

## **Who Do You Say I Am?**

We are beginning a new sermon series today. I felt in my spirit we were to spend time discussing who Jesus is. Everything flows from our understanding of who He is. Visiting with Bryce last week talking about worship. How do we get people more engaged in worship? I'm convinced it has less to do with the songs we sing or musical style and more to do with what we think about Jesus. If we realize who he is and what he has done, what he is doing, what he is going to do, that should make us want to worship, wholeheartedly, unreservedly, fully participating in offering a sacrifice of praise and worship to Jesus. He is worthy of our praise! Do you know who he is? Do you know what he has done for you?

We are going to spend the next few Sundays talking about who Jesus is according to the Scripture. Jesus asked that question of his disciples. **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” Matthew 16:13-16**

If I asked the question “who is Jesus?” on social media, just imagine the answers. Rabbi. Messiah. Son of God. Miracle Worker. Teacher. Enlightened master. Founder of a religion. Mythical figure. All kinds of answers but Jesus made his question personal. “Who do you say I am?” I want us to make the question personal as we explore the answer over the next several weeks. This morning I want to focus on **Jesus: The Eternal Son of God.**

Turn to the first chapter of John's gospel. As you do, let me make clear who the person is that wrote this gospel. John is one of Jesus' disciples. He often refers to himself as “the disciple the Lord loved” in the gospel. He is one of what we might call Jesus' inner circle, Peter, James and John. James and John were brothers, the sons of Zebedee and his wife. John was an eyewitness to all he writes about. He declares in his epistle, 1 John 1, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes which we have looked at and our hands have touched.” John wasn't writing from some theological position apart from practical knowledge and experience. He knew Jesus. He heard him, saw him, touched him, ate with him, lived with him, traveled with him. With that in mind, hear the words of John. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was**

**made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:1-4; 14.**

In the beginning was the Word. John is referring to Jesus as the Word. How do we know? Because in verse 14 he writes, “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...the One and Only, who came from the Father.” Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. He is the ultimate self-disclosure of God. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. Jesus himself confirms that. When Philip, one of the disciples said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” Jesus answered, **“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” John 14:8-9** Jesus has made the Father known to us. Hebrews 1 says, **“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...” Hebrews 1:3** This is who Jesus is. The radiance of God’s glory, the exact representation of his being, the Word of God made flesh.

John, the author of the gospel bearing his name, is an eyewitness. John, one of the disciples who knew Jesus best is saying that Jesus wasn’t just a miracle worker or a teacher or an interesting rabbi. He says Jesus is God in flesh. John Piper writes, **“What John is doing in John 1:1-3 is telling us the most ultimate things about Jesus that he can. It took John more than three years to figure out the fullness of who Jesus was. But he does not want his readers to take more than three verses to find out what took him so long to know. He wants us to have in our minds, fixed and clear from the beginning of his Gospel, the eternal majesty and deity and Creator rights of Jesus Christ.” ...John Piper**

John wants us to know from the beginning of his gospel what the bible tells us, that Jesus is God in the flesh, the eternal Son. But why did he choose to refer to Jesus as the Word? “In the beginning was the Word.” We describe ourselves and make ourselves known to others by our words. We explain our thoughts and feelings through our words. If I could tell only the truth about myself, no deceit, no hiding, complete transparency and if I could express the very essence of my being through words, I would be truly revealing myself to you. But what if you couldn’t understand my words, my language, but I could take the essence of those words and turn them into an image. If I could take the actual truth about myself and create a living person, then you would know the real me. The true words about me would become a living word. I can’t do that, but God can. That’s what God did in Jesus. The will and plan and purpose and intent and character and beauty and majesty and glory and authority and love and truth and nature of God

was and is revealed in His Word and God chose to wrap this ultimate Word in flesh. **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” John 1:14.** And we call him Jesus.

Jesus, the Word, is the ultimate expression of God. **Think of it this way, everything God intended to say, every word God intended to speak, was spoken in Jesus; in his nature, in his birth, life, teaching, miracles, in his death, resurrection, ascension and eventual return!** John Piper wrote, “What God had to say to us was not only or mainly what Jesus said, but who Jesus was and what he did.” Jesus is the Word of God in flesh. The Word of God come to life, fully expressed, fully obeyed, fully revealed. So what does John want us to know about who Jesus the Word is in these opening verses of his gospel? (Thanks to John Piper)

**The eternal existence of Jesus.** “In the beginning was the Word.” Those words are identical to the opening words of the Greek Old Testament. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John wants us to know that in the beginning, before anything existed, before anything was created, there was Jesus, the Word of God, the Son of God. He was and is eternally existent. When we think of Jesus then, we don’t start in Bethlehem when he was born of the virgin Mary, we think of eternity past. Jude, one of the Lord’s half brothers or step brothers, depending on your view, writes, **“To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” Jude 25** Jesus was before all ages, before the world began and he is Savior and Lord now and forevermore! Jesus declares in Revelation that he is “The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the One who is and who was and who is to come.”

Before there was time, there was the Word, Jesus. Before there was a universe created, there was the Word, Jesus, the Son of God. In the beginning, before there was a beginning, there was Jesus. “In the beginning was the Word,” but that’s not all. Look at...

**Jesus’ relationship with the Father.** John writes, **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God...He was with God in the beginning.”** John wants us to know about the relationship of Father and Son. This is the heart of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. It is a mystery for sure, but understand what the bible is teaching us. God is a relational being and he created us to be in relationship with him and with each other. We believe in One God who is eternally existent and expressed in three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus was with God in the beginning, eternally existent and he is still with God the Father. Jesus is God and He is with God, i.e. he has a relationship with God. One of the

creeds produced by an early church council, The Nicene Creed declares **“We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God begotten of the Father, that is from the substance of the Father. He is God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father.”** One with the father, they are of one substance, and yet distinct in person and personality, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Again, I know it is a mystery, but aren't you glad that God is beyond our understanding and yet he has purposely made himself known to us, in and through Jesus Christ the Son?

Jesus spoke of God as His Father and the extraordinary relationship was clear. Jesus said, **“I and the Father are one.” John 10:30.** In his prayer in John 17, Jesus prays, **“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” John 17:1.** Four verses later he prayed, **“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” John 17:5** The Word was with God, uniquely, before the world began. God the Father with God the Son. John wants there to be no doubt, no question as to who Jesus is. To make it even more plain, look at...

**The essence of Jesus' identity.** **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”** It doesn't get any simpler or any plainer than that: the Word was God. The writer of Hebrews says Jesus is the exact representation of God's being. Jesus perfectly reflects all that God is. Paul writes of Jesus, **“He is the image of the invisible God...For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him...” Colossians 1:15, 19.** Jesus is the fullness of God in a distinct person. This is why our hearts are to be lifted to him in worship. He is our everything and our all. He is Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Living God.

**Jesus' relationship to the world.** John declares, **“He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” John 1:2-3** This Jesus, the Word that was made flesh, who came and lived among us, who taught us and performed miracles, who loved us and gave himself for us on the cross, dying in our place, he is also the one who created this universe. “I thought God created the universe.” He did. Don't forget the doctrine of the Trinity. God created the heavens and the earth. How? He created it through Jesus. God was the Creator. Jesus was the agent, the Word by which all things were created. The Holy Spirit is the power or means by which all things came to be. One

of the ancient church fathers, Gregory of Nyssa, wrote that “Every act which extends from God to the creation...originates with the Father, proceeds through the Son and is completed by the Holy Spirit.” The apostle Paul writes of Jesus, **“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or power or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.” Colossians 1:16-17**

Jesus was not created. He was and is Creator. John said “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” Do you get the feeling Jesus is all in all? Do you see why he is worthy of our praise today? Do you see why knowing him, loving, serving, surrendering your life to him is the wisest, best, most important thing you can do?

He is the Eternal Son of God. He is fully God and fully man. He is complete. He is everything we need. I’m always puzzled by those who say Jesus didn’t think he was Messiah or God in the flesh, that idea was thrust upon him by the church hundreds of years later. Well, in addition to Jesus telling the Sanhedrin at his trial that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus said, **“I am the bread of life.” John 6:35. “I am the light of the world.” John 8:12. “I am the door.” John 10:7. “I am the good shepherd.” John 10:11. “I am the resurrection and the life.” John 11:25. “I am the way and the truth and the life.” John 14:6. “I am the true vine.” John 15:1** Jesus knew who he was. He is everything we need!

C.S. Lewis wrote, “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool; you can spit at him and kill him for a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” ...C. S. Lewis

I’ll tell you who I know him to be. I believe the word of John the Apostle, this eyewitness. I believe him to be the Word of God who became flesh and made his dwelling among us. I believe him to be the Eternal Son of God and this Jesus laid aside his heavenly glory and came to earth to live among us, to be our Savior and Lord. I know him to be my everything and my all. Every moment of my life, regardless of my circumstances, if for no other reason but simply because of who the word of God declares him to be, I believe he is worthy of praise. Do you know him? Who do you know him to be? Is He your Savior and Lord? He is worthy of praise! He is worthy of the surrender of your life to Him. Let’s give him praise!!