**\*INTRO\***

 Good evening….Our scripture tonight is going to come out of the first chapter of the Gospel of John….so if you would please, turn in your Bibles to chapter 1 of John’s Gospel. We will begin by reading verses 1 through 3 which will provide us with some context, and then we will skip down to verse 14 which will be the main focus of our message.

Beginning at verse 1 the Bible reads:

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**2**The same was in the beginning with God.

**3**All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Now verse 14:

**14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Let us take a moment to pray before we begin:

So in those first 3 verses that we read, we see that John begins his gospel by establishing for us the fact that, before he was born on earth, Christ existed as the “Eternal Word”….since before time began. Now, there have been movements down through history, heretical movements, that have accepted both the deity and the humanity of Christ, but many of these movements have had Jesus being a man and becoming God, but as we will read in verse 14, John has it very much in the opposite order.

Verse 14 reads

**14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

 Verse 14 starts off with the phrase “and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”; and I read that as just a short phrase, but I want to express to you that what is happening there, at that point in history, was no less than THE greatest act of humility that man had ever known…up until that time. In my mind, the two greatest acts of humility in the history of existence both belong to Jesus Christ….the greatest one, of course, is Christ giving Himself to die a gruesome death at the hands of mortal men; here is Christ, who as creator… as the Eternal Word, had given men mouths to begin with- then allowed those mouths to curse him, to blaspheme His name, and to spit upon Him……and it was Christ who, through His own divine imagination, granted men hands, and he then allowed them to form those hands into fists and to beat him….and then He then takes upon Himself the wrath of God for His people, paying the price for their sins. THAT is the greatest act of humility that man has ever known, but second to it is what John has described for us here: that the Eternal King should ever condescend to dwell with mortals, as a mortal, in the first place. In Exodus, we read that God’s word was carved into stone tablets, carried down a mountain, and presented to His people by Moses, and here in chapter 1 of John’s gospel, we read that God’s Word has been enfleshed, and carried into mortality through Mary's womb……and God has given Himself to His people!

And that word “flesh” there, maybe it’s the fact that we've read it so many times, or maybe it just doesn’t translate well to English, but something has caused us to lose perspective on the original meaning of this word. For John to say that the “Word became Flesh" was no tame, innocuous, way to say it…..the word flesh or “sarx" as it was written in the original Greek, is a strong word…it is crude almost to the point being graphic. There were a lot of ways that John could have described the Christ’s Incarnation….he could have said “and the Word became man", He could have simply echoed Pilate’s statement when Pilate said “Behold the man” but that’s not what John does… there is an earthiness here in the word “flesh", a grit…..a certain sense of weakness and vulnerability – this is what Isaiah speaks of when he says “all flesh is grass, surely the people are grass"…and so now we see that the infinite Creator of the universe has taken upon himself that weak human frame…..He, of whom it was said “is mindful of our frames, that we are but dust” has now taken on that form that was derived from the dust…..and it was Him who formed that dust into a mortal man in the first place.

In other words, it is the exact opposite of the Catholic rendering of the embodied Jesus with the blondish-brown hair & blue eyes, the glowing white skin, and a halo hovering over his head…which Jesus wasn’t a white to begin with, but he didn’t have a glow coming from His skin…and he certainly didn't have a halo hovering over His head that followed Him around….Christ wasn’t this weak, effeminate figure that we see in paintings, he was a brawny carpenter with calluses on his hands…and as the prophet Isaiah tells us, he had “no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him”… It’s kind of ironic to consider that the Bible tells us that Moses, after he had encountered God, his face shone, yet the face of the incarnate Son of God didn’t…. the light of the world didn’t have light coming from His eyes, he didn’t have light shooting from His mouth, or a halo as we've said….Christ didn’t have any of those things….

We all remember that it was Saul who was the first king of Israel, and he was the king that they deserved, but even though he was a horrible king, the book of 1st Samuel tells us that Saul was a beautiful man…. It says he was the handsomest in all Israel, and that he stood a head taller than his countrymen…and then David after him, the Bible tells us that David was ruddy and handsome with beautiful eyes--- **this is how you make a leader**, this is how you fashion a King according to worldly wisdom. Yet when the true king came, we are told that he had no stately form or majesty that we should look upon him. If you and I were alive during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry and we passed him on the streets, we would've passed by Him and wouldn’t have noticed anything about Him….**we would’ve walked right by Him** were it not for the fact that he had throngs of people following. This was a man who could walk in plain sight… the only thing his appearance did was totally conceal His identity. He would’ve been just another Jewish man of the 1st century, according to His appearance. Jesus' behavior, his foot washing, his constant service to others in order to teach His disciples humility….. how humble His incarnation was. Christ could have done anything he wanted, He could’ve made himself 7 foot tall, He could’ve given Himself that halo, He could’ve made Himself physically beautiful to behold. What we learn with those first 3 verses we read is that Jesus could have done anything he wanted……because He is the Creator of the universe.

So we see that GOD, who wore eternity as a robe has now taken upon Himself human flesh…COMMON human flesh. Christ the Creator….the Great Potter Himself….who gave those beautiful features to Saul, to David, and so many others… and yet, for Himself He reserved only a simple clay pot….and so never has that truth that we read in 1st Samuel, that “ God sees not as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart ” never has that been more perfectly illustrated. We know from the scriptures that Jesus spoke like no man spoke, He lived like no man had ever lived….but we also know that He looked just like every other Jewish man of the time in which He lived.

The Great Potter Himself, when he molded the man who would embody His very essence, chose to fashion Him in a deliberately common manner, and the particulars, such as making himself beautiful….none of that stuff mattered to God, and that fact is obvious. But the fact that it didn't matter to God should very much matter to us because it reveals to us something about the mind of God…..and we can see this elsewhere in scripture- **this is how God thinks, this is how highly God considers human wisdom**….which is to say not highly at all….This is how God has ordained his salvation to be viewed by the world.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.”

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

 For since, in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Now to Verse 27:

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”**

Now I want to clarify that when God speaks of using weakness there …He’s talking about our weakness. Jesus certainly wasn't weak, in fact we know that Christ was the strongest man who ever walked the Earth….but in the eyes of the world, Christ was weak.

 Through the wisdom that is revealed in that passage that we just read, we are given a window into the mind of God. When God was putting together His plan of salvation…He didn’t put together a focus group…he didn’t consult a bunch of people and say “ now what would make sense to you…..what would you want to follow in a leader??”. Because if He had consulted human beings we can be sure that the result of the Everlasting King being fashioned into the form of a Galilean carpenter would **NEVER** have happened. When we look at the world, there are certain features that we see that are common in leaders….and there are statistics that you can find that show that something like 90% of men in corporate or political leadership positions are over 6 feet tall, and they also share other dominant physical features. Because, to the human mind, there is a certain kind of person, who looks a certain kind of way, who commands the respect of other people. But that isn't what God has done here…..because God doesn’t play by the world’s playbook. God’s wisdom is the world's foolishness, and we can absolutely see that in the way that Christ the Creator comes into the world occupying common human flesh. The Hebrews….they wanted a Savior who would conquer with military might- they got a Savior who would die…they wanted a King who would exalt their nation and it’s people- they got a King who humbled himself in unimaginable ways. The Hebrews wanted the God who had revealed Himself in the pillar of fire, and cloud, and in a burning bush; but they didn't want the God who was revealing Himself to them in the greatest way….in the form of a common man….and they certainly didn’t want a peasant boy, who was born to peasant parents in a cave, and would spend the majority of His existence engaged in a menial task like carpentry.

 Now, as we started today, we talked about the pre-incarnate Christ as the Eternal Word, who ,in the beginning was with God and who WAS GOD, and it is very important that we know and understand that Jesus is God. But it is just as important that we understand the true humanity of Jesus…. and emphasizing one of these points over the other has been a consistent source of heresy throughout the history of the Church. JESUS HAD TO BE GOD… WHY?? Because God is an infinite being and carries with Him infinite wrath…and so if Jesus is finite, well, the difference between finite and infinite is, in itself, infinite…a created being, no matter how glorious it might be, is still a created being and is therefore, a step below and a 1000 miles away from God… Jesus had to be God in order to bear the wrath of God. But, JESUS ALSO HAD TO BE A MAN….WHY?? Because the remission of sin requires the shedding of blood, and bleeding is a distinctly mortal condition…dying is a distinctly mortal condition. We MUST understand Jesus' true humanity…the Son of God did NOT zip up a human suit and wear it for 33 years…..that is NOT what happened! The Eternal Son of God who was TRULY God became TRULY human, and those who would've read John’s Gospel in the original Greek would have had that settled with the word “flesh”, but for the rest of us there is much help with our understanding of this in the Gospel accounts of Christ's life…. In the gospels of Matthew and Luke, we are given the human genealogies of Jesus…and contrary to what the Catholics would teach (again), we know that Jesus had a human family with human siblings- and they obviously were not of the same father, but nevertheless they were still His siblings. Scripture tells us that Jesus ate, and He drank…we are told that He grew and He learned…. that He slept when He was tired; and John tells us that He wept when Lazarus died. Christ was undeniably God, but He was also undeniably human….and what really cements this for us is in when Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane, and we read in Luke 22 that He is agonizing over all that He is about to face in the cross…. Luke tells us that He prays “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” Then it says “Now an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him, and being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”….that is the very essence of Christ's humanity right there! What we are seeing there is both God and Man in full view, at the same time...and the reason that Jesus, is feeling so thoroughly broken in this moment, the reason he is in such sheer agony is because He is God and He knows what God knows, and because He knows what God knows, He knows the wrath of God- because it is His wrath too, from the time of man’s rebellion…..and so as GOD, Jesus knows exactly what He is about to take upon Himself and as a MAN He feels the crushing weight of every bit of it. I’m gonna say something here that, if it the first time you’ve heard it, it’s gonna sound off….But I assure you that it is the Biblical position= Jesus has two wills. He had a human will, and He had a divine will… if Jesus didnt truly have a human will, then He couldn’t have been truly human. Yet we know that He did because the Bible tells us that Christ was tempted in all ways, yet without sin……and that’s because that human will was ALWAYS in submission to the divine will….ALWAYS! When Christ was in His humiliated state being carried along by the Holy Spirit, having set aside the full use of his divine attributes…..He was always in submission to the Father, and that truth is illustrated for us by that phrase we read in Luke 22….“not my will, but yours be done.”

A few weeks ago I spoke to you about the importance of having Christ as our perfect, and Eternal High Priest….and it is precisely Christ's humanity that makes Him the perfect intercessor and High Priest for us….as Paul wrote in Hebrews “we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”… When we are struggling in life, and we need someone to talk to, we look for someone who has been there….we want to talk to someone that knows what we are going through. Well, that’s who Jesus is….He has been there….He knows exactly how we are feeling, because He has experienced and felt it Himself….He knows what it means to be in excruciating pain…He understands the nauseating sting of betrayal…He knows the heartbreak and the sorrow of loss...and although He never gave into it, Jesus knows what it means to be tempted too. As Christians we can be comforted in knowing that there is nothing that comes our way in life that Jesus is unable to sympathize with us about….that He doesn’t know and understand on the most intimate level. Yes , Jesus was God, but He was also truly and fully human.

So back in verse 14 we see that John uses the words “flesh" and “glory", and those two words don’t often go together….they represent two very different, and almost opposing ideas….but to say that Christ was truly enfleshed, to say that “He had no stately form or majesty”….thats not to say that He had no glory……not at all…instead, what it does is it identifies the nature of His glory….John says “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”. In the early Old Testament, God manifested in a cloud outside of the tabernacle….. the Hebrew word for tabernacle is ***mishkan***, which means “dwelling place or tent", and God used the mishkan, or tabernacle as a means of revealing His glory to man…. John uses that world “dwelt" here for exactly that reason. If you were to literally translate the idea it would be “the Lord dwelt in his tent among us"….and while the Lord’s “tent” was sufficient to blind the eyes of the wicked to His glory, it was insufficient to conceal His glory from those that the Father had given Him. Because even with his common and unremarkable appearance, Jesus was not simply ANOTHER manifestation of God’s glory, He was, far and away, the GREATEST…greater than a cloud, greater than a burning bush…..If you remember, there is a story in 2nd Kings about Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, and how he couldn’t perceive the angelic hosts… he couldn’t see their glory until it was revealed to him and in the same way, we cannot see the glory of the Son of God unless it is revealed to us by Him. For this reason Luke 24:45, speaking of Jesus, says “He opened their minds to understand the scriptures”; and those scriptures that He opened the minds of His disciples to concerned His person… His deity… His pre-incarnate glory. Yeah… Jesus was absolutely a man, but He certainly wasn’t just a man. He had eternal glory, He hailed from everlasting….and He disclosed that glory to His “sheep". The glory of Jesus may have been concealed by how He looked, but it was revealed by the life He lived and the knowledge of who He really was.

Glory is, for some reason, one of those words that everybody uses, but generally, if you ask someone to define it, they can’t really tell you what it means….so I think we probably ought to take a moment to define glory as it is used in reference to God. God is invisible and transcendent; transcendence cannot be seen….God cannot be seen….and because God cannot be seen, at certain points and in certain ways, God reveals Himself- He reveals that which is invisible, and makes it visible to men...pillars of smoke and fire , burning bushes but its even more than that…. in Isaiah 6 there is that beautiful verse where the seraphim says “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory”….the psalmist tells us that “the heavens are telling of His glory”, and its not just at one place, at one time….it’s at ALL places at ALL times. The whole of Creation SCREAMS of the glory of God….it is seen in magnificent creatures and beautiful plants, and its on display in every storm, in every bolt of lightning, and every tossed wave. We can see Gods glory in every tree branch that bows itself to the wind, and we see it in every night sky… and these natural revelations of Gods glory- they tell us THAT God is, and they tell us something of WHO He is. But, Jesus revealed the glory of God in this way….He manifested the fullness of God’s character to us….that's what He means when He says “I and the Father are one” or “if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father”. The greatest glory of God is not seen in what He does….the greatest glory of God is seen in who He is, and who He is, is seen in what He does…and Jesus was, according to Hebrews 1:3, the radiance of His glory, and the exact representation of His nature. Every time we walk outside, we are surrounded by the glory of God, but John speaks of the GREATEST manifestation of the glory of God by an infinite degree when he writes “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father”….and the phrase that comes next explains the nature of the glory that was revealed through Jesus… “full of grace and truth”.

As you consider that Jesus was full of grace and truth… as you consider the nature of His ministry and all that He did…the question that ought to come up is “How could anybody hate this man?"…and yet we know that they did. Christ came to His own, and those who WERE His own would not receive Him- How is that even possible? Why would they hate Christ….what was there to hate?? Did they hate the fact that He healed the masses…..did they hate the fact that He forgave the prostitutes…did they hate the fact that He took the little children into His lap and said “you may think I don’t have time for this, but I do have time for this.”….did they hate Him because He explained Himself over and over again to dull men with incredible patience? Did they hate him because He embraced the kind of people that disgusted their fellow man with their sickness or their sin- the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the lepers….this one man who was born into sin, hating another man who was born into sin, because of the nature OF his sin; and here we have the spotless Lamb of God walking around on earth. How hard must it have been for Christ to even bear to be around people like us??...and yet He did so much more than just bear to be around us. He went out of His way to be at a certain, with a certain woman…of ill repute, who nobody else would touch with a ten foot pole. When He was spat upon, He endured…when He was betrayed by His disciples in His final hours…with the sting of that still fresh in His mind He then went to the cross and secured the means of their eternal salvation. We ask what is there to hate…Truth, Love, and Light- that is what there IS to hate. It is the NATURE of the darkness to hate these things…that is PRECISELY what makes the darkness dark. They hate that which is lovely, they hate that which is good and righteous. To gnash your teeth at Jesus is to gnash your teeth at all that He did, and all that He is…and in doing so you reveal your own monstrous, unbelieving heart. When we consider His love, and His grace and His truth, we OUGHT to ask why…..we OUGHT to ask why would they slaughter the only man who has ever been worth keeping? Billions of us have walked on this earth and there was one…ONE who wasn’t a throw away – and his name was Jesus Christ. And yet they beat Him and strung Him up as a spectacle and they slaughtered Him, not because He wasn’t beautiful or good or righteous….But specifically because He was!

And then I hope that in that moment, the reality hits you that it wasn’t **THEM** who put Christ up on that cross…..**IT WAS WE.** It wasn’t them who slaughtered the only man worth keeping it was **YOU AND IT WAS ME**…..I did it, and you did it…I am the reprobate and so are you. I may as well have taken a mallet and driven those nails in His hands and feet myself….and yet, just as He did with the disciples, He pressed right through it to love me through His death.

The world meant for the cross to bring shame to Christ, but the cross was not to His shame, they were just so dull, and wicked, and foolish that they could not see the glory of it shining through. The cross is to Christ's glory, and now it is ours because of Him. As we said earlier, the GREATEST glory of God is found in who He is, not what He does…..But it’s demonstrated through what He does, and its never been demonstrated in fuller display that what happened 2000 years ago on that cross….that Christ would die for sinners.

As we're talking about who Jesus is, I think it would be a good idea for me to let Him explain, in His own words, exactly who He is- so here it is:

**“Blessed** are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed** are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. **Blessed** are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. **Blessed** are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. **Blessed** are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. **Blessed** are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. **Blessed** are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. **Blessed** are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

As I read that, maybe you’re thinking wait a minute…that’s not who He is, that’s who we are supposed to be….But my friend, that is absolutely who Jesus is, and THEREFORE, it is who we are supposed to be. THAT is the revelation of His character, and the call for HIS people to be like Him and that is the glory of God…it’s in the character of God, and it was revealed by Christ.

Today, there is very little talk of God’s glory and many times, when Christians do speak of God's glory….it’s really only as a means by which they can glorify themselves. There are churches full of people who want better families…they want better societies, they want to be better people themselves, they want to be better moms and better dads….and if you listen to sermons by the most popular preachers, it’s usually something like seven steps to being a better spouse, five steps to being a better dad, being a better child, being a better mom, those sorts of things….and if you want to be a better person, be a better wife, husband, employee etc. and you’re pursuing it to the glory of God and you want to be more Christ-like then that is a truly wonderful thing… but that’s not why most people are doing it…most people pursue these things as a means of seeking glory for themselves….so tonight I am asking you to think about which describes you?…what is your motivation? Are you pleading, like Moses, for God to show you His glory…or are you busy chasing your own?? And I can give you specific and tangible evidence to show you whether or not you are…this isn't some mystical feeling kind of a thing, it isn't some touchy-feely, emotional state of being…there are very practical standards God has given us to measure ourselves by- here are a few of them:

Humility….are you humble?? Is your life about you, or is your life about Christ and His people? People who have been saturated by the presence of God’s glory, they aren’t self serving….do you pray for us?…do you think of us? Because our Lord thought of you as He stood on the brink of His own mortal destruction.

Do you associate with the lowly as Jesus did? Or do you only associate with Christians who have it all together, which, of course, is false…. because nobody has it all together, so really you’re just associating with people who know how to put up a façade better than everybody else….or do you make an effort to reach out to people that you expressly know to be hurting?... because, let’s be honest, you weren’t in such a great place when Jesus found you either were you?

Do you suffer well, because yeah…that’s there in Matthew 5 too isn’t it? …The thing about suffering it that it reveals our true character, even physical suffering….take someone who is known as being a gracious person, give them a severe headache and then ask them some strange question….are they still gracious?? Probably not….because they're in pain. Emotional pain works the same way….if you want to find out whats really inside somebody, watch them when they’re hurting, and see what spills over the brim…when Jesus was suffering the worst anguish that any human being has ever suffered,( I’m not talking about physical pain…although that was part of it), I’m referring to the anguish of taking upon himself the wrath of God…when he was suffering that way, what did He do? “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” There wasn’t anything to be revealed in him, not of sin anyways!

Do you mourn? Because we are in the midst of a perverse generation, and if we are indeed a holy people then we have much to mourn for.

Are you pure in heart? …..Are you a peacemaker…or are you more like a warmonger? Are you gentle?...or do you always have to affirm your worth by defending yourself against every perceived attack?

Are you persecuted for the sake of righteousness?...and that’s not the same as being persecuted for the sake of being abrasive…there are all sorts of people who have the right doctrine and right theology who will say that they’re persecuted for the sake of righteousness when really they’re just flat out intolerable….and if they were talking about anything other than their faith they’d be just as intolerable to listen to….

The grandest sign of God’s glory isn’t found in beautiful creatures, or sweet smelling flowers, the grandest sign of God's glory isn't found in the night sky, nor is it found in powerful sermons or electrified church crowds...The grandest sign of Gods glory is found in the life and death of Christ and the salvation that we enjoy because of Him….and we glorify God by living humble lives that are characterized by two broad and simple virtues, and that is grace and truth….and after observing Jesus’ glory and humility, His gentleness, His mourning, His peacemaking, His suffering for righteousness sake…as you consider your own righteousness you shouldn’t even be able to stomach it, you should be throwing that filthy thing overboard as fast as you can....hemorrhaging ALL OF IT! We, as Christians, don’t consider our glory anything, because we'd rather consider the glory of Christ “who, though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! As a result God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow- in heaven and on earth and under the earth- and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:6-11…..and as you think about that passage, ponder the reality that Christ considered none of what He did to be beneath Him as the begotten Son of God, and then ask yourself the question “what then, can be beneath me as a servant of God?”