

Making God Known | Christmas Day | John 1:1-14
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That the hearer would rejoice in the revelation which God has given us in Christ – he has not come in wrath or the terror of judgment for us, but he has revealed his heart and it is filled with love.

Introduction

During World War II, Father William Thomas Cummings claimed that “there are no atheists in foxholes.” Others have claimed that there are no atheists anywhere if we define a “god” as that in which we put our ultimate trust. Some may put their ultimate trust solely in what they can perceive with their senses. Others of us may put their trust in a divine being, a personal God that exists in this universe but that cannot be seen.

If you are one who places your trust in a personal God - a divine being, I wonder, though, how would you describe this God? And further, where would you go to get the data? Indeed, you may sense that God has left traces of His existence all over the world in the midst of the created order. But what does that tell you about God? I mean, what does it say about what this God is actually like? What is God’s day-to-day agenda? What are God’s motivations?

A peaceful afternoon by the ocean may reveal one thing about God, but getting caught in a thunderstorm might reveal another. Is God loving and kind or is God mean and vengeful? Is God unpredictable, sending tornadoes and tsunamis at random? Or is God loving and gracious, opening up a parking spot in the front row at the mall? Or, is God like me? Do we have the same views on politics and religion and sports?

You see what I mean? How can we possibly know what God is like? If God were to show up here, right now - would we be afraid? Should we be afraid? Would terror reign over us? Would we be burned up in his very holy presence as he judges us for even our slightest misdeeds?

What is God like? More importantly, how do we *know*? If we have this sense that there exists in this world a God, where do we go to find out what He’s like? How can we be sure? How do we know we haven’t accidentally created God in *our own* image?

Gospel

There are many ways in which humanity has tried to get to the bottom of this question. We have philosophized and moralized. We have looked at nature and inferred what, it seems, God is like. We have spent hours staring at the stars, wondering how they got there and what’s beyond them. We have come up with lists of rules that spell just how humanity might appease the gods, should they exist.

There are so many ways in which humanity has attempted to get to the bottom of the question of God. But as Christians, we need only look in one direction for we see that, in the Christmas narrative, we have all the information that we need. In the Christmas

story God has been made known to us. **Or more precisely, in *Jesus* God has made Himself known to us.**

This is what we uncover as we meditate on our Gospel text this Christmas Morning. John the Gospel writer wants us to know what he knows. He wants us to know that the mystery of God has been revealed. He wants us to know that in Jesus Christ the Word of God has been made flesh. God has made Himself known to the world and to *us*.

So when we look to Jesus, what do we see?

John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And later in verse 14 John writes, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". What does this mean? Well, it means that if we want to know what the Creator of the world is like, we look to Jesus. If we want to know the mind of our Maker, we look to Jesus. We open up the Scriptures to the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - and we begin to follow Jesus around. For the Son of God who was there when the foundations of the earth were laid at Creation is the same one who is lying in the manger on Christmas Morning.

So what does John tell us about the God who has made Himself known in the incarnation of Jesus? Verses 4-5 tell us that Jesus is life and light. Jesus comes, born today, and reveals the heart of God to his people. And God is a God of Life and Light.

In the ministry of Jesus we see this borne out in amazing ways. At Cana, Jesus celebrates life and the gifts of God by providing wine for the party. At the pool called Bethesda in Jerusalem Jesus brings healing and wholeness to a man who for 38 years couldn't walk. In the town of Bethany, Jesus raises his friend Lazarus from the dead!

In the beginning, God was all about Creating life. And in Jesus we see that God continues to be a God of life. The sick are healed, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and, of course, the dead are raised. And ultimately, God becomes part of the creation to heal His creation. God becomes part of the life He created to restore it. This is the heart of the Creator and we know it because this is the heart of Christ who is born on Christmas.

What else does John tell us about the Word made flesh, Jesus? Verse 14 tells us that Jesus comes bearing the glory of God and that he is full of grace and truth. It is perhaps the grace of God that we long for Christ to reveal most of all. For we want to know what God is like but the real question behind that one is, "How does God feel about *me*?"

In Jesus, this question is answered in no uncertain terms. For verse 14 also tells that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Eugene Peterson, in his paraphrase of this passage from *The Message*, writes that Jesus "moves into the neighborhood". But Jesus "moves into the neighborhood" not to crush us, not to condemn us, but to demonstrate the favor of God towards his people. Jesus "moves into the neighborhood" to be a living, breathing, walking, talking demonstration of the grace of God. Jesus calls as his followers imperfect fishermen. He

keeps quite unsavory company...tax collectors and sinners. He shows grace to women caught in adultery...he calls himself "The Good Shepherd". Jesus comes into this world, to show - to demonstrate - the incredible grace of God.

This, of course, is on full display as Jesus takes up his place on the cross. This would be the very purpose for which He is born. So if you really want to know what God is like...look to Jesus and you look to Jesus as he hangs on the cross. Right there is where the grace of God for us is on full display. Right there is where God gives his one and only son, so that you and I might not perish but have eternal life. And it's there, where, through his death, Jesus graciously pays the debt of sin that we owe.

If you want to know how God feels about you look to Jesus. Look to Jesus who loves you so much that he gave up his life for you. Look to Jesus and rejoice. For God has come to be with his people! He comes not in his might and power...but He comes in humility and grace. He comes in a baby...born of Mary. Born for you today. Born to make God - Our Creator and Redeemer - known to the nations.

Rejoice! Jesus is born! And if you want to know God...look to Him. Amen.