

May 23, 2021 Who Is Jesus? John 1:1-18

Dearly Beloved;

You have heard it said, “Life can change on a dime.” And we seem to be witnessing that very thing at the moment. Not very long ago, 4,000 plus, new cases of Covid-19 was to be expected, if not worse. As of today the case count in Ontario has fallen by 50 per cent. Today’s count was 1890, and half of that number was in the GTA. A host of factors have brought us to this hopeful point. The Provincial lockdown helped. Vaccinating half of the provincial population with at least one dose, helped. Self-isolating in our homes as much as we could helped. Washing our hands helped. And of course wearing our masks when in the company of others outside our home circles, helped.

A little over a year ago, I stopped trying to guess when the Covid-19 experience would be over. Once again we are seeing a wave of infection appear to wind down. I’m like Yogi Berra. I won’t believe it is over, until it is over. Please continue to exercise caution, and stay as safe as you are able. You are precious to me, and more importantly, you are precious to Jesus and HIS kingdom. I live in hope of the time when we can gather together, unmasked and sing praises to God’s name, in the sanctuary on Mill Street in Stirling. Amen

You may not have realized it, but the message at the end of April, the two at the beginning of May, and this one are part of a series. And by the way, I do want to thank Wally Mayhew for being willing to “pitch in relief” for me, that I might

be able to continue to serve in your midst. The message for April 25th, was about what motivates an act of faith. If it comes from a heartfelt desire to do God's will...there is no need of recognition or reward. It was that kind of selfless motivation that Jesus modelled as he set HIS face toward Jerusalem, the cross, and saving us from our sinful selves.

The second unit in the series was from Luke 4:14-30. The day began with worship at the local synagogue in Nazareth. The worshippers almost killed Jesus. Well, they tried. It just was not the time for his death, nor the place. He walked away having declared HIMSELF, the ONE in whom the Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah was and is fulfilled. A shiver runs down my spine every time I remember that cliff at Nazareth. The crowd had the chance, and the means, but it was not the moment of God's provision. Jesus walked away and HE went to Capernaum.

The third lesson was from Mark 1:29-33. Another Sabbath and another synagogue. Jesus is walking with Peter and Andrew and they go to the house of Peter's mother-in-law. She is sick. She is in bed. She has a fever. Jesus takes her by the hand, and she recovers so completely she is able to get up and lead in the ministry of hospitality. As a result people are brought in great numbers to that house. Jesus heals the sick. The demonized are released on HIS order and set free. Jesus decides after praying early next morning to take the ministry to other villages (Mark 1:35) so that HE can preach there. "It is the reason (Jesus says) that HE came."

This morning I read to you the first 18 verses of John's Gospel. John's account of Jesus ministry is different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The first three Gospels are called the synoptic Gospels. It means they take a comprehensive view of Jesus and HIS ministry. We get portraits of Jesus teaching beside the seashore. We have sections devoted to what he taught. We get the miracle stories: all kinds of healings...physical and spiritual. We get stories of Jesus birth. And of course we get the story of HIS dying and rising the 3rd day.

John's Gospel is different. John begins by telling us in no uncertain terms who Jesus is. "In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." (John 1:1-2) John knows what he is doing when he begins his account of the ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus with the words "In the beginning." It is meant to ring the Genesis bell in our heads. He intends that we make the connection with Jesus and everything that is described in Genesis chapter 1.

John is starting with words that make his claim that in Jesus, John walked with God and talked with God, and that God the Son is not new to the drastic need of the world, and you and me. He is saying as clearly as words can express, Jesus was there in the beginning. In fact John is saying, you know the word was there in the beginning. Everything that was created was created by the life giving power of the word of

God. He spoke and the earth became. He spoke and the water, and the grass, and the air became. He spoke and the plants grew out of the earth. He spoke and the fish inhabited the waters. He spoke and the animals walked on the dry land. He spoke and the man and the woman became. And John says one thing more: you know that word of power that God spoke, that was Jesus. HE was there in the beginning. HE was with God. And HE was God. And John sums it all up by saying it again... "HE was with God in the beginning." And by the way you can check it out! Virtually word for word in the King James Version.

Here is what John is wanting us to grasp. Boys and girls, I am going to tell you the story of Jesus, but it is important that you understand this from the start. Jesus is God's creative word of power. He was there in the beginning. With God, and being God's Word of power, He was God. Yes, with God in the very beginning.

That is important. John is telling us from word one of his account it will only make sense to us and will only be believable to us, if we start out understanding that Jesus is divine in nature. He was with God and He was God, with HIM in the beginning.

Too many people think that the church or the Church (little c just people...big C...people who think they have power to run other people's lives) too many people think the church decided and proclaimed Jesus is God. When John set pen to paper he understood the most marvelous thing he had

learned from Jesus, walking with HIM, talking with HIM, watching HIM heal people, watching HIM...die to save people, and rising from the dead to proclaim HE is for real...John understood that Jesus is the God who was there in the beginning, speaking and making the earth, the water, the air, the plants and the fish, and the animals and the people.

John is saying, Jesus is God's Word made flesh (John 1:14) dwelling among us. We beheld His glory, He came from the Father full of grace and truth...the one and only. One of a kind. One time. For all of us. We beheld HIS glory. What you find in my account (John's account), I saw HIM. I witnessed the events, the teaching, the healings, the setting free of souls lost in bondage. This 4th Gospel is John's testimony. He was there. He wants us to be there with him...seeing Jesus. Seeing HIM save the world. Seeing HIM who was with God and was God in the very beginning.

Take a look at the last 2 verses of John's account, what we call chapter 21:24 and 25. "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

No. It is not the complete story. It is what John saw. God was in Jesus. From the beginning. When the sun rose on the first morning to light up a beautiful world, and wonderful

world full of people, who needed saving. Jesus was with God, and HE was God.

Let us pray.

Lord thank you for John's testimony. Thank you for his saying every way he could think of, that Jesus was with you in the beginning, the Word of power. Thank you for sending HIM into the world to save it, to save us, whether we believe it or not. Thank you for John's reminding us, some things are true, no matter what some will say or some will think. Thank you for John's passion to declare there is truth. Amen