

Second Sunday after Christmas – January 5, 2020
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

John 1:14-18 (EHV)

The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15) John testified about him. He cried out, “This was the one I spoke about when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’” 16) For out of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. 17) For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18) No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is close to the Father’s side, has made him known.

Fellow recipients of God’s Grace:

There’s nothing like it – that’s the slogan adopted by the Australian tourism board as it attempts to lure people from around the world to their world down under. That’s what many will say about mom’s cooking. Someone else may say, “There’s nothing like a crisp, bright winter day.” There’s nothing like it – the phrase has to rank as one of the most used phrases in our language – and that’s sort of amazing when you think about it, isn’t it? Is it truly possible that there can be so many unique activities and experiences?

In our text John describes Jesus as the One and Only with the phrase: **the only-begotten from the Father** – the phrase emphasizes the fact that there is no one like him. A brief consideration of some of the thoughts of our text will show exactly why that is true. Our text begins with the statement: **The Word became flesh and dwelled among us.** This statement is really the concluding thought of the opening verses of John’s Gospel which began this way: (John 1:1) **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

When we put those two thoughts together it becomes obvious why our Gospel speaks of Jesus as being one of a kind. Jesus is true God from eternity who became flesh and made his dwelling with us. John is telling us that God himself became one of us and came to live among us. There certainly are many thoughts that we could emphasize in a discussion of this text but this morning I’d simply like us to rejoice in the fact that the

Theme: The Lord of Grace has Come

1. He has made the Father known
2. From his grace we have all received blessings

The Gospel writer John was an eye-witness of the things that he wrote about. **We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth ...18) No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is close to the Father’s side, has made him known.**

No mere human being can make the Father known to us in the way that Jesus does. He has a personal, intimate relationship with the Father. He is of the same essence of the Father – begotten of the Father from eternity. He came to show us the grace and truth of God.

The Scriptures tell us that God is love and in Jesus we see the love of God in a very personal way. Jesus reveals the truth of God to us in a very special way. The truth about God is that although he is love he also is a just God who hates sin. But the God who hated sin also loved the sinner. And that is why he sent his Son into the world. That Son came and dwelt among us not just to reveal God’s power, majesty and glory. He came to live among

us to take our place under the wrath and curse of God. He came to satisfy God's justice. And in so doing he revealed God's grace to us as well.

In 2 Corinthians 8:9 the Apostle Paul reminds us: **you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.** (EHV)

Christ's dwelling among us was part of the poverty the Paul had in mind when he wrote those words. Let's think about this in the context our text for today. John the Baptist described Jesus in this way: **"The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me."**

John the Baptist, like the Gospel writer John was well aware of Jesus eternal nature – that he was there in the beginning and that all things were made through him. But when Jesus came to live among us and to reveal God's glory to us he did not show that divine nature at all times. As a part of his humiliation he was born in a lowly stable. He grew up in lowly Nazareth. And in humility he allowed John the Baptist to go before him for a time. John had become a well known teacher and prophet but John knew that it was his role to point people to Christ. As the time came near for Christ to begin his earthly ministry John was willing to fade into the background – to let others see that Jesus was far superior to him since Jesus was the promised Savior – the only begotten son of the Father filled with grace and truth.

16) Out of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

When Jesus came to live among men he came to share God's grace with us. We often speak of grace as God's underserved love – but it isn't always so easy for us to comprehend that grace or to apply it to ourselves. When you think about grace ask yourself the following questions:

- † What business did the Word have in becoming one of us and living among us?
- † Why should the eternal Son of God care about human beings since he knew they would be hostile to him?
- † What has any human being done to deserve such attention?
- † Why does God care about me when I can't get through a day without somehow sinning against him?

Do you begin to see the picture? God's grace is a love which I don't deserve. It's a love which he offers in spite of my hostility and disobedience toward him. It's a love which truly is one of a kind. There's no other love like it.

And it is this love – this grace – which is the source of the boundless blessings that the Lord of Grace pours out on us giving us one blessing after another.

As our text reminds us, **Out of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.** With these words our text points out another aspect of God's grace to us. It is not only undeserved but it's unlimited.

The phrase grace upon grace might be a bit difficult for us to understand. Perhaps this example will help to explain the phrase.

Years ago our family frequently visited one of the local Chinese restaurants. When we went there the waitress didn't even have to ask what we want to drink – she would bring Barb and me our water and our tea. She knew that I especially enjoyed the tea and she was always very attentive to be sure that I had enough. Often before my cup was even empty she'd be right there to fill it and this would happen several times throughout our meal. She gave me tea upon tea – always making sure that my cup never ran out.

And that's what our text means when it speaks of the fact that we have all received grace upon grace or one blessing after another from the fullness of Christ's grace. Christ continually pours out his grace into our lives. It will never run out. God's unimaginable love, which he gives us in spite of our unworthiness, never ends. We use some, and there is more to take its place for future use. It is there to comfort us when we hurt. It forgives us when we sin. It relieves us when we feel guilty. It supports us when we are afraid. It gives everything to us who can give nothing to earn or repay it. God's love is so great that the eternal Word became flesh and sacrificed himself on the cross for us. Jesus gives us grace upon grace. We always have his love. We cannot exhaust the supply.

The evidences of that love are obvious also in the physical blessings which the Lord has provided to us. We don't even really deserve daily bread and yet the Lord has graciously blessed us with so much more: clothing and shoes, house and home, family. And I'm sure each of could add many more blessings to that list for our homes are filled with much more than the basic necessities of life – we enjoy an abundance of physical and spiritual blessings from the Lord's grace.

And the Lord's grace isn't just apparent to us in our homes – it's also obvious to us from the blessings he has given to us as members and friends of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. It is here that we can come to grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus and everything that he has done for us. We gather together here in our Lord's name and he keeps his promise to be with us. Through the Word and Sacrament our faith is strengthened. It is here that we can hear the blessed assurance spoken to us by our pastor that our sins are forgiven. It is here that we can bring our children to the baptismal font where the God of grace washes away their sins and calls them to faith.

It is here that we can participate in group Bible studies and our children can participate in Sunday School and confirmation classes. It is here that we can assemble together to encourage each other and it is here that we can join others in singing songs of praise to our Savior God.

It is here that we can meet other Christian friends. It is here that we can work together with others in the Lord's kingdom. It is here that we can welcome others from our community to worship and it is from here that we can go into our community and invite others to come to enjoy the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Good Shepherd is a place where you can grow in grace.

It is my prayer that you will continue to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as he blesses your membership and participation in our congregation in the year which lies ahead.

May the grace our Lord Jesus Christ and love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.