

A Follow Up to the Most Important Question in Your Life

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 1. Last week, we looked at this passage that describes for us the glory of the Incarnation, literally the enfleshment of God when God the Son became flesh, and we, last week we titled the message "The Most Important Question in Your Life," the most important question for every single human being is what do you say about Jesus? Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" That is the most important question. That is the watershed question that determines your eternal destiny. What do you say about Jesus? He asked his apostles that in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, "Who do men say that I am?" Some say a prophet. Some say John the Baptist. "But who do you say that I am?" And that is the question for each one of us, who do you say that he is?

And this morning, I want to title the message, that was last week, this morning "A Follow Up to the Most Important Question in Your Life." It's a follow up question but a follow up to the most important question in your life. You say that you believe Jesus is fully God and fully man, you believe he's your Savior, he's your Lord, the follow up question is this: how does your life back up that statement? What is the way that when people look at the way you live, what would they conclude about what you believe about Jesus? How you spend your time? How do you treat others in your family, in your workplace? What do you talk about? How do you speak to unbelievers about Christ? Does your life back up your profession?

If we're honest, most of us would have to acknowledge that there is a gap, there is too often a gap between the way we live and what we say we believe, and this ought not be that way. Why is there that gap? Why is there a difference between what we say we believe, we look at the word, we see what the Bible tells us about the Lord Jesus Christ, and we're going to read a passage in a moment that we read last week that shows us he's fully God, he is fully man, and yet why is our life inconsistent with that? How do we close the gap in 2022? Looking at a new year, how do we make the resolution to make my life testify more clearly than ever before of the supremacy of Jesus Christ? How do I make that happen?

That's the question that we want to consider this morning and what we're going to see in the passage, two key words that we're going to focus on this morning and I want to

mention those before we read. The words are "glory" and "fullness." Glory and fullness. The glory of the word and the fullness of the word. Let's look at John 1. We're going to read verses 1 to 5 and then 14 to 18.

1 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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

14 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. 15 John testified about Him 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.'" 16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we come to You this morning asking that You might search our hearts with Your word, that You might send it into our minds, into our souls, to penetrate and to discern the secret thoughts and intentions of our hearts that You might lay them bare before You, and that You might lead us in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake, that You might lead us in the way everlasting. We pray that You would show us the Lord Jesus Christ, that we would be able to say with the apostle, "We saw His glory." And we pray this that He might be treasured and worshiped and revered and loved in a way which He is worthy of. We pray this in His name. Amen.

So the follow up question to the most important question in your life, what do you say about Jesus? What do you say about Jesus of Nazareth? Who is this man and how does your life back up that statement? He is the Christ, you say, but how does your life back that up? How do we close the gap between what our life says and what our profession, we say with our mouths?

I mentioned the two key words here. Glory. As John continues to unpack the revelation of who Jesus is in verses 14 to 18, he presents to us this word picture that's really quite striking and would have been really compelling for those Jewish recipients of this message that were familiar with the Old Testament. The imagery is clear and emphatic. When he says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw His glory," the King James says, "we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." The word "glory," a very important word in the Bible. The New Testament word "doxa," from which we get our word "doxology, word of glory, word of

praise," it actually though the real root biblically is the Hebrew word for glory, "kavod." The New Testament writers when they're using the Greek word, they're thinking in terms of the Old Testament concept and the Hebrew word "kavod" is a word which speaks of heaviness and weightiness. The glory of God is not, in a sense, a separate attribute of God. When we speak of the attributes, the characteristics of God, we could say, you know, God is omniscient, he knows all things. He's omnipotent, he has all power. He's sovereign, he reigns and he rules. He is good. He is holy. He is a wrathful God. He is a just God. He is a merciful God. A compassionate God. These are all attributes of God. Glory, in a sense, really is not a separate attribute, it's actually, it's the impact that the attributes have upon you or have upon nature itself. When God reveals his attributes, his glorious character in any way, when God reveals himself, glory is the result of that, is the weightiness, the heaviness. There's a sense in which you could think of it this way, glory is like the imprint that God makes upon creation when he shows up.

So when we see God, when we come into real communion with God, when we experience his presence, when we experience his attributes, glory is the effect that it has upon us. And so if we are seeing his glory, our lives are impacted by it. You know, the impression that it makes is left. You think about, you know, if you have shorts on and you sit in a lawn chair or something, you get up and you have a mark on your leg. Well, that's an imprint that might stay there for a while and someone may say, "Hey, what's wrong with your leg?" It's just where I was sitting. Or you have some mark on your skin because, you know, you experienced some other kind of event that it leaves a mark. I remember some time ago learning the term dermographics which is like, apparently, it's a kind of a quasi-biological condition where your skin actually just shows up more than other peoples if somebody scratches you or whatever. Dermo, skin. Graphics, write. It's like you can write on your skin. Well, that's a very poor analogy to say that when God reveals his glory, it leaves an imprint that people can see.

So when you are regularly beholding his glory, it is the weight of who he is. When you're regularly encountering God and his love, his goodness, his mercy, his holiness, his majesty, it leaves a mark and so that your life, then, is a testimony to his glory. And one of the reasons that there is a gap between what we say and what we do and how we live, what we say and how we live, is because we're not regularly seeing his glory. God means for us to be regularly beholding his glory. You can't manufacture it in yourself to be different because of what Christ has done. You can't make yourself a demonstration of his power and glory. You need to be acted upon by the Lord and impressed upon by his majesty, his goodness, and then you will reflect that. We tend to think that we can gin it up and that's certainly a futile approach. You cannot, you can only offer a dim approximation. You can't really show people the value of Christ unless you are seeing Christ regularly.

And this word picture is that he's painting for us is seen really more clearly when you look at the words that John uses here. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." I mentioned last Sunday that the word "dwelt" is actually literally in the Greek "pitched a tent among us." He pitched his tent among us and this idea of pitching a tent is a way to speak of the human experience. It's the humanity of Christ that's also talked about here

because our bodies are seen as tents. They are a housing for the soul that is temporary as we walk through this life as pilgrims. In fact, 2 Corinthians 5:1, Paul says that if this tent which is our physical body is destroyed, we know we have a building from God that's eternal. You see, we all have tents.

We're pitching our tents and so this is speaking of Jesus becoming man and pitching his tent but it's doing something much more than that as well, and for the Jewish reader, they would have picked up on this immediately, and as a Christian if you've read your Bible much, you undoubtedly see as well the connection. To pitch the tent and see glory, he pitched his tent among us and we beheld his glory. It's a clear allusion to the tabernacle. When God began to reveal himself to the nation of Israel after he brought them out of Egypt with his mighty hand, saved them from slavery, delivered them through the blood of the Passover lamb, and he brought them out to himself and he gave them his law and he pitched his tent among them, he had to make a tabernacle which was called the tent of meeting. It was the appointed place, the one place now that sinful men could encounter a holy God. It was the one place that sinners could come and experience and see his glory.

God had made a way for us to come back to him and so the Jews under Moses were invited into his presence through the tent of meeting. In fact, turn with me to Exodus 40. They were given instructions, incredibly precise instructions. You read the book of Exodus, it's amazing. Basically the way the book reads, if you haven't read it in a while, he says, "Okay, I want you to make, you know, curtains that are this long, this high, and they're made of this, and you're to sew them together this way, they're to have this border." And great precision, and then he'll say, "Now I want you to have the poles that you carry, that you put into these have to be this long, they're made of this kind of wood, etc." Great precision and then every single part of the tabernacle is given this instruction, and then what you see is that six or seven chapters later, it tells you they built the things and it goes into all the same detail it did before. This is where, for me, I don't like just to, you know, you get tired of typing, you get tired of writing, I would have thought Moses as he's writing would have said, "Lord, can't I just say, 'Hey, they did what I said five chapters ago exactly?'" No, the Lord had him write it out again.

So you're reading and you're thinking, "Hey, I already read this." If you've been reading through the book of Exodus, you're like, "I already read this." Well, you did but you really didn't. You're still reading a new passage that's saying the same thing. But to meet with God, to meet with God, he sets the rules. He sets all of the rules. He doesn't take suggestions. There is not a suggestion box on how to meet with God. So you say, "I'm sincere. I just think that it ought to be this way. I think God ought to be that way." God doesn't care what you think or what you want. He doesn't care what I think or what I want because we would not, we think the wrong things and we want the wrong things. Only he knows how sinners can be made right with him and he has prescribed one way.

So the tabernacle at that moment in time was the beginning of his unfolding of the one way of salvation. All that precision but anyway, so Moses gets all these instructions about everything, about what the garments for the priests, exactly how the tabernacle has got to be, all the instruments inside the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, the table for the

showbread, the candelabras, etc. Everything is all laid out and it says in chapter 40, he finishes the work. Chapter 40, verse 33, "He erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work." He's finished the tent. The tent is now erected. It's set up, the tent of meeting. God has pitched his tent and look what happens, verse 34, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." The cloud descends upon the tent. They had built this tent, they'd done all that God said, and the cloud of God's glory fills the tent. Verse 35, "Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." He couldn't go in because the presence and power and majesty and glory of God was so great.

Twice you heard the word "filled, the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." John is saying he pitched his tent among us and we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten, full of grace and truth, and of his fullness we've all received. He's saying the same way that Moses when he did all that God had said saw the glory descend, he said, "We have looked upon this Man, Jesus of Nazareth. He pitched His tent among us." His tent wasn't that impressive. It was just like every other tent. Isaiah had said, "He has no stately form or majesty that we should be drawn to Him." There was nothing about his physical appearance that made it clear that he was who he said he was but John says, "He pitched His tent and we beheld His glory. We saw the glory in the tent. We saw the fullness of the glory in the tent. We saw the fullness of the glory in the tent so much that it far surpassed what Moses saw." Far surpassed what Moses saw.

It's interesting, the word "beheld" or "saw," it's actually a stronger word than just the English word "to see" or to past tense "saw." I wish they had translated it beheld like the King James. It means "to view attentively; to contemplate; to look at with wonder." It doesn't just mean to see it, it means to look at and to contemplate. He's saying, "We looked at this Man, the tent, it's pitched among us. We looked at Him, we considered Him, we thought about what we were seeing. We contemplated and more and more and more we began to look with wonder because as we looked at this Man, we saw the glory of God."

Now it's important to understand they didn't see it in a way that would have been visible to the naked eye like Moses did. It was different. When Moses' glory cloud, when God's glory came down upon the tabernacle, everyone could see it, believer and unbeliever and most of the Jews were unbelievers, most of them died in the desert, but they all could see the glory cloud come down. It was visibly manifest. John is not saying here, I don't think he's emphasizing even what he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration. He's not talking about what he saw, what was visible to the naked eye. When you looked at Jesus, to the naked eye there was not a halo around his head, there wasn't a glow about him. There was nothing visible that said he is God but John said if you looked at him and really looked at him and considered all that he said, all that he did, you watched him thoughtfully, you became absolutely overwhelmed with the fact that in Christ is glory.

There was no other way to explain it and he saw it not with his visible, not with his physical eyes, they saw it with spiritual eyes but it was powerful and compelling, and we

see this because in chapter 2 he explains how he began to see the glory. In chapter 2, verse 11, back to John, 2:11, after Jesus has turned water into wine, the first miracle that John records for us, he says in verse 11 of John 2, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory." Do you see that? How did he see glory? "We saw glory in the things He did. We saw Him do things and this was the manifestation of the internal Shekinah glory of God being made visible not to the naked eye but to the eye of faith, to the discerning thoughtful person who was open."

"And His disciples believed in Him." He manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him. This word "sign" is an important word for John in the way he unfolds the gospel. He's trying to convince his readers that, "Listen, we have seen Jesus, in Jesus we have seen the glory of God. He is fully God, fully man. He's the one Savior. He's the one way that you can be made right with God." And he presents seven signs, seven miracles. The word "sign" here means that which signifies or distinguishes, it's a distinguishing mark, a token that authenticates something. It's analogous to like a signet ring, it authenticates that this has come from a certain person, the king. These marks authenticate the claims of Jesus. Jesus is claiming clearly in his ministry to be God. It's not just what they saw, it's what they heard too because John's going to record for us all of the sayings of Jesus, all of the "I Am" sayings where he's basically saying, "I Am that I Am. I am Yahweh." He's making those claims and these signs authenticate his claims. They prove it.

These seven miracles that he does, he changes water to wine in chapter 2. He is Lord over the laws of physics. He heals the nobleman's son in the latter part of chapter 4 from a distance. There's a nobleman whose son is ill and he asks Jesus to come and heal him and Jesus says, "Go your way. Your son lives." He goes his way and he finds out that his son turned the corner at exactly the moment Jesus said, "Go your way. Your son lives." And he believed. He heals a lame man in chapter 5, the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. He feeds 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes in chapter 6. He walks on water in chapter 6 as well. He heals a man born blind in chapter 9. He raises Lazarus from the dead in chapter 11, the seventh and final sign that Jesus does. And then his greatest sign of all is the eighth, after he lays down his life, he takes it up again as a risen Lord. So John says, "These things have authenticated His claim. We have seen His glory in the things that He's done."

John tells us that the way that you see glory is to look at Jesus. Have you ever thought as you're reading, particularly when reading an Old Testament passage like, for instance, the one we said with Exodus 40, to see the glory cloud or to see the Red Sea opened, or to see the Jordan River, the waters of the Jordan stand back, what would that have been like and what would it have been like to see the Lord win the battle against the Midianites with Gideon and his 300 warriors? We think back and we think, "Wow, that would be, if I could just see that. Lord, why don't You talk to us directly the way that you did to Abraham? Why don't You show us these miracles like that?" And what the New Testament apostles would tell you and tell me is that we are being very foolish. We are actually, it's like a child asking for, you know, Kraft macaroni and cheese instead of, "I want to eat Kraft macaroni and cheese rather than the steak that you guys are eating, mom and dad. I don't want any filet mignon, I want some Kraft macaroni and cheese."

Actually, I like Kraft macaroni and cheese. I'm not trying to say anything bad about it. It's a weakness. I actually like it better than people's homemade macaroni and cheese. My wife really finds this to be a stumbling block in our marriage because she knows real macaroni and cheese is so much better than Kraft. But anyway, I digress.

The point is so I'm showing the weakness there but like think about that, a child doesn't know what he doesn't know and he thinks what's familiar and comfortable, or he has an idea that this what I need and God says, "No, you can't waste your time with this. You need the feast." And the feast is to see Jesus, not to see merely the opening of the Red Sea or the plagues upon Egypt. That's small potatoes compared to seeing God's glory blazing in his Son. And where do you see his glory, though? You can't see it with your eyes, the naked eye, but you can see it in the Scripture. You read the gospels and you see the glory of Jesus and you see it, if you read it humbly asking the Lord, if you come to the Scripture and this is a way we ought always to pray, I remember seeing a plaque on a pulpit one time that said this, "Sirs, we would see Jesus," so that the pastor would see that every time he got ready to preach. "Sirs, we would see Jesus." That's what the Greeks said when they came to Jesus in John 12. They said it to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus." If we come to the Scripture that way, "Lord, let me see Jesus. Let me see Jesus." And you read the text of Scripture, God has ordained that in the text of Scripture you will see and meet with Jesus. You will see his glory.

It's interesting, Romans 10:6-8, a really interesting passage. At first glance, it's kind of, seems kind of difficult and odd but there's a wonderful truth here, these three verses. Romans 10. He's explaining the way of salvation in Romans, that the way of salvation, the way of righteousness with God is not based on what we do, it's not based on what we bring, it's based on what God has done, what Jesus has done, what Jesus is, and salvation happens in merely receiving him. You bring nothing. He brings everything. And if you try to bring anything, you get nothing. Nothing in your hand can you bring, only cling to Christ.

Well, he's getting at that and he's explaining this and he's trying to explain, "Listen, when you hear the word of God, you actually meet with Christ. You have the potential of meeting with Christ." Look what he says, Romans 10:6, "But the righteousness based on faith," that is, the righteousness that comes to God, not bringing anything but simply trusting in Jesus, "the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down), or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." What is he talking about, who will ascend, who will descend? He's saying the heart that wants to meet God, the heart that wants to see Jesus, you may say can I go to heaven and find Jesus? Can I descend to the abyss and see Jesus? He says that's not the way of faith.

Look what he says next, verse 8, "But what does it say?" What does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." He's saying that when the preaching of the word, when the reading of the word, the hearing of the word, the speaking of the word to one another, when you are speaking the word of God to one another, Christ is there. You don't have to go to heaven, you don't have to dig into the abyss, you simply go to the

Bible with a heart that is eager to see, that says, "Lord, show me Jesus." And it's not merely the gospels, the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation preaches Christ. Jesus said this himself in John 5, he told the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures because you think in them you have life, but these they are that speak of Me. Moses was writing about Me," he says.

And so to see the glory, go to the Bible. You spend time in the Scriptures but you don't go just lifeless, not expecting anything. You don't just go doing it to check off a list. You go doing it to see Jesus. You go with an earnestness that says, "Lord, let me see Jesus." And as you experience his glory, you see the wonder of who he is, the Scriptures unpack for you the majesty of Christ, the meekness of such a glorious Savior that would humble himself to become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, who is continually saying, "Come unto Me. Come, you who are thirsty. Come, you who are hungry. Come and receive from Me." And you see his glory, then you will have the marks of that in your life. You're shaped by it. It's to be a continual ongoing process. It's not we saw and we know it and that's enough. No, we continually seek to see more and more of the glory of Christ.

The reason there's a gap between what we say we believe about Jesus and how we live is because we are being content with so much less than God wants for us. He wants us to see the glory of his Son. He wants us to delight in the glory of his Son. He wants your heart to be so thrilled with the glory of Jesus that you are going through the day rejoicing in whatever circumstance you're in because no matter what's happening around you, no matter who's against you, you know God is for you. No matter who condemns you, you know Christ declares you righteous. You know that no matter who tries to destroy your life, who's against you in trying to wreck you and bring all kinds of tribulation against you, you are more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ.

We must regularly be seeing his glory. We have to be abiding in it. This is why as Ted was saying, we need to be in church. I'm too depressed to go to church. How can you say that? If you're that depressed, the one place you must be is church. How stupid of you and I say that to myself. I go when I'm depressed because I'm the pastor, I have to show up, but if I'm thinking biblically I would go because I must be with the people of God because God ordains to bring his blessing through one another as we seek him together. This is a wonderful opportunity that's not there every day of the week. Praise the Lord if you have believers in your family, there's times for you to commune together and encourage one another but even then there's something rich and wonderful about coming together with the body of Christ, with other people who are saying, "Lord, show us Jesus." And you need to be praying that. That is to be the echo of your heart. Every time you come to a Bible study, every time you gather together with other believers, even when you're talking one-on-one and somebody is just talking about the problems in their life, "Lord, help me see Jesus. Help me see how Jesus relates to this. Let's find Jesus together in this." And when people have that as their heartbeat, then the Lord delights. As he says, "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." God delights to show his glory to his people. We're so content with so much less. Lord, help us to be urgent to see his glory.

The second thing we see, though, is the word "fullness." The word "fullness." Back to John 1. This glory is seen in his being full of grace and truth, verse 14. Then skipping to verse 16. In verse 15 is kind of a large parenthesis that John deals with related to John the Baptist but the thought really flows from verse 14 to verse 16. "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." Colossians 1:19 says it pleased God for all the fullness to dwell in his Son. Colossians 2:9, "the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form," in Jesus. God was pleased to put his fullness into Christ.

The Son of God is fully God and the fullness of God is in him and what this is telling us, this word "fullness" and the connection with glory, the way that glory impresses itself upon you is that you experience his fullness. This is the most wonderful aspect of the gospel, that the gospel is all about the fullness of Christ meeting the emptiness of man. You and I are utterly and completely empty and Jesus is wondrously, gloriously full. He is everything that we are not. He is everything that we need and as we come to see his glory, we see his attributes, we see his majesty as we read the Scriptures, we see the wonder of his character, then we're able to experience and receive, we're invited to receive his fullness personally.

So this second thing, we live out of his fullness. The key word is fullness and I said, "see his glory," how do you close the gap? You see his glory and, secondly, you live out of his fullness, or you could say we experience his fullness. We receive all that he has for us. We continue to go to him and continue to see ourselves empty and to pray ourselves full. This is the Christian life. This is how salvation happens. How does salvation happen? You must see yourself empty, nothing that you can commend yourself to God. Only filthiness and sin. Nothing that God would be able to approve of in your life or my life.

The publican said, "Have mercy on me the sinner." He sees his sin with such clarity that nobody else's sin matters. He sees himself as the worst sinner, the sinner, and all he can do to God is say, "Have mercy on me." Be propitiated toward me is what it says in the Greek. He's looking at the sacrifice and saying, "Lord, be propitiated toward me because of what You've done." He's not saying, "Have mercy on me because I'm so sincere in wanting mercy." He's not saying, "Have mercy on me because I'm trying to turn away from sin." He's saying, "Have mercy on me because You have dealt with my sin, You have finished it somehow in Your work. There's nothing that I bring, only I look to what You have done." That is salvation. Salvation is faith alone. There's nothing, it's not a sense of earnestness, it's not a sense of desire, it's not working up, ginning up any of that, it's acknowledging that you are absolutely impoverished before God. You can say to the Lord, "I don't even want to be saved like I ought to be saved. I'm so wicked and vile all I can say is have mercy on me, be propitiated toward me because of what You've done in Christ." And God says, "You are My child forever."

And Christ is fullness. This is what's so beautiful about John's gospel too. I mentioned these seven "I am" sayings that he has. In fact, there are more than that. He says, "I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world." Think about what he's saying here. "I am the bread of life. He who is hungry, come to Me. If you're hungry, come to Me. You need

Me. I'm the light of the world." He says that before he heals the blind man. The picture, the miracle that he's going to do pictures the reality of who he is. If you are blind, what do you need? You need someone to give you light. Jesus is the one who has the power to do that. Nobody else does. He is the one. "I am the light of the world." Do I have to want, I mean, do I have to somehow work on my eyes. No, you just come acknowledging you're blind to the light of the world. Do I have to work for my bread? No, the work Jesus says in John 6, is to believe on the one God sent. "I am the bread of life." Just receive the bread, acknowledge yourself empty and pray yourself, ask him for his fullness.

"I am the true vine," John 15:1, "You are the branches, apart from Me you can do nothing." This is the Christian life. The Christian life is lived the same way throughout to the end that it began. It's exactly the same. You think yourself empty, you pray yourself full. Every moment, every day, that's the plan. That is in me, my flesh, dwelleth no good thing but in Christ I have all the treasures of wisdom and sanctification and holiness. So I acknowledge again and again I have nothing, Christ has everything that I need.

This is where we get tripped up so often. I know for myself. We're told in Scripture to examine ourselves and we are to experience true life change and that's absolutely right, and some of you need to understand that, that the Bible is, somebody says the ministry of preaching is to make the comfortable uncomfortable and the uncomfortable comfortable. There are people that are comfortable that shouldn't be and they need to be made uncomfortable, and there are people that are uncomfortable that should be made comfortable and if you've not experienced a change and you don't care about that at all and you're not grieved about that at all, you need to examine yourself to see if you're a believer. But many believers live impoverished, live like paupers when they should be living like children of the King and that is because we are tempted, we cannot lay aside our old legal mindset, the legal frame of mind, the law built into us that says we must do something. And so we look at our lives and we look at the lack of fruit and we try to work on it, we make even resolutions, this is a real pitfall for New Year's, we make resolutions. I'm not saying resolutions are bad, they're good but you've got to get the horse before the cart. A lot of times the resolutions we treat like the cart but they can't pull anything. A resolution has no power. Christ, his grace is the horse and if you're not walking in grace, your resolutions will mean nothing. You may do some for a while, you may make some improvements but there will be no real life change.

The Christian life is to be lived by grace from the beginning; the same way that you see yourself empty, I have nothing to bring to God to commend myself to him, every moment of every day is to be lived the same way because John 15:1, "I am the vine, you are the branches." He says, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." Think about that. A branch, what can a branch do? It can bear fruit or it won't bear fruit. What's the difference, what's going to make the difference of bearing fruit or not bearing fruit? If it's connected to the vine. If the branch is rooted in the vine, holding onto the vine, connected to the vine, fruit will happen. It's inevitable because it's connected to the life-giving sap of the vine. But if the vine is trying to do it in its own strength, it's not rooting itself, it's not making its effort to be rooted to the vine, the branch is just not making itself to be rooted to the vine then it will produce nothing.

This means we think ourselves empty, we pray ourselves full. Think about this, the Christian life, try to overcome sin. We all have to battle with sin. Think about your besetting sin, the sin that is most difficult for you right now in your life. How are you to battle it? You know, I think one of the things that we forget to do sometimes is we need to start by even just asking to really acknowledge yourself completely empty, to think yourself completely empty is to say, "Lord, would You help me want to turn from sin." Do you know what I'm saying? Not just, "Will You help me turn from sin but will You help me want to turn from sin. I need Your grace." And to understand and this is where faith comes in, and to believe that because in Christ you have received his fullness, you have received the one who came to save his people from their sins, you have received the power of his death and his resurrection that asking him for that you are going to receive it. He's going to make you want to turn from sin and then he's going to enable you to know how to turn from sin as you stay in his word, that we too often, we try to like do the first part on our own. We make resolutions on our own. We make plans on our own and then we ask God to bless them. We need to start by saying, "No, there's nothing good in me. I am completely emptiness. Jesus is fullness. Everything that I need I will find in Him. Nothing that I need will I find in myself."

I'm going to read you from Charles Spurgeon, a sermon he preached on the fullness of Christ. He says, "Salvation is not by what you bring to Christ, but by what you take from him. You are to be receivers first, and then, by-and-by, through the power of grace you shall give forth from yourselves rivers of living water to others." That has to happen. Look what he says, "In your first coming you come empty, having nothing but your sin and misery; as empty, undeserving sinners you receive of his fulness," and listen to this, "and all your life long continue to do the same." Every day you continue to come empty to an ocean of fullness that is Christ. "The grace already given is not the climax, or the conclusion, you go on receiving more and more. Grace increases your capacity for grace, and that enlarged capacity becomes filled, and so the fulness of God comes into you till you are filled with it, and you rise from grace to glory, being made like unto God, and fitted to dwell where he is for ever and ever." That is the path. There is that progression that happens but it happens only as you are rooted in grace. It doesn't happen through human effort.

Now listen, it doesn't mean that we're to sit around. No, I'm not saying let go and let God. No, I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying seek with all of your heart to cling to Christ. Look to him. Pray to him. Cry out to him and believe that he not only is able to take care of every need that you have, he is willing and he will do it certainly, and therein you will find the power, therein you will see his glory be made known in your own life.

His fullness, everything that we need is in Christ. Do you lack purity? Jesus is pure, perfectly pure. Do you lack a desire to pray? Go to Jesus who could find nothing more delightful than to spend time with his Father, often going away from the ministry and from the disciples to be alone with the Father. Do you have trouble meeting your goals of reading the Bible? You don't want to read the Bible? Jesus loved the Bible.

I was talking to Denver Clark about a message he heard recently where somebody was commenting on the fact that a Messianic Jewish pastor was saying that Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 at the beginning, near the beginning of the cross. You know, when the sky gets dark about 12 noon and he says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And then he quotes Psalm 31:5 at about 3 o'clock when he is about to die, "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." And this Messianic Jewish pastor was saying, "I think it's certainly worth considering that Jesus was meditating on Psalm 22 to Psalm 31 as He hung on the cross." The man Christ Jesus living as true man, living as true man through the agony of the cross clinging to God by the word, the power of the word. Yet he's fully God. Isn't that amazing? That is the author of your salvation who has gone before you and says, "Follow Me." What a Savior.

You need to desire the word? Go to one who loves the word. "Lord Jesus, I need to love the word more. Help me love the word. Help me long for the word. Help me even when I feel dry when I'm reading the word, just keep wanting to read the word. Help me, Lord." Everything that you need is found in Jesus, that's the message of the gospel and it's certainly what John is saying. You're hungry, he's the bread of life. You're thirsty, he's the one that living waters come out of his belly. He makes them come out of your belly by his Spirit. You're in the dark, he's the light of the world. You're afraid of death, he's the resurrection and the life. You need to be protected, you don't know which way to go, he is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

Everything that you need Jesus is. Why would you not give yourself to him? Some of you have not yet given your heart to Christ. Why are you holding back? Why would you not give everything that you are to him, realizing that giving yourself to him has nothing to do with your salvation, you just receive from him, but part of receiving from him, then, is entrusting yourself to him on the backside. That means repenting, being willing to let things go but you have to even ask him for that. "Lord, I'm not willing to even let things go. Help me." That's what the rich young ruler should have done. He should have said, "I love my money too much. Lord, help me!" And he would have found salvation. Amen.

Such a glorious Savior that invites us every day to see his glory, that offers to make himself known to you and me in such a way that the imprint of his love, his mercy, his tenderness, his kindness, his holiness, his purity, would be seen in our lives by those around us, and that it would be seen supremely in the fullness. God's talking about making your heart so full that you can't contain it, to see his grace and his truth just flooding your heart to where you're overflowing. That's what God wants for you and me. It's not going to be found through what you feel, though. It's not going to be found through looking for how you want it to be. Don't sit and figure out that you can make this work the way you want it to work. No, come the way he says. There's only one way, the way he says. Humble yourself. Go to his word and ask him to show you Jesus and to give you the grace to respond appropriately to such a glorious King. Ask him to help you repent. Ask him to help you believe. Ask him to do everything that you cannot do. Acknowledge that you can do nothing and then for the rest of your life keep doing that and in the process, you will experience more and more of his glory, more and more of his fullness, and you will be more and more like him to the praise of his glory.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the gospel. Lord, we know when we look at our own lives how much deficiency there is. We know what we should do and we can't do it. We know what we should do and we don't want to do it. But thank You that Jesus received sinners. He's a Savior of sinners. He's a Savior of people who don't want to do what they should do and who do the things they shouldn't do. He was a friend of sinners and tax collectors and He's still a friend of sinners and tax collectors who come to Him and worship Him. Lord, just help us be worshipers of Jesus. Help us to receive from His fullness. Help us to be shaped by His glory. Father, we ask You this so that we might experience it, but more than that we ask it so that He might be shown through our lives to be the marvelous Savior that He is. We thank You for Your promise, "Faithful is He who called you. He also will do it." Amen.