

AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY...FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH!

Imagine being an angel. Your boss, of course, is God! You are doing whatever it is that angels do when all of a sudden you are summoned by God for an extremely important assignment. Just for the record, your name is **not Clarence** and your assignment is **not preventing** George Bailey from taking his own life!

Your assignment is this: **Prepare the world for a visit from God!** Imagine how difficult and overwhelming it would be to **coordinate and plan the entrance** of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords into the world **that He created!** It is quite possible that you might have thoughts similar to those conveyed in the song: *How should a King Come?*

*Even a child knows the answer of course, in a coach of gold with a pure white horse.
In a beautiful city in the prime of the day, and the trumpets should cry and the crowds make way.
And the flags fly high in the morning sun, and the people all cheer for the sovereign one.
And everyone knows that's the way that it's done. That's the way that a King should come.*

How should a King come?

*Even a commoner understands, He should come for his treasures, and his houses and lands.
He should dine upon summer strawberries and milk, and sleep upon bed clothes of satin and silk.
And high on a hill his castle should glow, with the lights of the city like jewels below.
And everyone knows that's the way that it's done. That's the way that a King should come.*

That's not how God came, though, was it? **How did** the King come? The song continues:

*On a star-filled night into Bethlehem, rode a weary woman and a worried man.
And the only sound in the cobblestone street, was the shuffle and the ring of their donkey's feet.
And a King lay hid in a virgin's womb, and there were no crowds to see Him come.
At last in a barn in a manger of hay, He came—and God Incarnate lay!*

What a picture—God Incarnate laying in a manger! That fact is what we are celebrating here this morning! Take your Bibles and turn again to John 1. Please follow along as I read verses 14-18.

How did God choose to reveal Himself?

--It wasn't in a coach of gold with a pure white horse!

--It wasn't in a castle with crowds waving and trumpets blowing.

--And it wasn't in power and great glory like we would expect from the picture we see of God in the OT.

Instead, according to vs 14, God manifested Himself—He displayed and revealed His glory—as being “full of grace and truth.” And that revelation of God is what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

Notice again the first part of vs 14 “And the **Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us...” Theologians often refer to the Word being made flesh as **the Incarnation**. The word *incarnation* comes from the Latin word “*incarnatio*” which means to “embody in flesh.” (A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity, R. McCune, II, 101).

I'm going to be using the word “enfleshment” because it is more self-explanatory than “Incarnation.”

1. The pronouncement regarding God's enfleshment

Before we look at **statements** of God's enfleshment, I want to consider...

A. The significance of God's enfleshment.

Who was enfleshed? We see in vs 14 that **the Word** was made flesh.

Who is the Word? Last week I spent a considerable amount of time demonstrating that the Word was Jesus—God the Son—the Creator and Second person of the Trinity.

Why does it say the Word was **made flesh**?

Why not: “And the Word **was born**, and dwelt among us...”

Because Jesus didn't **begin to exist** when He was born in a manger—and Jesus didn't **begin to exist** when He was miraculously conceived in Mary's womb! So **when** did Jesus **begin** to exist?

Never! Jesus is God and **never had** a beginning!

He always has been; He has always existed!

As God, Jesus is **from everlasting—to everlasting!**

To come to earth as a man, Jesus had to **take on something** that He did not have before—flesh! He had to be enfleshed because as God—even though He always existed—He **did not previously exist** in the flesh.

So by virtue of needing to be enfleshed, it demonstrates the deity—the divineness—of Jesus!

What about you and I? Were **we** enfleshed? No! **Why not?** Because we **did not previously exist!** We—you and I as humans—**came into existence** when we were **conceived in the womb** and our **human body began** to form. We did not exist before our conception in a different form and—consequently—we were not “enfleshed.”

B. The statements of God's enfleshment

John 1:14 is not the only verse in this chapter that states God the Son took on flesh and came to earth.

--vs 10 “He **was in the world**, and the world was made by Him, and the **world knew Him not.**”

--vs 11 “He **came unto His own**, and His own **received Him not.**”

--mid of vs 14 “...and we beheld His glory...” To behold—to look upon—God's glory, God **had to be revealed** in such a way that He was **visible to the natural eye**. Numerous other verses point to Jesus taking on flesh to come into the world. Here are a couple from the book of Hebrews:

Heb 2:9 “But we see Jesus, who was **made a little lower than the angels** for the suffering of death...”

Heb 10:5 “Wherefore when He **cometh into the world**, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but **a body hast thou prepared me:**”

Next, let's consider... **2. The picture given of God's enfleshment**

We touched on this some last week, but I want to expand on it a little more here this morning. God through John, I believe, is being very deliberate in ensuring we understand that Jesus is **God** enfleshed.

--vs 14 (“and we beheld **His glory**, the glory of the only begotten **of the Father**) ...”

When we beheld—looked upon—the glory of Jesus in the flesh, we were looking at the **glory of the Father!**

We'll come back to this thought in just a minute, but I think it is important to clarify what is meant by “only begotten of the Father.” We see it here in vs 14; we also see it in the middle of vs 18 “...the only begotten Son.” The word “begotten” is also in what many call the most familiar verse in the Bible: **John 3:16**.

Feel free to say it with me if you know it: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

So what does “only begotten Son” mean? Just a few minutes ago, I mentioned that Jesus **always has been**. “Begotten” sounds a lot like the word “begat” which indicates **the fathering** of a child. In Mt 1:2, we read “Abraham **begat** Isaac; and Isaac **begat** Jacob...” So what does it mean that Jesus was the only **begotten** Son?

“Begotten” comes from the Greek word “mon-og-en-ace” and literally means “one of a kind.” It carries the idea that Jesus is unique—there is no one else like Him; He is the only One in His class. Jesus is the **unique one** from the Father—and Jesus **alone represents** the Father.

--Look at vs 18 “No man hath seen God at any time; the begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath **declared** Him.” This verse in particular emphasizes the fact that **Jesus is revealing God** to us. Here **John** is making the statement about Jesus. **Jesus** later makes the same statement **about Himself!**

John 14:8-9 “Philip saith unto him, Lord, **show us the Father**, and it sufficeth us. ⁹ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou **not known me**, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”

Jesus, then, is the picture of what God wants us to know **about Himself**. We can't rush past this; we need to let this sink in. Of all the ways God could have **declared** Himself—of all the ways God could have **manifested** Himself and **revealed** Himself—God revealed Himself in the person of Jesus.

Jesus was full of **what?**

--Aloofness and arrogance?

--Brilliance and beauty?

--Fire and fury?

--Majesty and mystery?

--Power and Wisdom?

None of those things! What does the verse say? What was Jesus full of? **Grace and truth!**

A. Jesus displayed God's grace

What is grace? Grace is God's **unmerited favor**; it is God **giving us good things** that we don't deserve. Some use the word GRACE as an acrostic: God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace is also defined as good-will...and lovingkindness...and favor. Grace was certainly seen in Jesus who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

Let's consider first... **i. Grace demonstrated in the life of Jesus**

--Please turn to Mt 8:2. Notice what the leper says, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Jesus' response? Vs 3: "I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

--Now Mt 8:6. A centurion comes to Jesus and says, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick..."

Jesus' response? Vs 7: "I will come and heal him."

--Now Mt 9, beginning with vs 18.

--In vs 20—on the way to bring a certain ruler's daughter back to life, a woman diseased with an "issue of blood" touches His garment and is healed.

--In vs 25, Jesus brings the child back to life.

--In Mt 9:27-31, Jesus heals two blind men.

--Fast forward to when Judas lead a group of soldiers to Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane. Peter cuts off the ear of Malchus with a sword—but Jesus puts the ear back on and heals him. (Luke 22:50-51)

--As Jesus is put on the cross, He cries out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34)

--After He was crucified and rose again, Jesus **restored Peter**—who had denied that he was a follower of Jesus; and **saved Saul** of Tarsus—who was persecuting the followers of Jesus.

Now wonder God led John to write that Jesus was "full of grace!"

Grace wasn't Jesus demonstrated in the **life** of Jesus, though. In fact, the **greatest act of grace** was not in what Jesus did **while alive**—it is in what He did **through His death!**

ii. Grace is declared in the death of Jesus

Notice the verses on your outline:

Romans 3:24 "Being justified freely by His **grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

II Cor 8:9 "For ye know the **grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

--How did Jesus **become poor**? By leaving the splendors of heaven and coming to earth to die for us!

--How does that **make us rich**? Because when we put our faith and trust in Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross, we are made **sons of God**—and joint-heirs with Jesus!

Ephesians 1:7 "In whom we have **redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of His **grace**;"

Hebrews 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels **for the suffering of death**, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the **grace** of God should taste death for every man."

What does God want us to know about Himself? How did He reveal Himself through Jesus? As being full of grace! There is a second way God revealed Himself through Jesus. It was not **just** grace, it was **also truth**.

B. Jesus displayed God's truth

i. Truth demonstrated in the life of Jesus

We noted multiple ways that Jesus demonstrated **grace** in His life, but what about **truth**? Was **truth** demonstrated in the life of Jesus? If so, **how**?

1) First, He **knew things about people** before they told Him! Let's go back to John 1; look at vs 47-50.

In John 4—after Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well—she went back to town and told people, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29)

Jesus didn't just demonstrate truth by knowing **things about people**, though. I believe He also demonstrated truth by... 2) **Exposing error!** Did Jesus expose error? **He certainly did**—quite often!

--In Mt 22, we read of the Pharisees trying to “entangle” Jesus in what He said. Vs 18 “But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?” Jesus knew their motives—and called them out!
--Same chapter, vs 29, Jesus said: “...**Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures**, nor the power of God.”
--In Mt 23, Jesus calls the Pharisees “hypocrites” 7 times, “blind”/“blind guides” 5 times, and “fools” 3 times!
Is it “mean-spirited” to expose error? **No; it is truth-telling!**

So telling the truth to a person **about their sin** is not incompatible with **being full of grace!**
Jesus was “full” of both! Jesus didn’t just demonstrate His zeal for the truth, He also **declared the truth.**

ii. Truth declared in the teachings of Jesus

1) Jesus **spoke the truth**; **John 8:46** “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”

2) Jesus Himself **was** the truth; **John 14:6** “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

3) Jesus **came to bear witness of the truth**; **John 18:37** “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should **bear witness unto the truth**. Every one that is **of the truth heareth my voice.**”

Please don’t miss this last phrase. Jesus said that if you are **of the truth**, you will **hear what He says!**

Let’s recap. God left heaven... and came to earth in the person of His Son. God the Son was “enfleshed” and we beheld God in His glory. What were we shown—and what should we see? Jesus—full of grace and truth!

Lastly, let’s consider the ... **3. Provisions available because of God’s enfleshment**

Jesus not only **came into the world** 2000 plus years ago—He **returned back to heaven** almost 2000 years ago as well. That means we cannot **physically look upon Jesus** the way John and the disciples did. But Jesus is still the **manifestation of God**—He is still the picture God wants us to have of Himself! And what is that picture? That God is full of grace and truth—and that grace and truth are still available to us! Three truths...

A. Shows us that God is approachable

Aren’t you glad **God is approachable**? The fact that Jesus is full of grace...that He was a friend of sinners...that He **loved** people and **helped** people and **longed** for people to come to Him, shows us that God wants to be approached. And that is still true today—for us!

Mt 11:28-30 is still a promise from Jesus. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” God is approachable—& still wants us to come!

B. Satisfies our most important needs

Of all the ways God could have been displayed/manifested/revealed Himself, Jesus came full of grace and truth! Why? Because that is what we need the most!

1) Jer 17:9 reminds us that “our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” That means we **can deceive ourselves**—and be deceived by others! So we need to be **told the truth** about ourselves...and our sin...and our need for a Savior. Our hearts talk us into believing **we can save ourselves**, but God’s Word—the truth—shows us that **we can’t save ourselves!**

2) And as sinners, we most certainly need grace! We need to know that **although we are sinful**—and God is holy—we can have forgiveness and mercy from God because He is full of grace!

C. Sufficient to meet all of our needs

Look at vs 16. “And of His fulness have all we received...” Who is the “all” that have received the “fulness” of Christ’s grace and truth? Is it just John...and the disciples...and the people who originally read this? I agree with F.F. Bruce who suggests that it also applies **to us**—“those who have not seen, and yet believed” as Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29.

What about the last part of the verse? What does “grace **for** grace mean?” Does it mean I get the fulness of God’s grace if I **give Him grace first**? Is that what “grace **for** grace” means! Obviously not! It is better understood as “grace **upon** grace.”

I love how Bruce put it: “What the followers of Christ draw from the ocean of divine fulness is grace upon grace – one wave of grace being constantly replaced by a fresh one. There is no limit to the supply of grace which God has placed at His people’s disposal in Christ....” (The Gospel and Epistles of John, F.F.Bruce, 43).

Isn’t that an **awesome** thought?! God’s grace—**like the ocean**—will never run out; it will never be used up! **Hebrews 4:16** “Let us therefore come boldly unto the **throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and find **grace to help** in time of need.”

--God will not run out of His ability or willingness to “give grace to help in time of need!”

--God will never say, ‘I have no more grace for you—I’ve given you more than you deserve already.’

Nor will He say, ‘I just ran out of grace on the **last person** I helped!’

The same holds true for wisdom. **James 1:5** is a verse God wants us to claim. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that **giveth to all men liberally**, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

--Like God’s grace, there is an ocean of God’s wisdom that will never run out—it contains an endless supply—and God gives it to all men liberally (meaning abundantly).

How did God come? How did He manifest Himself on earth? What is it that He wants to know about Him? That He is full of grace and truth—and that grace and truth is available to each one of us right now!

So what does God want us to do with what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First, He wants us to know the truth about ourselves. We are sinful—He is holy. He came to be our substitute. There was no other way for us to obtain forgiveness—“no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Have you put your faith in Jesus and what He did for you on the cross? Have you received Him for yourself? If not, that is what you need to do!
2. Second, if you have come to Him for forgiveness, are you daily depending on Him for grace? We sometimes fall into this weird way of thinking that we don’t need grace as much **after** we become His children. We need it is much as ever—certainly not less!
3. Third, God calls us to be like Jesus! Are we full of grace and truth? Are grace and truth seen in our lives? I believe they need to be!