

“God”
Pastor John Bronson

(John 1:1-5)

August 28, 2011

Order of Worship for August 28, 2011,
Pre-service Song
Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: The Princess Tea and the Military Luncheon (Do either of these need to be a full ministry moment?)

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:161-176 and Prayer

Dedication of the Children’s Ministries Staff

Songs of Worship:

“Worthy of Worship” (this may be new)

Song # 153

“We Bow Down”

Overhead

“Praise the Lord! Ye Heavens, Adore Him”

Song # 82

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

Song # 3

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “God” (John 1:1-5)
by Pastor Bronson

Closing Song: “I Stand in Awe” Song # 80

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evening in the Word
Heroes of the Faith, Hebrews 11:16-31
5:30 to 7:00
The Henneker Music Building

“The Prayer Closet”

August 28, 2011

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **Russell and Sharla Weisner serving in Malaysia:** Sharla and the children’s return to Malaysia will be without danger and they will be refreshed; Russell’s further meetings in the States will secure prayer and financial support; plans to establish and expand their ministry in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, will move forward
2. **President Obama, Jerry Brown** and both the national and state bureaucracies: they will be protected from harm and malicious attacks; the Spirit will instill a deeper respect for the rule of law and wisdom for fostering a self-respecting and self-supporting citizenry with gratitude for the opportunities and privileges of living in a nation of political freedom
3. **Board of Trustees:** they will be clear and united regarding project priorities for the rest of the summer and this fall; they will have adequate support in finances and volunteers for project completion; they will enjoy a strong sense of the Lord’s guidance and blessing
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: MSgt David Howell** (son-in-law of Eileen Hewitt):
5. **Young Adult of the Week: Samantha Ryan** (daughter of John and Michelle Ryan):

Pastor John Bronson

I encourage you to take out and look at the questions [at the end of the transcript]. They are designed to help you follow as we move through the message. Today I will say from the outset that the message is challenging. I hope you can track along with me as we work through some very profound and foundational truths of the faith. The title might give away something about it. The title is “God”. The text is John 1:1-5.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was the light and the light was the life of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”

With those remarkable words John begins his gospel, his good news regarding Jesus the anointed one sent by God. We began our study of John last week. We set some important things in place. I want to remind you of those four important things that were established last week when we looked at the Word. Those four were by way of review: 1) that it is wise for us, it is needful for us to remember that the Gospels are not biographies. Don't turn to them and look for the kind of information that will satisfy your interest regarding all the details and the progressive development of Jesus' life. That is not what they are designed to do. In fact what they are designed to do is to call you to faith. So you should remember that as you are exposed to this teaching. The second 2) is that the opening section of John's Gospel, the first eighteen verses, are a prologue – the word before – and they are designed to give us his credentials. Why pay attention to Jesus? That is fundamentally what John is engaged in at this point. The third thing 3) that we established last week is that it is good to remember that revelation, the revelation of God to man, was made necessary by sin. Consequently there is a continual conversation between our God and us that is designed to get the truth around our resistance. That resistance is sin within us. So that will help you as you wander through the verses and you try and understand what is going on it is helpful to remember that it is sin that has made revelation necessary.; The last of the four 4) is that the question that we face and that you must answer regarding the Bible's claim that Jesus is in fact the eternal Son of God, is not the question “How did God accomplish that?”. The question is, “Why was it necessary?” That is the question scripture seeks to answer. Not “How did God do it?” in the sense of “How did He manage to make Himself into a man”, but rather “Why was that the necessary path that God had to follow in order to accomplish our salvation?”

This ties in to our understanding what the basic challenge is. Sin represents a dilemma for God in dealing with us. What is that challenge? I think that most often when we bring the question up in that manner we tend to assume if not directly state that the big question about, “How can God deal with sinful men?” is really whether or not God has sufficient love in order to deal with sinners. Does He have enough to overcome His own hatred of sin and forgive us? After all, I think that that is most often the struggle that you and I have when someone offends us, when someone steps on us, when someone does us unjustly, when someone treats us unfairly, when someone puts us down, we are suddenly in a tough spot if we are Christians. We say, “Oh, I have to pull together my inner resources in order to be able to release my sense of offense and forgive this person.” This goes along with the idea that the problem is not so much with God's readiness to forgive, but as we say with our readiness to be forgiven, as well as our readiness to forgive ourselves. That whole line of thinking causes us to think that the issue has to do with us. But it doesn't have to do with us. It is wise when trying to understand God's way of dealing with us to remember this fundamental fact. God is love. He has an inexhaustible source of love. He never runs out of love because God's entire being, what He is, is love. But there is still a problem. This is the problem. How can God fulfill the truth by satisfying justice while also manifesting love so as to sustain life and hope? The problem that God has was satisfying at one and the same time the demand of His own holiness for justice which results from an attack on the

Pastor John Bronson

honor and majesty of perfect goodness combined with perfect knowledge and absolute power, and at the same time meet the imperative of love which seeks to heal and save the lost and suffering? The whole problem is inside of God.

You’re probably thinking, “I don’t get that.” Let’s go a bit further. I would like you to think for a moment about these five concepts: goodness; power; truth; justice; and forgiveness. All of us deal with what those four concepts signify every day. The world around us and much of its turmoil is actually bound up with those terms. How do they relate to each other? How do they play out in our own hearts and minds as we deal with one another: goodness, power, truth, justice, forgiveness? What we see in God relating to those five concepts is very difficult for us to grasp. This, I believe, is the way we tend to think. The more power an individual has, the less that individual has to fear, because the exercise of the power will protect them from whatever might possibly have threatened them. Therefore as you have an increase in power, the ability to forgive others is increased, because you have less to fear and therefore you will not be troubled. Consequently, to be powerful, and therefore without fear, and yet not forgive, is to be petty. Powerful, unassailable, without fear, graciously you can forgive. And to not forgive [under such circumstances] is a sin greater than whatever the original offense might have been. Really, what can your sin or my sin do against God? Absolutely nothing! So of course God should forgive: He is a God of love.

But what does this really say to us? The real message in that line of thinking is that what matters is not truth or justice; for there is no denial of the reality of offense, there is no actual clearing of the offender’s record or name. If power, the fact that I am too powerful for you to hurt me is the basis of forgiveness, then power and not justice is what matters. And if power rather than justice is what matters, then it is might that makes right, and the greatest sin is to be weak or poor.

Beloved, I contend that you are looking at the heart of what has become the nature of American culture. In our culture there is nothing more than despicable than to be poor, and there is nothing we admire more or give more leniency to than to be rich and powerful, and we expect the rich and powerful to be gracious and liberally forgiving and hold no one to account, and we do not hold them to account either.

But that is not the way God is. The justice of God is rooted in truth. How will God execute perfect justice against sin, honoring complete purity and unfailing righteousness while at the same time manifesting or giving full expression to His perfect love and His mercy and compassion and loving kindness and His readiness to forgive us? The answer is given to us as a matter of fact in Romans 3:23-26. This is what Paul wrote:

“There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [a sin payment] by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Did you ever think about that? How many sinners were there in the Old Testament? All of them [were]. How does God respond to sin unchecked? He flooded them. Is God any less outraged by sin after the flood than before the flood? Not at all! So [how] was it that God managed to not exercise His power and judge? Paul says [it was His] forbearance. And on what was His forbearance based? It was not based on His power, but it was based on His

Pastor John Bronson

knowledge that He Himself would remove the offense of sin. How did He do that? What Paul says in Romans is that God sent His Son to die for us.

It is necessary for us to understand and appreciate that God bore the full weight of His own justice and wrath against sin. But in bearing that full weight, satisfying the demand of justice and giving Himself freedom thereby to act with great generosity, we must remember that the demand of divine justice is not for suffering, it is for death. This creates a problem. God cannot die. If God is going to die, He must become a mortal, He must become a man. We come now to the question, how can that be? For the Christian the answer is so basic to our faith we scarcely think to question it. But there is not now and there never has been anything obvious about it. It is wise for us to remember that in the Old Testament and for the Jew there was nothing more fundamental than this fact, God is One. That is exactly what we hear in the daily repeated affirmation of Deuteronomy 6:4-6. *“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.”* Why is that a big deal? For a thousand years they refused to believe it. For a thousand years they are sucked off into the worship of idols, again and again and again. Only after the Babylonian Captivity did they finally reconcile themselves to the most fundamental fact about God: [He is] One.

And then along comes John. What does John say? John 1:1-2, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”* This is how the notes in my English Standard Version Study Bible put it: “In this verse the Word is expressly affirmed to be God. The Word existed already in the beginning.” You could actually properly translate that statement as “before the beginning” for that is the thrust of the statement: when the beginning began, the Word. [The Notes continue,] “This is a clear reference to the opening words of the Bible. It is a way of denoting the eternity that is unique to God. John states clearly “the Word was God.” He goes on, “that the Word was with...” [John is saying,] God is God, God is with God. [Continuing,] “The word ‘with’ indicates a distinction and a separation of persons within the unity of the godhead.” When my wife and I stand over there [by the fellowship Hall doors], she is with me and I am with her, we are one, but we are two. [Finally the notes say,] “Furthermore, the word ‘with’ indicates relational intimacy.” We are with, joined together, side by side.

What does this do to the Jewish mind? How to understand this? God who is God made an agreement with the Word Who is God to accomplish the salvation of sinners. Our salvation is accomplished for us by [the One] God. It is accomplished by way of an agreement or a covenant of perfect obedience and of voluntary sacrifice on the part of God the Word with God the Father. This is not two gods; it is One God. But God is two persons, because they confer with one another, they agree with one another, they speak with one another, they act in concert with one another. The Word who is God, and God who is God: not yet but later John will introduce us to the Spirit. Beloved, if there is no trinity, there cannot be Christianity.

Now, why am I doing this? You will find that today a majority of people who confess Christ have absolutely no comprehension of why they do. They do not understand the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They will shy away from the Trinity as if it was a mumbo jumbo arriving from some theologically abstruse minds and it has no part in their faith, but I tell you my beloved friends, my beloved brothers and sisters, if there is no Trinity, we are dead in our sins.

Pastor John Bronson

The echo, as it were, of these truths comes to us when we listen to Paul’s words, in this instance in Ephesians 1:3-5, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him. . .”* [When were we chosen in Christ?] *“...before the foundations of the world. . .”* [that is, before the beginning; that is the reason we understand John’s words in 1:1 the way we do, *“...that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.”* Again, we hear this; God the Word agrees to live a perfect life and then give that life as an atonement on the cross, suffering the judgment of God the Father’s wrath against sin for those whom the Father will give Him. It is indeed the words that we find in John 17, Jesus’ prayer to the Father in the Upper Room on the night of His betrayal that are clearest. *“When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence. . .”* – Now listen to this – *“...with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.”* – When did the Son of God exist? Before the world existed. Before any of the creation was here, because in the beginning was God and in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God in the beginning. Jesus goes on and says, *“...I have manifested Your name to the people whom You gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to me. . .I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given me. . .I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word. . .Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: he was in the beginning with God. This is how John begins the Gospel of our salvation in Jesus Christ. He begins with this so that he can end with the triumph of God’s grace through God’s justice on the cross, where Jesus, the Son of God, having lived a life of perfect obedience under the Law, freely gave Himself as a sacrificial offering to satisfy the demand of that Law against sinners, not for His own sin, for He was sinless, but for the sins of others. 2Corinthians 5:21, *“For our sake He [the Father] made Him [the Son] to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”* The answer therefore as to why God has dealt with humanity by God the Word who is God and who is with God from the beginning is so that He might save sinners from death. The end of this message is this question: have you been saved? Do you believe in this God? Do you believe in the God who was the Word, and the God who was in the beginning, and the God who became the Son, and the God who died for you? Do you believe? That is the question. There is no other God but One.

Please pray with me: Gracious heavenly Father, we are speechless. Who can comprehend what You have done for us? Who can imagine such a thing? And yet here it is spelled out so that we might believe. And believing, be saved. Thank You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

What makes forgiving others difficult for you?

1. The Bible tells us God is love. If that is so, why is there any difficulty on God’s part in forgiving us? Isn’t the real difficulty in our forgiving ourselves as well as receiving His forgiveness?
2. Have you ever struggled to balance or reconcile the need to deal seriously with a person’s failure or wrong choices along with affirming your relationship with them and that you see them as valuable?
3. Do you agree or does it seem right to you that if a person’s words or actions can do you no harm then you should not hesitate to forgive them. By the same token, does it seem to you that for a powerful person to “hang on to” an offense and “demand justice” is rather petty and heartless?
4. “If power rather than justice is what matters, then might makes right and the greatest sin of them all is to be weak.” Comments?
5. Israel long struggled with idolatry, that is, with the worship of various false gods. What makes idolatry so attractive or irresistible? (on this see Ephesians 5:5)
6. Does the Trinity, the teaching that there are three Persons in one God, help you in understanding the gospel?
7. What, if any, difficulties do you have with the teaching of God as Father, Son and Spirit, one God simultaneously being three Persons?