

**WBS 2024 - Sept. 17/18**

**John 1:1-34**

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**Intro:**

If someone was to write your life story, a biography, how would you want it to begin? What would the introduction include, as usually the intro is a hook for the reader, it sets the tone for what is to follow, giving the reader an appetizer of what this person's life was about.

- **Would you want straight up facts:** Ellen Mary Dykas grew up in the Midwest, went to faith-based schools from 1st to 12th grade yet came to understand who Jesus truly is as a freshman in college.
- **OR, would you want it to be a bit more personal... emotional...dramatic?** Ellie or El, as her family called her, was a feisty little girl, clamoring for attention, the happy kid who made people laugh...yet had secret insecurities in her heart that remained hidden and stuck inside for years.
- **OR maybe a bit mysterious...even spiritual?** From a young age, Ellen wanted her life to count...she pondered and wondered in her little girl dreams if the landscape of her future would include far away lands, maybe opportunities to serve the downcast with words of kindness...all this at the same time as her active fantasies about becoming a wealthy professional athlete or kicking it on an electric guitar as a rock star in an all girl band! ☺

**Hashtag-TRUE STORIES.**

Introductions are important in books, and as we dive into John chapter 1 this week, perhaps you noticed how UNIQUE John's introduction is compared to the other three gospels.

**Listen to these other intros:**

**Matthew 1:1** - "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham", and then a long list of historical facts of people connected to the Messiah King.

**Mark 1:1-4** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face,

who will prepare your way, 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

4 John [the Baptist] appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

A dramatic beginning, which brings us right away into the STORY of the messenger, John the baptist.

**THEN Luke 1:1-4** Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. — **A true biographer!**

**THEN JOHN 1:1-5 which draws our attention elsewhere:**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

WHAT?! Dramatic and yet it seems otherworldly, a bit mysterious, like an impressionistic painting. What's John painting a picture of here?! What is about to be revealed...who is this WORD? There's a HE and HIM in this intro, not some kind of vague supernatural force...a Person. **We know from the full counsel of God's word, that the Word is none other than Jesus Christ!**

**5:00**

**The ESV study bible** (p. 1811) says how all of the gospels explain Jesus as the promised Messiah or CHRIST, the God-Man sent to fulfill the promise of salvation. However, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the story from "earth up", depicting a gradual unfolding of Jesus's unique relationship with his Father. JOHN, however, tells the story from "heaven down", as we just read: God our Creator and Savior taking on human form, and coming TO US, TO EARTH. We'll see in our passage for today, that God also meets us right at street level introducing us to the earthy, wilderness man John the Baptist, Jesus's relative, who was born with a specific purpose: prepare God's people for the arrival of JESUS: the Eternal God, Creator, and Savior. Today, we'll look at two key themes from verses 1-34:

1. **JESUS, is our Creator and Savior.**
2. **John the Baptist, is the promised messenger born and sent to prepare hearts to receive him.**

## 1. **First, Jesus our Creator and Savior:**

In these first verses we're essentially taken from Genesis 1 with creation, then to Gen 3 with the impact of sin: DARKNESS...has come into the world and our hearts. BUT, there's also a living and future HOPE: LIGHT has come into the darkness...into "our darkness" —JESUS is LIGHT AND LIFE. AND there are hints pointing to what is to come when all things WILL be made right...that the darkness is not going to ultimately win.

### **FIRST: Jesus our Creator: Genesis 1, Col. 1:16**

- a. In the beginning was the WORD. This echoes to Genesis 1 and the creation of the world. The word, "Word" in OT times was understood as God's powerful and effective action in creation, deliverance and judgment. John, however, uses the word much more personally: JESUS is the Word! As we'll see all throughout John's gospel, God's promises and the means for fulfilling them now have a person who IS that promise: **JESUS. The Word of God who is God.**
- b. **Jesus is CREATOR. V. 3: All things were made through him. Read Colossians 1:16 – For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.**
- c. KNOWING and TRUSTING that Jesus is Creator is GOOD NEWS and HUMBLING NEWS.
  - i. **GOOD:** He created us with a design in mind, a purpose, identity, value, preciousness that we can't ADD to, or TAKE away from. We can't lose it!
  - ii. **HUMBLING:** We were created by God, FOR God. We don't belong to ourselves! This world, all who live in it, and everything IN it exists for God's glory and is in his hands for his purposes. And we don't have the power or responsibility to recreate ourselves, or to re-identify ourselves. **NO...we are created and identified by our loving Creator and Lord.**
  - iii. **To believe and live IN the good news of Jesus requires that we see our lives as essentially having NO *private real-estate over which to plant a "MINE" flag: HUMBLING NEWS. YET, GOOD NEWS: there is also NO area of life for which we are alone/isolated/left-to-ourselves to figure out.***

10:15

### **Jesus is Creator, and he is also Savior:**

**What does he save us from? What do we need deliverance from?** More to come as we walk through the gospel, but we have **two key ideas** right here in Chapter 1: he saves us from darkness and unbelief. Let's look at **verses 4-5, and 12-13, READ.**

- a. **Darkness: In the bible it might refer to** literal darkness, no sunlight, or to things that are obscure, even mysterious. **But here in John 1 refers to sin** and the utter corruption and brokenness it has brought upon EVERY aspect of creation, including our hearts, minds, bodies, the way the world works, relationships, weather, governments, etc. A sinful broken world, sinful people who sin against us, and our sin which wreaks havoc internally and externally.
  - i. In the well quoted **John 3:16 passage, v 19 says bluntly:** "The light has come into the world, and people LOVED THE DARKNESS RATHER THAN THE LIGHT BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL."
  - ii. Last year we dove into Romans which also speaks to this right at the start in chapter one, where the apostle Paul explains how God has clearly made his presence known in the world, **yet in Romans 1:21** it says, "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened."
  - iii. **Darkened hearts and thinking...**refusing and resisting the Light of God's truth, grace, and love revealed in the person of JESUS: Creator and Savior. JESUS has the power to save us from darkness, and also ->...
  
- b. **Unbelief: which is a fruit of** the darkness. 10-11, the world and his own people, the Jews, did not know him...didn't believe. John the baptist acknowledged two times, "I myself did not know him"...this was a lack of understanding—he didn't know that Jesus was the Messiah because he needed to be enlightened with the revelation of God's truth...**he just didn't know!** And God the Father opened his eyes...and God does this for any who seek him in response to God's pursuit of them. **YET, the kind of unbelief that chapter 1 is highlighting seems to be what comes from a hardened heart,** a resistance to bend our will to believe and obey the Lord, and disobedience is rebellion against our Creator! Hebrews 3:12-13 says, "Take care brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

**c. There is treasure here for us to take to heart and think about, GOOD NEWS and HUMBLING NEWS:**

- i. **GOOD news:** Jesus has the POWER and DESIRE to save us from unbelief...to shine a light into our hearts and minds so that we understand who he is, we can take hold of what is true in the scriptures, AND we can believe, obey, have our desires and loves our will utterly changed!
- ii. **HUMBLING TOO:** We can't "make" ourselves or anyone else, understand or believe the truth. WOW then, what is our hope: Our Savior Jesus has sent his Spirit, the Spirit of Christ who, as the apostle Paul prayed in Ephesians 1: 17-19, "...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe." **We participate in God's ministry through prayer and also SPEAKING truth and life-giving words to others...**how many of us have been blind to sin, or confused about truth, or were deeply hurting and we just didn't know what to do...and someone SPOKE and our hearts were comforted and our eyes were opened by the Spirit's power.
- iii. What John is getting at in verse 12 and 13 is that we are GIVEN salvation by GOD...it's not something we muscle our way into, or that we are born into through our parents; it's not a spiritual experience that church leaders or spiritual gurus can force upon us, or even give to us! It's a gift and right given to those who believe in Jesus as Creator, Savior, and LORD over their lives, which he alone deserves.
- iv. Our passage explains in verses 16-17 more of **HOW HE SAVES US: *He gives grace, reveals truth, opens our eyes to his grace and truth!***
- v. **Once more: GOOD NEWS and HUMBLING NEWS:**
  1. **GOOD:** we have the truth of God revealed in Jesus the Word of God, and explained to us in the scriptures, God breathed truth. Jesus is to have a home in us through the Spirit, and the Scriptures are also to be at home in us, as Colossians 3:16 exhorts us.
  2. **HUMBLING NEWS:** We need to make room in our hearts and minds for the Word of God! So do we need to do some purging, de-cluttering? Are there other voices, even spiritual sounding voices,

which seem to contain portions of the truth, grace and holiness of Jesus but perhaps don't actually line up with biblical faith? Are there just so so many good things in our lives that are keeping us TOO busy, too cluttered so that we don't have time, energy, or even desire...our appetites for the Lord have become dulled...is God inviting us to put some things aside so that the Word of God in Jesus and the Scriptures can be fully at home?

**JESUS, is Creator and Savior.** And John the Baptist was sent to prepare people to believe in him.

## 20 minutes

### 2. **John the Messenger's experience and testimony:**

a. Think about what God chose to reveal about this key person in his salvation story, and the one chosen to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy that someone would be raised up to be a voice crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord", as the books of Isaiah and Malachi both promised. John the Baptist may have been seen as a weirdo, maybe a fanatic: lived in the desert, wore a camel hair tunic, ate honey and locusts. **YET putting all the gospels together we learn that:**

- i. He was conceived miraculously to an elderly barren couple, his mom was a cousin to Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- ii. Was filled with the Holy Spirit FROM conception, and was brought into the world with a specific purpose: PREACH and PROCLAIM that the Messiah is coming soon and has come. He began his ministry, so to speak, even before he was born as from the womb of his mother Elizabeth, he LEPT when Jesus was brought into his presence, as pregnant Mary went to visit Elizabeth! **I'd encourage you to read Luke 1 this week as it gives so many rich details that we don't have time to cover today.**
- iii. In our passage we learn how John gave witness to Jesus with courage, humility and clarity: He pointed beyond himself, communicating, "LOOK at Him! I'm not the Christ, I'm not the prophet Elijah resurrected from the dead. I'm 'just' the messenger of the Christ...and I know him! HE's the One we've been waiting for...the Lamb of God...the fulfillment of all the promises we've been taught!"
- iv. **Here's a great encouragement for us when our faith is wobbly, or confused: towards the end of John the Baptist's life, he was unsure**

**too.** In Matthew 11 in prison just before being martyred for his allegiance to Jesus, it says in v 2, “Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Jesus, are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” And Jesus sends word back to him, and says effectively: “YES, look at all the signs I am doing...I AM THE ONE.”

**As we close up, I want to highlight something that may not be obvious.** Both John the Baptist and John the beloved disciple are examples of how God provides people to help us know, love, understand and obey the Lord and his truth. **We can't see or touch Jesus as John the apostle or John the Baptist did,** yet through the Scriptures, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, we point each other, saying, LOOK AT HIM! I'll help you or...will you please help me? I don't get it...I'm struggling...I don't know what I believe anymore...help me understand JESUS and his teaching.” We remind each other that this life isn't all there is...there is another world we're waiting for, when Jesus will reign as the Warrior King, as Revelation 19 describes him as the King coming on a white horse, a king whose name is not only Faithful and True but as verse 13 declares, “...the name by which he is called is The Word of God...16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

### **CLOSE and PRAY.**

**Jesus is Creator and Savior** and he is OURS as we believe him to be who he says he is! And as Robert Yarbrough explains, believing in Jesus QUOTE “...is not a thing, a lifeless object, a static attitude of passive agreement and acceptance. It is a dynamic posture, an activity, a living devotion... To believe in the name of Jesus means to enter into an all-encompassing, life-transforming relationship with the God whom Jesus has come to disclose...”. CLOSE QUOTE

Which, my sisters, makes sense, doesn't it...that faith in the WORD, the living Lord who created us, who has made a home IN us, and given us the capability to have his words of life HOUSED within our hearts and minds...it makes beautiful, life calibrating sense ***that he would touch every part of our lives.***

This is a lifelong devotion we grow into...and help each other to live out. **Let's pray and ask him to help us grow and remain faithful to him.**