questions, “What is God like?” The question is answered in who Jesus is. The word translated as “*explained*” is where we get the English word “exegesis” meaning the method or practice of interpreting Scripture. This is what I do every week in preparing the teaching for Sunday. However, Jesus is the **only one** uniquely qualified to exegete or interpret God to mankind for **Slide** “... no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” (Matthew 11:27) **Blank** As a preacher I exegete the scriptures as inspired by God the Holy Spirit. God reveals to man who He is through His written Word and the living Word, Jesus.

Verse 18 ends the prologue of John’s gospel. It introduced the themes that will be expanded on throughout the rest of the book. **Slide** In verse 1, Jesus has existed in intimate fellowship with the Father from all eternity. **Slide** Verse 14, Jesus, God very God, became flesh. **Slide** Verse 17, Jesus brought the full expression of grace and

truth of God to mankind. **Slide** Verse 18 it is in Jesus that God is revealed to man. How Jesus does these things will be expanded on and explained in the rest of the book. **Blank**

Now that we have spent 7 weeks studying the introduction of Gospel according to John the question is, “What is your reaction to what John has written and I have taught? Do you believe? Do you know and believe in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? Has Christ become the answer to the problems in your life? Jesus is the only One who is the answer to the meaning of life.

If you want to know more about Jesus, if you want to give your life to Jesus – then come to me after the service and let me pray for you and pray with you and we will seek Jesus together. The time is growing short do not delay.