

Sermon preached by Pastor Ben on December 14, 2014 at Victory of the Lamb on John 1:1-5, 10-14.

Series: A Long Time Coming

Today's Focus: The Prophet

“One *Word* Still Worth Our Time”

- 1. Because it's a *Word* that gives light**
- 2. Because it's a *Word* that gives life**

So here we are in a movie theater. By now my kids have gotten used to calling it “church” but maybe your first idea of a movie theater is more like a place where Hollywood stories are told on the big screen, sometimes in 3D. After all we live in a visual world of movies and television and You Tube clips and pictures and icons and logos and emoticons. I had to laugh last week during the Packers game as my dad on his new smartphone sent me one emoticon filled text message after another!

Yet at the same time we still live in a world full of words. Every day on Twitter, 500 million tweets are sent out—most of them containing words. Think about that! And of course there are hundreds of millions of indexed websites on the internet. No one even knows how many blogs post and articles and message boards and essays and books there are online. Some people think we don't even have a number to quantify the total number of words. Yet how many of them truly matter? How many of them are worth your time?

Have you ever heard the term “click bait”? Some of you are like, “What kind of fish can you catch with that bait?” Of course it's not used to catch fish. It's used to catch consumers like you. Click bait is content on the internet custom designed to get you to click on some sensational or provocative headline in order to divert you away from what you may have actually wanted to read. And it doesn't have to be completely true or trustworthy, just leading enough to make you go Hmmm. This is why it's so hard to read anything of substance anymore because before you can find or get to the end of anything that might actually be of substance that is well reported and well documented, chances are you've gotten distracted by some sort of click bait that lured you on to something else.

You know what I'm talking about. On one local news website this week, on the same page at the same time, were the following ads, “Thicker hair in 30 seconds – celebrity trick inside.” “One dirty little secret to eliminate 15 years of mortgage payments!” “Drivers feel dumb for not knowing this new rule.” “The 15 best NFL players turned pro wrestlers.” “You'll never guess who's related to Abraham Lincoln.”

We live in a world full of words—most of which I think you'd agree are a waste of time. But not this *Word* that we're going to hear about over the next couple minutes. You see there is one *Word* that still matters, one *Word* that's still worth our time. It's the One who came from the Father full of grace and truth. It's the one *Word* that still shines in the darkness. And it's the one *Word* that still gives life to those who receive it. The apostle John tells us about this one *Word*. Listen to what he says...

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been

made. ⁴ *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Who is this Word that John is talking about? It's Jesus. In the beginning, *he* was there, John says. He was with God. And he was God. Now that might seem to you like an unusual way of talking about Jesus but think about what this means. Long before baby Jesus was born in the manger, he was the eternal, almighty Son of God. As a member of the Trinity, he existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit before time and space came into being. And according to the Bible when it happened that there was something instead of nothing, the way God brought it all into being was...you remember? Through a spoken word. God spoke and it came to be. He *said*, "*Let there be light...and there was light*" (Genesis 1:3). Jesus was there, powerfully present. The Word of God was there to shine light into the darkness. That's what the Word of God does.

That's what it still does today too. That's why it's the one Word that still matters. You see without a word from God we are in the dark. I mean, boy, there's a lot of darkness out there in our world, isn't there? Violence and abuse and hatred and torture and sickness and disease and death. And that's just what we all see and feel on the outside. Then there's what we find on the inside—grief and guilt, doubt, worry and fear. Lying. Anger. Bitterness. Resentment. Darkness so oppressive we can sometimes almost feel it choking our souls to death. But then we hear about the one Word that's still worth our time. It is a Word that still shines light into the darkness of our world. A light that the darkness has not and will not overcome. It is a light that can still shine into our hearts as well so that if you listen to this Word it drives out the darkness so that it cannot prevail.

¹⁰ *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.*

¹¹ *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.* The world into which Jesus Christ was born was full of darkness too. Oh sure we celebrate the joy of Christ's birth. Silent night, holy night, all was calm, all was bright. But no sooner was Jesus born when some people wanted him dead. King Herod tried to have him killed, darkness trying to snuff out the light. Why? Because King Herod felt threatened by a baby. The darkness doesn't have to make sense. It never does.

But that was just the beginning. Fast forward three decades and we see Jesus being nailed to a Roman cross. We hear him cry out in excruciating pain. We watch him suffer and die. The very people who looked forward to the coming of a great prophet sent by God, their Messiah, did not want to listen anymore to his words when they didn't match up with their own ideas of what they wanted for themselves. So the Creator God who came on a rescue mission for sinners, was murdered by his very creatures that he came to save. Do you see what the darkness of sin is like? It leads to death except that when Jesus died, he died the death we deserved. He absorbed the darkness we contributed to. Why? So that through this Word, the Gospel message, he might still today shine light into our sin darkened lives and give us eternal life even in the midst of death.

¹² *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—* ¹³ *children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of*

God. ¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Why is Jesus the one Word that is still worth our time? Because he is the only Word that became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He is the only *Word embodied*. A first person personification of what God is like so we could understand. Everything he did, everything he said...this was God doing and saying it for you and me.

You know Christianity is unique in this. It's not just a religion that is based on a bunch of wise sayings like those of Confucius. It not just a bunch of philosophical teachings like Buddhism. It's not just about following a moral code or a couple pillars or a set of traditions. It's not just a message of "Be good. Be better. Behave." It's about having a relationship with God by believing in the Word who became flesh, the Word who reveals God's loving heart—his grace. To know God as a God of grace who forgives is to know what the Word of God, Jesus Christ, has done for us through all the way from Christmas to Good Friday to Easter. It is to know *him*. To believe in *him*. To receive *him* as your Savior and in so doing to become just like Jesus—a dearly loved child of God!

Jesus makes this possible because he is the one Word that's still worth our time. Friends, one day your time here on this earth will run out. This week I had the amazing opportunity to visit a little old grandma named Mary as she lay in hospice. She was 101 years old. Apparently she asked for me to come. Her son and his wife have been attending church here at Victory of the Lamb and are with me in my Bible 301 class right now and so little old Mary really wanted to meet me. She wanted to be able to come to the new church. Of course I couldn't just say, "Well you'll have to wait till next year." So I instead I went to her.

I arrived at 3:45 pm. I went up to see Mary and there was Ron her son who met me inside. He said, "I think she can still hear" and then we went together by her bedside. You know it's interesting that God made us so that hearing is often one of the very last things to go. It's as if there is a Word that is so important to hear especially in the face of death. Friends, never assume that someone in hospice or the hospital can't hear what you have to say. Most of the time I believe they can. So Ron introduced me to his mother. He said, "Pastor Ben is here, that new pastor you wanted to meet." And I told her, "Mary, I'm here to share a message of comfort from God's Word with you." And I read in a clear, loud voice Psalm 23...which says, "*The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.*"

And I said, "Mary, there is nothing that you lack right now. You know why? Because God loves you so very much. He sent his own Son Jesus into this world as one of us to be your Savior. Jesus is the Good Shepherd because he laid down his life on the cross for you. Jesus your Savior paid for all your sins. And he did it all by grace. There's nothing you have to do to earn this love. It's yours as a free gift through Jesus. Be at peace with God because you are peace with God, Mary. There is nothing you need to fear. Jesus did it all. And so now he is with you. Even as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Jesus is with you. You do not need to be afraid of death because Jesus conquered it when he rose from the dead. Surely goodness and love have followed you all the days of your life and you will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Just think what this means, Mary. Because of Jesus, when you die you will

only be falling asleep because you will wake up in heaven where there will be no more pain or suffering or tears or death. And it's all because of Jesus."

And you know what? Mary stirred as I spoke these words about Jesus. These words shined light into her heart. They gave spiritual life to her soul. And after I shared these words I prayed a prayer called Entrusting the Dying to the Lord and then all of us in the room prayed together The Lord Prayer. And as I began The Lord's Prayer, guess what? She opened her eyes just a bit and her mouthed gently moved as if to speak the familiar words she'd hear before. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come" and it was then in between Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done when Mary gently breathed her last and that was it. It was like "Thy kingdom come"... well "Here I come" because she knew that the Word of God, Jesus, gave her the hope of eternal life!

Friends, why does Christmas matter? Because this one Word still matters—Jesus. And he still speaks today. That's how he still serves the role of a prophet—someone who speaks the words of God in his case because he was the Word who became flesh. But he still speaks every time you read the Bible, hear the gospel message in a sermon, or share it with others using your own lips, keystrokes, or pen. And it comes with God's own promise that his word will not return to him empty. But it will accomplish what he desires and achieves the purpose for which he sent it (cf. Isaiah 55:11). Even though we live in world full of words...Jesus is the one Word that's still worth our time because he shines light into our darkness and gives us eternal life. Amen.