

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 5/12/2021

Text: John 1 verses 1-18

Sermon Title: Part 1 "The wonder of the incarnation"

Scripture references from the ESV

John 1:1-18 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

As humans, we have an inbuilt ability to be awestruck and full of wonder at what we see around us. This is particularly obvious in children, who are endlessly discovering new things and experience mystery that leads to awe and delight. As we get older, we tend to lose this capacity for awe and wonder. We start to rationalise and take for granted things we see every day. Often, we are just so busy with life that we don't have time to stop and look in wonder.

We lose mystery, and with that loss, life becomes mundane. We are no longer in awe and able to wonder, but instead become cynical and grumpy. Even Christmas, once a source of wonder and delight, can become just another source of stress. When

mystery is gone, we lose the sense of awe and wonder that brings joy and delight to life.

How can we recover that sense of awe and wonder? What will captivate us to such an extent that we will stop rationalising and want to take time to stop, stare and enjoy?

God created us with the ability to wonder, and he did it so that we might delight in Him, to His glory, for the good of all people.

Sin has clouded our vision of God and his glory, so that we don't delight in him or honour him as God. Instead, we look to physical things to fill our hearts with wonder and awe, but the problem is that our hearts were made for eternal things and therefore physical things can never satisfy the eternal longings of our hearts. We become bored with them and take them for granted.

We need God, by his Spirit, to open our spiritual eyes, the eyes of our hearts, to see the glory of God and to delight in him and glorify him. If we have lost our sense of wonder and awe, then we need to

refocus our gaze on the glory of God, especially as he is seen in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1:14 shows us the way: **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

The Word, of course, is Jesus. We know about the historical Jesus who:

- was born on earth 2000 years ago. He lived, performed miracles and yet was hated and put to death
- is followed by millions of people who call themselves Christians, after him, and are willing to give up sinful pleasures and even to give up their lives for him

Who really is he? (vv1-5 above)

1. Jesus Christ is eternal – In the beginning was the Word (v1)

The Bible begins: In the beginning God (**Genesis 1:1**), which speaks of God being eternal. Before anything existed, God was and always has been. John tells us that Jesus was in the beginning, meaning that he too is eternal. Jesus always has been. He didn't begin his existence 2000 years ago, or even at creation. (**Col 1:17** see p4).

2. Jesus Christ is one with the Father, yet distinct from the Father – In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God (v1 above).

In v18 (above), John introduces God as Father. Jesus constantly refers to God as Father, and in v1 a distinction is made between the Word and the Father. They are not the same person. The Word is **with** God (the Father) so they cannot be the same, yet at the same time there is a oneness. The sentence implies a personal relationship that is intimate, unique and mysterious. The mystery lies in in the phrase 'and the Word was God' (v1)

3. Jesus Christ is very God – the Word was with God yet at the same time the Word was God (v1)

How can two distinct persons be one being? Here is mystery indeed and it gives us two choices.

- a) **We can dismiss the mystery** and try to explain it away. We might think to ourselves that John must have meant something else, or it's been badly translated. Pride might make us say that it can't be true simply because we can't understand it.
- b) **We can embrace the mystery** and allow it to lead us to awe and wonder at our God. We can choose to say: it doesn't make sense to me but I am going to believe it because it is here in God's word. I am going to stop in the midst of the busyness and drudgery of life and gaze at our God in wonder and worship.

This verse tells us that Jesus Christ is not a created angel or an inferior sort of God, and nor is he merely a human being who had a unique power.

Jesus Christ is **nothing less than perfect God** (J C Ryle)

4. Jesus Christ is creator of all things – all things were made through him..... (v3 above)

Everything that has been made (created) was made by Jesus Christ, hence we can see that Jesus Christ, the Word, was not made by God. Jesus Christ made everything that was made, so he himself could not have been made. As God was speaking the universe (all the planets, angels, demon, plants, animals and humans) into existence,

he was doing so through the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, so that he is seen to be the creator of all things. (Col 1:16 see p4)

5. Jesus Christ is the source of all spiritual life – in him was life and the life was the light of men.....(v4 above)

Jesus Christ is the source of all physical life, but we are more than just physical beings. People try to deny it, but we are also spiritual beings. Deep down, we know there is more than just what we see, which is why people talk of their loved ones having gone to a better place when they die, or are interested in the paranormal or speak of connecting with something bigger than themselves.

We are spiritual beings, but **by nature we are born spiritually dead**. Hence, we don't want to accept that Jesus Christ is eternal, the one and only Son of God, being in very nature God and creator of all things. In our spiritually dead state, we are not excited by this and it does not make sense.

- Even now, people are chasing pleasures in so many other ways, but Jesus remains boring to them.

When we become spiritually alive, Jesus Christ does make sense. There are mysteries that we don't understand, but those mysteries only serve to lead us to wonder, awe and worship. Jesus Christ is the source of our spiritual life (v4), and the way to receive that life is through receiving Christ, or believing in him (vv11-13 above).

You will never have true spiritual life in your soul unless you receive Jesus Christ, the Word

Who is the real Jesus, the Word about whom John speaks here? We have seen that the real Jesus is:

- **Eternal** – he is from everlasting to everlasting, and in that sense, outside of time
- **One with the Father, yet distinct from him** – he is distinct from God yet united to him
- **Very God** – neither a god, nor an angel, nor just a human with divine power. He is very God
- **The creator** – everything that has been made was made by him, including humans and the entire universe

- **The source of all spiritual life** – only through Jesus Christ can we know and enjoy fellowship with God

No one is bigger, greater, grander, more important or more awesome than Jesus Christ

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (v14 above) – ponder on these words and be in awe. The one who:

- For all eternity stood outside of time, stepped into time to be born as a human being
- Was face to face with the Father left the splendour of heaven to live on our earth
- Is very God became a man so that he was both God and man in one being
- Created human flesh became what he created
- Is the source of spiritual life became human and died on a cross to save us from sin with all its consequences

That is the wonder of the Incarnation

Our God, the Word, became a human and lived among us.

What does this mean for us?

- I. **Jesus Christ knows what life is like for us.** Fully God and fully man in one being, he was without sin yet he has experienced human life in a world of sin, suffering and pain. He understands our pain and knows exactly what we need.

Our God knows what it is like to live in the flesh

- II. **Jesus Christ is able to fill us with awe and wonder.** In our universe, there is much that leaves us awestruck. How much more awesome, then, is the one who created it. There is enough mystery and glory in Christ to fill us with awe and wonder for the rest of our lives and all eternity. We need to take time to stop and chew scripture over in our minds. Take **v18** (above) as a starting point. Stop trying to explain away what we don't understand, receive the mysteries as a little child and we will find that

Jesus Christ is more awe-inspiring and joy-filling than anything else.

- III. **Jesus Christ needs to be received.** If you do not have a sense of awe and wonder when you contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ, then it may be that you are still spiritually dead, and need to experience the life of Christ giving you spiritual light. You need to receive Jesus Christ by actively believing in him and not just believing the facts about him. Active belief means that you can:
- Have a relationship with him and talk to him about how you feel
 - Ask him to show you his glory and to fill you with awe and wonder
 - Ask his forgiveness when you have sinned and are aware of your sin
 - Ask him to help you change when you find that sin is dominating your life
 - Ask him to give you grace for the trials that you are facing

As you do that with honesty of heart and humility, so

Jesus Christ will fill you with himself and cause you to wonder and worship

Colossians 1:17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:16 For by ^fhim all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him