

He Loved Me . . .

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

1:14-18

Topic

No one had ever seen God
until Jesus came as God in human flesh

Title

“The First Time Ever We Saw Your Face”

Undercover Boss disguises company executives as new entry-level employees to experience what life is like among the rank-and-file.

My favorite *Undercover Boss* isn't an episode from the show. There are two Saturday Night Live parodies in which Adam Driver reprises his role as Ky Lo Ren, grandson of Darth Vader. He disguises himself as “Matt” on a Starkiller Base, and the next time as “Randy,” an intern on a Star Destroyer.

It doesn't go well for his subordinates.

God came to live among us: “The Word became 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.”

Things **did** go well for those He dwelt among:

- Mankind was dead in their sins. Jesus is Life.
- Mankind was lost in the dark. Jesus is Light.

“Because of all that the Son is, we have been given one blessing after another” (v16).

I’ll organize my comments around two points derived from the text: **#1 In Jesus You Behold The Glory Of God, #2 In Jesus You’re Bestowed The Grace Of God.**

#1 - In Jesus You Behold The Glory Of God (v14)

You gotta love the anti-drug public service campaigns aimed at kids. In one of them, a guy takes an egg out of the carton and says, “This is your brain.” He points to a hot cast iron skillet on the stovetop and says, “This is drugs.” He cracks the egg, and it begins to sizzle. He lifts the skillet off the burner and says, “This is your brain on drugs. Any questions?”

The opening eighteen verses of the Gospel of John make me want to say, “This is my brain on Doctrine.” It’s sizzling with profound teaching about God.

John wasted no time introducing the Doctrine of the Trinity. He told us in the opening verses that a Person called “the Word” was with God at Creation and was God the Creator. It is a mind-boggling revelation that God is One and more than One.

My mind is still reeling when John states that the Word Who was with God and was God became flesh to dwell among humans.

Discussing Jesus being fully God and fully human might be trickier than examining the Trinity. If I misspeak and say something confusing, you can default to the following:

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was the eternal God who became a human being. God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, came to earth and took

human nature upon Himself. He did not possess human nature until His virgin birth in the little town of Bethlehem. From then forward, Jesus of Nazareth was fully God *and* fully human. Jesus is the "God-man."

He was not half-God and half-human. These two natures in God the Son, residing in one body, cannot be divided. He did not do some things as God and other things as a human. Everything He did was as the God-man.

John announced the Word becoming human in one of the most sublime verses in the Bible.

Joh 1:14 And the Word became 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.

God in human flesh overwhelms theologian Wayne Grudem. He writes:

It is the most amazing miracle of the entire Bible - far more amazing than the resurrection and more amazing even than Creation. The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join Himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe.

If you are an avid reader, you appreciate a well-crafted sentence. There are times reading J.R.R. Tolkien that I pause and reread a sentence many times.

It takes nothing away from the rest of the inspired Bible to be enamored by John 1:14.

"And the Word became flesh." The Word who was with God and who was God took upon Himself humanity.

Jesus in human "flesh" differs from *Undercover Boss* in that it was not temporary, nor was it a disguise.

- Jesus never stopped being God. He will never cease to be human. He is forever both God *and* man in one person. "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; hail the Incarnate Deity."
- Jesus came to show us the Father.

"Became" means He added humanity to His deity. We should note that the virgin birth - another sizzling doctrine - means Jesus possesses a *perfect* human nature. He was without imputed or inherited sin. Jesus is the only Person Who qualifies to save us.

"Dwelt" is another carefully chosen word in this masterful sentence. It is the word you would use to say that you *pitched a tent or built a Tabernacle*. It connects Jesus' coming in the flesh to the Old Testament tent the Jews pitched, the Tabernacle.

Since Jesus 'tabernacled' with us, **there is no need for a Tabernacle or a Temple in the current dispensation.** Don't be drawn to celebrating or practicing Jewish rituals that are fulfilled in Jesus.

"We beheld His glory." I have always found "glory" a difficult concept to nail down. I came across this useful description: "God's glory is the sum of all His attributes and perfection. It is sometimes displayed as a bright or overpowering light."

🔪 John "beheld [Jesus'] glory" on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus "was transfigured... His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:1-2).

🔪 John "beheld" Jesus' innumerable signs and wonders, all of which brought "glory" to God.

🔪 John was at the crucifixion. In John 13:31, Jesus says of the Cross, "Now the Son of Man is **glorified**, and God is **glorified** in Him."

"The glory as of the only begotten of the Father." "Begotten" throws people.

Upon first reading, it sounds like the Father created Jesus. That cannot be true because the Word was with God and was God.

I've lately been quoting from the International Standard Version. Here is John 1:14 in the ISV: "The Word became flesh and lived among us. We gazed on His glory, the kind of glory that belongs to **the Father's unique Son**, who is full of grace and truth.

"Unique" is the better translation of the word "begotten." The writer to the Hebrew Christians uses the same word to describe the relationship between Abraham and his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac (11:17). He calls Isaac his "only begotten son." Abraham had another son, Ishmael, who was born first. Isaac was the *unique* son who would inherit God's promises.

"Who is full of grace and truth." In John 20:31, John says, "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." "All," "every man," "whoever," *can believe*. Sadly, not everyone will believe. The words "grace" and "truth" describe the experience of both:

- Those who believe, receiving Jesus, experience "grace." They are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, and they are enabled to walk in grace.
- Those who will not believe, rejecting Jesus, experience a hard "truth." Jesus puts it this way in John 3:18, "He who believes in [Me] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It is Truth or Consequences if you are a nonbeliever.

John beheld Jesus' "glory." We behold His glory.

In Second Corinthians 3:18 we are told, "we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Bible Knowledge Commentary says, "This glory is the experience of salvation available in the New Covenant and mediated by the Holy Spirit who

leads Christians from justification through sanctification to glorification." As we draw nearer to Jesus, His glory is revealed in and through us.

#2 - In Jesus You're Bestowed The Grace Of God (v15-18)

The Metrons were a powerful, peace-loving race. They intervened as Captain Kirk pursued the Gorn to retaliate for their attack on a Star Fleet outpost. The Metrons stopped both ships and announced that they would pit the respective captains against each other in a fight to the death. They would destroy the ship and crew of the losing captain, and the other ship would be spared.

Pursued by the stronger but much slower reptilian Gorn, Kirk eventually realizes he has all the resources he needs to be victorious in combat.

We have the all-we-need resource of grace.

Joh 1:15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "

Jews would have considered John the Baptist superior to Jesus because he was his elder by six months. John dispels that when he says, "He who comes after me is preferred before me."

Then he is quoted, "for He was before me." Born after John, the only way Jesus could be "before" John was to have existed before his birth. "He was before me" is John the Baptist's way of recognizing Jesus' pre-existence.

Joh 1:16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

Translations of "grace for grace" include the following:

- "Grace on grace."
- "One blessing after another."
- "One gracious gift after another from His abundance."
- "Gift after gift after gift."

- "Grace over-against grace."

Scholars can't seem to get a handle on it.

First, this isn't saving grace. It is grace in abundance *after* salvation. It is "gift *after* gift," "one blessing *after* another."

Second, this grace abundantly available comes from the "fullness" of Jesus. J.C. Ryle writes, "*All we who believe in Jesus have received an abundant supply of all that our souls need out of the full store that resides in Him for His people. It is from Christ and Christ alone, that all our spiritual wants have been supplied.*"

Have you been stocking up on toilet paper? Quote: "Product shortages are going to be as bad as when the COVID19 pandemic started, as reported on Fox Business. They made this prediction after Costco warned its customers it was having trouble fulfilling toilet paper orders in the week of September 20, 2021. The shortages won't stop at toilet paper."

Jesus is always fully stocked in supernatural resources for you, and a primary resource is grace.

One of our Lord's unclaimed promises is that during the Church Age we will suffer tribulation. If you were to ask Clubber Lang his prediction for the Church Age, he'd say what he said in *Rocky 3*. "Pain."

To quote Pastor Chuck Smith, "Grace changes everything."

The apostle of grace, Paul, explains how grace changes everything in our sufferings.

2Co 12:7 ... a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me...

2Co 12:8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

2Co 12:9 And He said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2Co 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Grace is needed to meet infirmities, reproaches, needs, persecutions, and distresses.

In spiritual alchemy, grace takes weaknesses and perfects them to be strengths.

Grace is not the healing you ask for. It isn't the way out of your trouble. It isn't the removal of your trial. It is the resource that allows you to boast about God and take pleasure in those things.

Most likely your house is equipped with the kind of water heater that keeps pre-heated water in its tank. There are tankless water heaters that promise "instant, unlimited hot water." You turn the handle and, *Bam* - hot water.

Is grace a resource we must store up in our tank? Or is it instantly available to us?

- We tend to live as though it needs to be stored up.
- We never seem to have enough of it to cope.
- We act like there is a grace shortage.
- We talk about renewing the fire as if we need to reheat our tepid tank.

The grace we are talking about comes from the "fullness" of Jesus. The Bible describes a believer by saying you are "in Jesus."

Since you are "in Jesus," *grace is instantly delivered to you in an inexhaustible supply.* After all, **it is grace**, a gift, that cannot be earned or deserved.

When Paul had his thorn in the flesh, Jesus told him that grace was instantly, abundantly available to him.

Paul stopped *beseeking* God and started *boasting* to people about Him.

Beseeking is fine. Let's do more boasting.

Joh 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Mentioning Moses and the Law seems odd, but that's because we are not Jews. John had introduced the thought that Jesus fulfilled the symbolism of the Tabernacle. What about the Law itself? Was that still in effect?

Listen to this quote:

By Moses was given the law: the moral law, full of high and holy demands, and of stern threatenings against disobedience; and the ceremonial law, full of burdensome sacrifices, ordinances, and ceremonies, which never healed the worshipper's conscience, and at best were only shadows of good things to come.

By Jesus, on the other hand, came grace and truth: grace by the full manifestation of God's plan of salvation, and the offer of complete pardon to every soul that believes on Jesus; and truth, by the unveiled exhibition of Jesus Himself, as the true sacrifice, the true Priest, and the true atonement for sin.

You almost don't notice that John uses the name Jesus for the first time. He called Jesus "the Word" for the last time in verse fourteen.

Joh 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

The saints we think "saw" God *did not see Him in His full glory*.

Moses "saw" God, but in Exodus 33:19-23, we read, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass

by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

Others, like Moses' disciple Joshua, saw Jesus in a pre-incarnation appearance. Albert Barnes writes, *"This passage is not meant to deny that men had witnessed manifestations of God; but it is meant that no one has seen the essence of God, or has fully known God."*

How can we know God and fellowship with Him if He is unapproachable? "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*."

The Contemporary English Version (CEV) reads, "No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is truly God and is closest to the Father, has shown us what God is like."

Every believer is "uniquely called and placed in our own sphere of influence" (Robert Ferguson).

You are the Lord's undercover operative. Not to disguise your Christianity, but to expose it.

🔑 Let others behold God's glory by being led by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

🔑 Let others marvel at the grace bestowed upon you, first in saving you, then in its abundance in you life.