

JESUS: GOD MADE KNOWN (John 1:1-18)

Have you ever felt invisible? You walk into a room. No one looks your way; no one greets you. Have you ever been with family or friends, and they are talking about you as if you weren't there?

Sometimes we must make our presence known. We can do that simply by clearing our throats. Others attempt to do so by dressing rather unconventionally, applying more makeup than is necessary, and by changing their hairstyle so they can't be missed and won't be overlooked.

In addition to making our presence known, sometimes we have to make our wants and wishes known. We must speak up. We must use our words. Men, of course, are notoriously bad at taking hints; so, ladies, with men, you just have to tell us what you want and probably more than once.

Sometimes circumstances require that we make our presence known and that we make our wants and wishes known. There are also times when we need to make our demands known. That is often what unions do for their members. Lawyers are good at writing threatening letters that get the attention of those that are doing their best to ignore us.

It occurs to me that there are stories in the Bible where God made His presence known. He made His presence known to Moses out of a burning bush and to the Israelites in a cloud of smoke and a pillar of fire. God made His wants and wishes known through priests, prophets, angels, and sacred writings. He made His demands known through the Law and the judgments He brought upon rebellious people.

More than all of that, however, God has chosen to make Himself known. While we are not invisible to God, He is invisible to us. I think it would be safe to say that no one here has even seen God with their eyes. No one here has ever physically touched God with their hands. Some say that God has spoken to them audibly. I have not had that experience. Some might be tempted to think that God wants to remain hidden. Nothing could be further from the truth. God has revealed Himself. He has done so through creation. He has shown us His beauty, His immensity, His power, His wisdom, and His splendor through this world, and through the heavens. He has also revealed Himself through angels, the Scriptures, the events of history, possibly your own conscience. God, however, has best revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus.

In the first chapter of Hebrews, the author of that letter wrote, "In these last days He (God) has spoken to us by His Son." In the next verse, he wrote of Jesus, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature" (vv. 2-3). John opened his first letter by announcing that he and others had heard, seen, looked upon, and touched "that which was from the beginning" (1:1).

In the first chapter of his gospel account, John further writes about the One who was in the beginning. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each began their account of the life and ministry of Jesus in a **biographical fashion**. They presented the **historical facts**. John, however, began his account of the life and ministry of Jesus in a **theological fashion**. He presented the **doctrinal truths** concerning who Jesus is. There is no more profound statement as to who Jesus is and why He came than the first 18 verses of John's gospel.

There are three key verses in this passage—verses 1, 14, and 18. **Verse 1 teaches** that Jesus is the word. As the word, Jesus is co-eternal, co-existent, and co-equal with God. **Verse 14 teaches** that the word became flesh. In the person of Jesus, God moved into our neighborhood. The eternal God became flesh and blood. He became like us so that we could become like Him. Finally, **verse 18 teaches** that by His coming as flesh, Jesus, the word, has made God known.

In his paraphrase of the NT, Eugene Peterson rendered v. 18 in this way: “No one has ever seen God, not so much as a glimpse. This one-of-a-kind God-expression, who exists at the very heart of the Father, has made Him plain as day.”

Apart from Jesus, the knowledge of God would be minimal, at best, but God has revealed Himself fully and finally in His Son. **Jesus is God made known.** Jesus makes God known in three ways.

Jesus Makes Known Who God Is

Obviously, the most important word in v. 1 is the word, *word*. The Greek word for *word* is *logos*. From the word *logos* we get the word *logo*. What is a logo? A logo is a symbol that represents or stands for something. When we see an athlete wearing a swoosh on his jersey or shirt, his helmet or cap, we immediately think of what that swoosh stands for—Nike. That logo gives expression to something other than itself.

Likewise, what is the purpose of a word? A word is more than just a collection of letters drawn from the alphabet. A word is meant to give expression to a thought.

Let me illustrate that. I am going to say a word, and when I say this word, I do not want you to think about what this word stands for. Don't think about this object? Don't form a picture of it in your mind? Are you ready? Here is the word—*apple*. You thought about it, didn't you?

Let's try that again. This time, I am going to say two words, but try not to picture it in your mind—*Apple Pie*. You couldn't help it, could you? Not only did it flash in your mind, some of you thought of your mom's apple pie or your wife's apple pie, and you could almost taste it. The whole purpose of a word is to enable you to communicate thought.

That is what Jesus does. He communicates God to our world. Jesus makes known the mind and heart of God, the Person of God. He shows us what God is like, what He thinks about, and what God cares about.

It is possible to communicate your feelings without words. You can show how you feel about something or someone by your facial expressions and your body language. It is easy to tell when a person is sad . . . angry . . . happy . . . or scared . . . But you cannot tell what a person is thinking apart from words. Thoughts can only be expressed in words. The words can be written, or signed, or sung, or spoken, but thoughts demand expression via words.

God has revealed Himself through the written word, but even that word cannot be fully understood apart from Jesus who is the Living Word. The full and complete revelation of God is found in His Son, Jesus the Christ.

One of the motion pictures I enjoyed watching some years ago was *Mr. Holland's Opus*. It is about a public school, music teacher who spends his lifetime pouring himself

into his students and thus giving them a passion and appreciation for music. Mr. Holland and his wife have one child, a son who happens to be deaf. Mr. Holland's son will never know and truly appreciate music the way his father does because he cannot hear music. They seemingly live in different worlds. Because the father is so busy teaching his students, he never really learns his son's language, which is sign language. His ability to communicate with his child is severely limited. As a result, the gap between the father and son widens. Through the loving efforts of the son's mother, the father's wife, the two are brought together, and they learn to truly communicate and appreciate one another.

In a sense, the mother/wife is a Christ figure. She stands in the gap and makes the father known to the child and the child known to the father.

There is an infinite distance between the Creator and His creation; yet, God loves us and wants to communicate with us so badly that He chose to learn our language, so to speak. He came to us in the form of His Son who became one of us. By His Son, God has spoken to us, and through His Son, He continues to speak to us.

How is Jesus able to communicate God to us? Jesus can communicate God because He is God. Jesus did not come into existence at Bethlehem. The Son of God has always been. He is eternal, and He is equal with God. Jesus is God, the Son of God.

Do you want to know what God is like? If you do, get to know His Son. Read what He taught. Research what He did and how He lived. Talk to those who have a relationship with Him, and talk to Him. God doesn't have to remain distant and a mystery. Get to know His Son, and as you do, you will get to know God. Jesus is the Word that communicates the mind and the heart of God—who God really is.

Jesus Makes Known What God Does

What kind of work has God done, and what kind of work is God presently doing? The work God has already done is the work of creation. Jesus was actively involved in the work of creation. Look at v. 3. Theologians say that Jesus was the agent of God in creation.

If you decide to build a house, you probably won't do the work yourself. You may decide what you want to build, and where you want to build, and what you want the house to look like, but you probably won't be out there pouring the foundation, raising the walls, etc. You will hire a contractor to do the work.

God is the Creator, but Jesus was the contractor. It was through Jesus that God created all that is.

There is another work that God has done but that He is also presently doing. Through Jesus, God is doing the work of redemption. Regeneration is the giving of life—spiritual life. Look at v. 4. The word *life* is not speaking about physical life; it is spiritual life. John used the word *life* at least 54 times in his gospel and his first epistle. In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, which was also written by John, John wrote about **the book** of life, **the water** of life, **the tree** of life, and **the crown** of life. Each of those things has to do with spiritual life. Spiritual life comes from God through Jesus.

Verse 4 is written in the past tense while v. 5 is in the present tense. The giving of life is something that God has done in the past and is even now doing through His Son. God wants to bring people out of the darkness of sin and the darkness of spiritual death into

the light of righteousness and the light of spiritual life. That is God's will, and that is His work that He is doing through His Son.

Verses 12-13 tell us how the work of new life is done or accomplished in a person's life. To receive Jesus and to believe in His name are the same thing. When you receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior by placing your faith (trust) in Him as Lord and Savior, you receive the life and the light that He offers. You pass from death to life. You pass from darkness to light. Everything you need you can find in Jesus.

One day a well-dressed gentleman walked into a car dealership. While he was there, he picked out a brand new, Silver Cloud Rolls Royce. There was no need to figure out what the monthly payments were going to be. He wrote out a check for \$250,000 and drove off in his new Rolls Royce. He loved the way it handled. When he got home, he got to wondering what the horsepower of his engine was. It wasn't mentioned in the owner's manual; so, he called up the dealership and asked what the horsepower of his new car was. The dealer apologized but said that Rolls Royce had a policy of not divulging the horsepower of its car engines.

The man replied, "You mean, I just purchased a car for \$250,000, yet you will not tell me the horsepower of its engine?" The dealer said that was the case. The new owner wasn't satisfied. "I demand," he said, "to know the horsepower of this car!"

The dealer agreed to send a fax to the Rolls Royce headquarters in London. The fax read, "My customer, who just bought a Silver Cloud Rolls Royce for \$250,000 demands to know the horsepower of the engine under the hood of his motorcar." Not long afterward, the dealer received a fax in reply. It was from the CEO of Rolls Royce. He gave a one-word answer: "Adequate."

Do you need God's power at work in your life? Do you need His power to:

- solve a problem,
- heal a marriage,
- break a habit,
- forgive a sin,
- save your soul?

His power, my friend, is adequate, more than adequate, to meet your need.

Jesus Makes Known What God Values

Look at v. 14. Jesus is full of God's grace and God's truth. Jesus wants to minister those very things to us. Look at vv. 16-17.

The Law of God has proved entirely inadequate to meet the deepest needs of our heart. Anne Graham Lotz wrote:

The law didn't make us feel better. It made us feel worse. The law didn't help us to be good. It revealed how bad we were. The law didn't give us joy or peace. It made us feel guilty. The law didn't help us measure up. It showed us we fall short.

What the Law couldn't do and what we couldn't do for ourselves, Jesus has done for us. He has given us grace. God's grace means, "**There is nothing we can do to make**

God love us more, and there is nothing we can do to make God love us less.” Our salvation is not dependent on what we do or don’t do; it is a matter of what Jesus has done for us.

In Jesus we have grace, and in Jesus we have truth. Truth isn’t a set of facts. Truth isn’t a philosophy of life. **Truth is a Person.** When you have Jesus, you have the truth. When you have Jesus, you know the truth about yourself, the truth about God, and the truth about the fundamental realities of life—what is important and what is not. Conversely, when people don’t have Jesus, they don’t know the truth about themselves, the truth about God, and the truth about what is important and what is not.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is God made known.

- It is only through Jesus that we know the mind and heart of God—who God is.
- It is only through Jesus that we are able to appreciate the work and will of God—what God does.
- It is only through Jesus that we receive the grace and truth of God—what God values.

Her name is Rena Ingraham. Rena never knew her father, until just a few years ago, that is. Back in 1940, while she was just a baby, Rena’s dad left home to find a better job to support his family. He never came back. As she was growing up, Rena would ask her relatives, “Do you know my daddy? Where’s my daddy? Tell me about my daddy?” She never got any answers.

When Rena was in her 20’s, a relative gave her a stack of letters that her daddy, Marvin Clark, had written. In those letters, Rena’s daddy professed his love for her and for her mother. It was then that Rena learned the painful truth. Her mother’s relatives didn’t like her daddy, and they kept her mother from seeing those letters. In fact, they wrote several letters to him that were supposedly from her. Those letters said that she didn’t love him, that she had gotten remarried, that she had moved, and that he should just get lost. Marvin never came back, but he never gave up loving his wife and his little girl.

It was through her father’s letters that Rena learned the truth about her dad. He was a man of integrity, faithfulness, and love. The more she learned about him, the more she wanted to know him. She began searching for him. She tracked him to Virginia, but she could never locate him. She finally gave up looking.

Just a few years ago, Rena’s own daughter, Margaret, moved to Virginia. She promised her mother that she would look for Marvin Clark, her grandfather. And she did. Margaret searched nursing homes, cemeteries, and old phone books. One day, she asked the members of her church to help. One church member realized that she had a Marvin Clark living in her apartment building. Guess what? It was the right Marvin Clark. Margaret found her 75-year-old grandfather who had still been hoping to find his family.

Not long afterward, Rena Ingraham stood by gate F12 of the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport in south Florida. She was waiting to meet a man she had never known, her own father. Finally, an old man with a cane hobbled through the gate and came toward her holding a dozen roses in his hand.

For the first time in 55 years, Marvin Clark approached his daughter and said, “It’s

been a long time since I held you in my arms.” With that, he wrapped his arms around her.

Rena reported, “This is the most beautiful day of my life. I feel like I’ve been born again.”

God has a desire to be reunited with His lost children. Be clear about this: He didn’t leave us; we left Him. Unlike Marvin Clark, God knows exactly where we are, and He comes to us in the person of His Son. If you will choose to embrace Him by placing your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, you truly can be born again. Jesus has come so that we can know God. Do you know Him?

Maybe you trusted Jesus for your salvation a long time ago, but your relationship with God seems rather distant. You know the Bible says He is your father, but for whatever reason, you didn’t have a close relationship with your father. The idea of God being your father doesn’t really speak to you, and, to be honest, isn’t all that comforting.

My counsel to you is get to know Jesus. Read the stories of those who interacted with Him. Note the compassion, and the mercy, and the care that He showed them. What He did for them, He will do for you.

I once read that a concerned mother once wrote a letter to C. S. Lewis on behalf of her son, Laurence. The son had read *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In that series of books, Lewis has a character named Aslan. He is a lion who is a Christ-figure in the story. The boy felt guilty that he loved Aslan more than Jesus.

Lewis wrote back with this assurance:

Laurence can’t *really* love Aslan more than Jesus, even if he feels that’s what he is doing. For the things he loves Aslan for doing or saying are simply the things Jesus really did and said. So, when Laurence thinks he is loving Aslan, he is really loving Jesus: and perhaps loving Him more than he ever did before.

When you fall in love with Jesus, you have fallen in love with God. Jesus is God made known.