

**"Christmas Has a Purpose"
(John 1:1-18)
Pastor Peter Yi
December 24, 2017**

(John 1:1-18)

¹ 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. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 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 testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

For the past two weeks we've been looking at this passage because this passage speaks to the meaning of Christmas. The first message focused on the first few verses where we mentioned that Jesus was the pre-existent, always existent Logos or Word. And this Logos became flesh and made his dwelling among us, to show us the way to God.

Last week's message focused on Jesus as the Light of Christmas. Jesus was sent to humankind, who was lost in the darkness of sin and rebellion against the Creator; and into this impenetrable darkness, Jesus came to shine and bring forth new life.

The previous two messages and next week's message all speak of the purpose of Christmas, but perhaps today's message speaks most directly about the purpose of Christmas. The verses we'll be looking at more closely are verses 9-13. These verses speak about at least three things: **the purpose, the choice, the result.**

Let's look at **The purpose**.

What you see throughout John's prologue is movement. I think it's true that movement always implies purpose, doesn't it? From migrating birds and fish to the rotation of the planets, to atoms and molecules—movement implies purpose. Even in our sleep, when we toss and turn, when we move, it's for the purpose of getting more comfortable. It might be an insignificant purpose, but nonetheless it's still a purpose and I suppose we can also say that the greater the movement the greater the purpose or the greater the effect. A stone that's thrown in the water creates a few small ripples. A shift in the earth's surface below the ocean creates a tsunami. Small movement -- small purpose. Large movement -- large purpose.

What we see in John's prologue, verse after verse, is the movement of Jesus Christ entering, exploding, illuminating into the world of men. Hint after hint, this passage speaks to the movement and purpose of Jesus coming into the world. First, the world was his creation. He created all there is. Creation implies intent and purpose. The Bible tells us that God created human beings so that we could be eternally happy and satisfied living with God, in a personal, face-to-face, communicating, loving, dignifying relationship. These are the beginnings of purposeful movement.

Then John tells us that Jesus came, he moved, from one realm to another, from one world to another world, to bring spiritual light into sinful darkness. We all know from high school physics class that light moves at the speed of light. It travels faster than the human eye can detect most of the time, but we can still tell there was movement. For example, when a light bulb flickers. It's enough for us to stop what we're doing and look up and wait for it to happen again, because we know that something moved.

In this prologue it's as if John is replaying the movement, the drama of the Genesis story. The Genesis story is creation—fall—redemption. That's the story of the Bible. God created humanity. Humanity abused their free will and rebelled against God. God executes a dramatic rescue plan. And so the Logos, the Creator, came to this dark sinful world of humanity, as the Light, to redeem us. It's the same storyline. God is on the move.

Then John the author introduces us to another John—John the Baptist. He tells us that the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for someone greater than him. That's another description of movement. He was to be a person whose job was to introduce Jesus to the world and he pointed the way to Jesus. He was like the appetizer to the full course. The opening band that gets the crowd warmed up for the main act. His job was to shine a spotlight on the one true light.

And then in verse 9 John says the True Light was coming into the world. This is another indicator of movement. And then to remove all confusion he says in v11 that the that true light came not merely into the world, but into the lives of people.

¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

When a person comes to another person, when a single man walks across the room to a single woman, there is a purpose, is there not? When he musters up the courage to start a conversation, to ask the lady out on a date; that movement implies a relational purpose. He would like to get to know her. He wants to know if she might possibly be the right life partner, soul mate, progeny bearer, or often times called a wife. We even say, "Look, he's making his move." So too with the Light. He came to his own people. Why would he come? What's his purpose? The purpose of light is to shine, to illuminate, to remove the darkness.

Finally, in verse 14 John tells us that the pre-incarnate, pre-existing Logos became flesh. Perhaps more than any other verse in this prologue, this verse shows us the most dramatic movement. A huge cosmic shift occurred when deity assumed humanity, when God became man. The other gospels tell us that stars were moving, angels were appearing, distant travelers were coming. The universe was hustling and bustling with activity, with movement. And then, John tells us that this Word became flesh, He became a man and made his dwelling among us; He pitched his tent; He set up his tabernacle; He hung out with us. The Pre-existent Logos, the Creator God, the second person of the Trinity, The Light of the world entered the world of men as a man. He moved.

What purpose does all this movement point to? Or another way to look at it is to ask this question, "Why did Jesus come to earth? Friends, this may be the most important question you and I can ever ask. There's an even greater question than asking 'Who am I?' or 'Why am I here?' or even 'Where am I going?' The more important question is to ask, "Why did Jesus come?" That he came cannot be disputed. That he existed is an historical fact. But no other man, no other historical figure forces us to ask this question? When we answer that question, the other questions will be answered. If I know the answer to "Why did Jesus come?" then I'll know the answers to 'who am I?', "why am I here?", and "where am I going?"

So, why did Jesus come? Jesus came to shine the light in the darkness. Now that can sound a bit cryptic. Well, instead of me putting it into my own words, let's look at the words of the Bible:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. (**Luke 19:10**)

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (**Mark 10:45**)

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. (**1 Timothy 1:15**)

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (**2 Corinthians 5:21**)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (**Romans 5:8**)

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. (**2 Corinthians 5:19**)

This brings us to the second point of this passage: **The Choice**.

Look with me to verses 10-12:

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not **recognize** him. **11** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not **receive** him. **12** Yet to all who did receive him, to those who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

It says that there were those who didn't recognize him, and there were those who didn't receive him and there were those who did receive him and believed in him. It's telling us that there's a choice to be made regarding Jesus. And even more than that it seems to be telling us that all 3 things need to be done: **Recognize** (10), **Receive** (11), and then **Believe** (12).

Jesus came to be recognized, that is, to be known. He didn't come to live in secret or to stay hidden. He came so that people would recognize him, but recognized as what? Did Jesus come to earth to be recognized merely as a spiritual leader? Did Jesus come into the world to be recognized merely as a wonderful moral example to be emulated? The answer is no. In our society there is more misinformation and ignorance about the person of Jesus than ever before. I think C.S. Lewis states it best. Listen to what he says about people and their misunderstandings about Jesus.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*)

Jesus came to this earth so that we would recognize him. It's at the stage of recognizing where we are looking at the signs, the evidence, the facts. Look at what Jesus did. Look at his teaching. It was teaching that rocked the world. It was unlike anything people had ever heard. Read his Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew 5-7. Examine his ethical teaching. You know that Golden Rule thing. Do unto others and you have others do unto you. He invented that. Copyright, Jesus. Look beyond the teaching to the blameless and noble life he lived, especially in front of his adversaries. Look at the way he viewed the marginalized of society. Look at the incredible respect he had toward women. Then look at his miracles. Look at the power he had to bend the rules of nature, to heal the sick, and the power he had over evil forces. Then look at the kind of death that he died. He died as an innocent man. The most innocent man to have ever lived, died the death of a million criminals. Look at his resurrection. Look at the eyewitness account. The verifiable witnesses who saw Jesus after his death. All these signs, all these accounts are there to help us recognize him. You see that was, in fact, his purpose. You're... you're... Jesus, right?

But, it's not enough that we just recognize him, we are to receive him as well. To receive Jesus takes it one step further than just to recognize him. You might recognize someone, and then walk away from them. "Oh gosh, I hope she didn't see me." But to recognize someone at the mall and then say, "Hey do you have time for coffee? Let's catch up?" That's completely different. To receive someone is to welcome someone.

If a really close friend, that you hadn't seen for ages, was flying in to see you, how would you receive him? What would you do to properly receive your friend? Maybe it'd be something like this. You'd go to the airport, park your car, go inside and wait at the arrival doors. When you see him, you'd wave your arms to get his attention. You'd walk up to him and give him a big hug and ask, "how was your flight." Then you'd grab his luggage and carry them to your car. You'd ask, have you eaten? Let me take you out to a great restaurant, my treat. After dinner you drive your friend to your home and introduce them to your family (if you have family). Then you take them to the room you prepared. Of course by this time you've already cleaned your home from top to bottom. You've changed the linens in his room, cleaned the bathroom, you have enough blankets and pillows and towels for him. Then you say to him, 'Mi casa, su casa', my home is your home. Raid the fridge. Put your feet up on the coffee table. Let me know if you need anything. Then you fetch some drinks and snacks, you invite your guest to sit on the couch and spend the next several hours catching up.

So, how should the coming of Jesus be received by the world to which he came, by each one of us? Would we say, Jesus, sorry, I'm tied up at work. Grab an Uber. I've reserved a scuzzy room for you at a motel that rents by the hour. We would never do that. We would receive Jesus with great honor and humility.

First, we **Recognize**, after that we receive and the final step, we believe in him. You can see the progression. It's one thing to recognize Jesus. It's another step forward to receive Him. But the greatest thing is to believe in Him. If you're hanging on a literal limb and your rescuer reaches down and says let go of the branch and hold my hand, trust me, I won't let go. You have to make a choice. Of course you could let go and plunge to your death. You can choose to hold the branch and eventually let go and plunge to your death or you can hold onto your rescuer. Yes there is a choice, but only one choice makes sense.

For us to believe in Jesus we have to acknowledge that we are sinners, that we strayed from and rebelled against God and his ways. We have to believe that only Jesus and what he did when he died in our place on the cross is able to pay the death penalty for our sins. We have to believe that he and only he is worthy and deserving of all our obedience and worship. That is a choice that we have to make.

The final point of this passage speaks to **The Result** of the choice we make.

What happens to those who recognize him, receive him and believe in him? Listen to verse 12-13:

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

These two verses tell us something really important. It tells us that God owes you nothing, but you get everything.

It was never our right to be the children of God. You and I live in an age of entitlement. Boomers complain about the busters. Busters complain about the X-ers. X-ers complain about the Millenials, but I think it's a part of our sinful human nature to think that we are entitled, especially in our culture, where we enjoy every human right and freedom and are blessed with awesome health care and cutting edge technology. All around us we don't just see one or two people that are immensely wealthy, we see tons of people that are wealthy. So, we begin thinking that we should experience those things too and when we don't experience them, we get depressed, or discouraged, or angry, even angry with God.

But, the truth of the matter is that God doesn't owe us anything. If you think he owes you, what reason to you have for thinking that he owes you? Sometimes we think God owes us because we've been good little boys and girls. Or our view of God is some pie in the sky, lovey-dovey, cosmic Santa that loves everyone, so shouldn't he love me too and give me my best life now?

Do you know why we think this way? One reason. We fail to understand the holiness of God. God's love without holiness is sentimentality. God justice without holiness is capricious and mean. Without understanding God's holiness we will never understand our own sinfulness. We'll keep telling God and others and ourselves, "I'm not so bad. I'm better than most. What's there not to like? God should be thrilled to have me on his team?" But every time in Scripture, when a man or woman encountered the holiness of God, they were ruined! Everything they thought they were, all of their pedigree, all of their accomplishments flew out the window upon encountering God's holiness. Never, not once, do you see people saying, "but God, I'm entitled, I'm deserving."

Friends, Christians and non-Christians, it is not our right to be the children of God. Just as a biological child doesn't possess a right to be born or to exist; and neither does the adopted child possess a right nor can she demand to be adopted. The entrance of these children into the family is a gift. And because it's a gift, it's grace, it's undeserved. And that's what the gospel is. You and I, because of Jesus, when we recognize him and receive him and believe in him, we receive the gift of becoming part of the family of God. Our sins are forgiven. We're no longer God's enemies. We immediately become God's children and as God's children, nothing is withheld from us.

Friends, Christmas has a purpose. God gifted his only child, Jesus to us, so that we might become the children of God. Recognize him, Receive him, Believe in him.

Let's pray.