



Sermon Growth Guide

December 13, 2020

Wonder - To See His Glory

John 1:6-18

Key Verse: John 1:14 “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.”

Big Idea: The love of Jesus is light for you to receive and to then reflect to those around you.

Foundations

Light reveals. In our passage this week, we learn that “the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world,” (verse 9). The Above-Us-God has become the With-Us-God in Jesus.

Pastor Tim employs the metaphor of the reflecting moon to help us understand how we can best steward the light of Christ that has come into our hearts. Tim writes, “A witness, a true witness to Jesus, positions herself in orientation to Jesus, but also in orientation, in connection with, the darkened soul who needs His light.”

Jesus eagerly desires to shine His light into your heart. Jesus also eagerly desires that you reflect His light, as the moon reflects the light of the sun, to the unbelieving world around you. Listen to these words of Christ from His most famous sermon as recorded in Matthew Chapter 5:

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Gathered together with your circle, in-person or online, open your time of study in prayer. Ask the Spirit to guide and guard your spiritual formation, your growth in Christ.

Understanding God’s Word

Take time to dig into how Jesus is described in verses 9-14.

What does it mean for Jesus to be “full of grace and truth?”

Applying God’s Word

How can your walk with the Lord be deepened by your understanding of who He is? How can you better carry the true identity of Christ with you into your week?

How can you better reflect the character of God of being “full of grace and truth” in your day-to-day walk this week? Where, and how, and to whom, ought you offer more grace? Where, and how, and to whom, ought you offer more truth?

Witnessing God’s Word

Pastor Tim employs the metaphor of the reflecting moon to help us understand how we can best steward the light of Christ that has come into our hearts. Tim writes, “A witness, a true witness to Jesus, positions herself in orientation to Jesus, but also in orientation, in connection with, the darkened soul who needs His light.”

What re-positioning can you do this week to better reflect the light of Christ to an unbeliever? With your circle, pray with great love for this person.

Light changes the landscape. In our **Wonder** image, we move now to the lamp. See the lamp the child holds? What you see depends on the light. Once in Virginia my kids heard an owl outside in a large pine tree behind our house. They went out with tiny flashlights trying to shine them all around the tree, but they couldn't see a thing. The light barely reached the tree. I came out behind them with one of those police-officer grade Maglights—remember those? I switched it on and woosh, this beam of light like a spotlight lit up the top of the tree. And there it was! So, that's a pro tip. A good flashlight can get you a lot of dad credits. A good flashlight and a sharp pocket knife. The light makes a difference. C. S. Lewis said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else." Light changes the landscape.

We want to put away the cynicism that could so easily drag us down this year and ask God to open our eyes to Wonder at Christmas. Cynicism says, "I already know what's over there. It's nothing special." Wonder is like a lamp, a flashlight, a new dawn. We have all seen these mountains to our west. In the dark, they can look like a curtain of black. That's the jaded, know-it-all-ness of cynicism. But then the dawn breaks, the light comes in and you start to see. Who among us hasn't stopped in our tracks looking down

Bijou past the church to Pikes Peak lit up by the sunrise, pink light on white snow? Layer after layer. There is so much more to see. Light changes the landscape. The light of Christ can change the landscape of your soul.

The Gospel of John gives us a different perspective on the birth of Jesus. This isn't shepherds and mangers and donkeys. This is cosmic elements, light and dark, creation and life and all kinds of existential things. John wants us to know the birth of Jesus was not just one more baby in Bethlehem. Look with different light. This is the very glory of God. See this glory, see this light, and it will change how you see everything else. But how are all these cosmic, swirling principles going to land? How is all this going to have anything to do with my life, real life? The ministry of Jesus starts with the witness of a man, the first witness, the first believer: John. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John" (John 1:6).

This is John the Baptist. We saw him last week. Whether Peter preaching to the household of Cornelius in Acts 10, Paul preaching in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, in all of these, the gospel, the story of Jesus always begins with John the Baptist. Why? Because John is the first to believe in Jesus, so John is the first to reflect Jesus. "He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light" (John 1:7-8). John said he was not the light, but later Jesus would say, "John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you

chose for a time to enjoy his light” (John 5:35). Well, John is a lamp, but only because he is a witness to Christ; he reflects the light of Jesus. This is the principle of “witness.” The moon does not shine its own light, but reflects the light of the sun. We call it a light because it sheds light on us, but it is sunlight it sheds by reflection. Hope that’s not news to anyone. I want you to see this principle of witness. The moon is called a light, but it only sheds that light when it is positioned to reflect the sun. And not only is it positioned toward the sun, but it is also positioned to reflect that light on the darkened side of the Earth. A witness, a true witness to Jesus, positions herself in orientation to Jesus, but also in orientation, in connection with, the darkened soul who needs His light. The moon isn’t light if it’s just out there in space shining all alone; it is light when it reflects that light toward the world that needs the light. Same with you, witnesses. Do you see? Take time to hear and connect with the darkened in the world and orient yourself to reflect the light of Christ.

“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world” (John 1:9). This light, God’s light, Jesus’ light, it was coming into the world. John explains that this light was in the world, there is some of God’s light in all creation, but people couldn’t grasp it, couldn’t comprehend it. Jesus’ birth was when God poured all that light into His Son in a concentrated way. And Jesus came to His own people,

the people who had been showered with God’s light through history, and many rejected Jesus. “Yet to all who did receive 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” (John 1:12-13). Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, not of natural descent, not of human decision, not of a husband’s will, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every person who accepts Jesus, receives Jesus, that’s how you get reborn too. Every conversion is a miraculous birth brought on by the Holy Spirit making Christ to live in you, so that you can also become a child of God, part of God’s own family forever. This does not happen by your resolve to live Christian principles. It does not happen by your supreme morality and excellent performance. It isn’t a spiritual add-on over on one side of your life. It is new life entirely. Rebirth. Born again. The old life gone. Born anew, a second time, only now a child of God.

Okay, now we come to the meat of it. Read with me verse 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” (John 1:14). The Word. We have already learned that the Word is God. Verse one, “the Word was God.” But the Word was also with God. It is the God who is also with God. A little strange, right? How does it work out? Jesus

is the Word, God become flesh. God united in eternal communion with humanity. God became man. The Bible makes two claims unique to other religions. First, the Scriptures claim that God is more above, more out there, more distant from the world we know than any so-called "god." This is not the god of the harvest, or the god of the mountain. God is outside of creation, having made it outside of Himself. The Above-Us-God. Second, the Bible claims this God stoops down into creation to become part of it. In most religions, the deity is a part of the world we live in, within it, through it, around it. Only in our fellow Abrahamic religions do we meet the supremely Above-Us-God, and only in Christianity does the Above-Us-God become the With-Us-God: Immanuel. God with us.

"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" (John 1:14). Jesus is full of grace and truth. Many churches and many Christians are all truth and no grace. Others are all grace and no truth. Jesus is full, the fullness, of both. Grace and truth. Truth. You are worse off than you ever dared imagine. You are more in need of help than you ever dared admit. The things you have done, the mistakes you have made, your relentless adeptness at hurting yourself and those

around you... You need help. You are in more need of a forgiving Savior than you ever dared admit. Truth. But Grace: you are more loved, accepted, treasured and redeemed by God than you ever dared hope.

Now, "we have seen his glory." All the glory of God in the face of Jesus. "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!" (Isaiah 64:1). Said Isaiah. Oh, that the glory of God would break out over the earth. John the Baptist said it's happening. It's happening, but not like you think. "God is coming up behind me with sandals on his feet." "Well, what do you mean, John? God with sandals on? We can't see God's glory. God's glory melts mountains. God's glory shakes the ground and fills the temple and burns everything before it in a ring of fire." Moses wanted to see God's glory, and God told him clearly, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). "So," God said, "hide in the cleft in the rock and I'll put my hand over you and I'll pass by you. You can't see my glory. That would melt your face off, man! You've heard of face-melting guitar solos... You can't see my glory and live. Sweet idea, but I'm not here to wreck you." Oh, that God would rend the heavens and come down in glory! It's happening, brother, with sandals on. "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" (John 1:14). God condescends that we may know Him. God accommodates His glory to our sight. You can't look at the sun, right? I mean, you can. Once.

God condescends, belittles Himself, embraces to Himself the weakness of our estate, so we can say we have seen Him. The Above-Us-God becomes the With-Us-God. All the glory of God in the face of Jesus. A wonder.

There is a price to this. There is a price to be paid to make it happen, for the Above-Us-God to be the With-Us-God, one and the same. The only way to get married is to take on each other's debts. When you join in marriage, you assume your spouse's debts. When you get married, your credit score changes! The husband takes the wife's debts and other qualities on himself; the wife takes the husband's debts and other qualities on herself. It's joyful, but that's how the joyful union happens. With all the good stuff, there is also a mutual assumption of frailties, finances, reputation, whatever! Starbucks points, restaurant gift cards, airline miles ... remember those? You start sharing all that stuff. There is only one way for the Above-Us-God to be the With-Us-God. He assumes our debts. For Jesus, that meant going to the cross to pay them off. It was worth it. I hope you know God loves you that much.

Cynicism says, "I already know.
I already know what's in those
dark mountains over there."

Wait a minute. The
Above-Us-God
has become the
With-Us-God in Jesus.
All the glory of God
in the face of
Jesus. God
on High
becomes
God

who is nigh. God loves you so dearly that He was not content to sit apart from you, shining alone in the heavens. God loves you so dearly, He did all it took to be in relationship with you. Do you know that so well it's rote and even boring? God has a passionate desire to be with you, in intimate relationship with you. "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her'" (Zechariah 8:2). Or in the New Living Translation: "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: My love for Mount Zion is passionate and strong; I am consumed with passion for Jerusalem!" (Zechariah 8:2 NLT). Do you really know? Do you really allow the passion God has for you to get into your heart? No price was too great to get to you. No cosmic force too strong to break into your life. God on high, God the righteous, God the true, reveals a longing desire to be with you.

Wonder. To see His glory. The light of Christ is a light to reflect. What if you allowed that passion to come home and rest with you, and then what if you oriented yourself toward God's light and toward the world's darkness, just to see if some of that light can reflect. What if you held the love of Jesus like a flashlight this Christmas, to shine on your friends, your neighbors, your family and closest relations? What would you see that you have not seen before? Light changes the landscape. You are born again when you believe. To all who believe, to all who receive Him ... you can be a child of God. Believe. Receive. Be born again in Him, a second time. "A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices; For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn." Shine the light of Christ with **Wonder**.