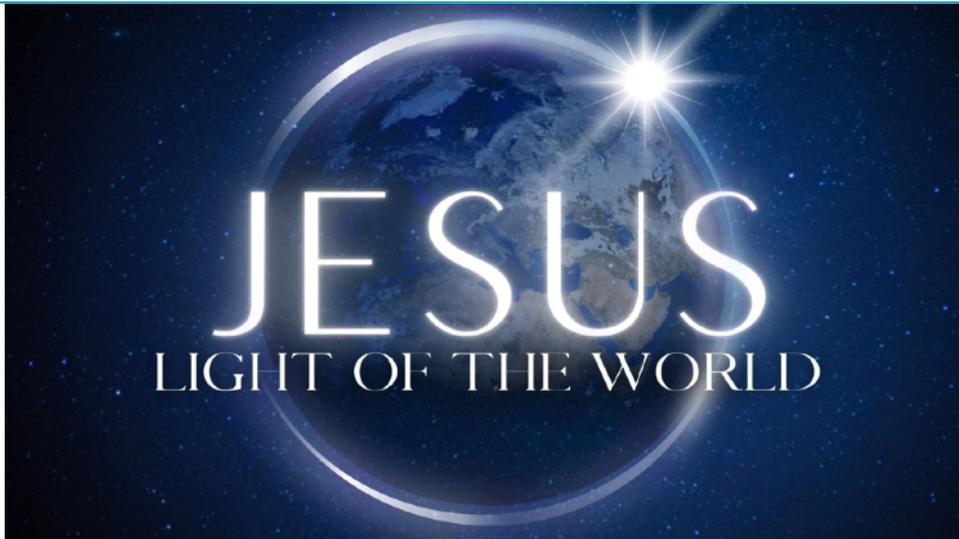

Introduction to John.

Sermon • Rev'd Andrew Hoggan • 17 August

Genesis 1:1-5 • John 1:1-5



There are many places in scripture where something we read in one part of a Gods word is further explained or unpacked in another part. This is especially true in John's introduction.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus by your Holy Spirit speak as we open your word, amen.

The first thing we can say about John's gospel is that it is different from the other three in the way it is written, and in the way John draws out deep, almost cosmic truths.

John is writing as an old man some 50-60 years after the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He more than any of the NT writers, has a perspective that comes with the passage of time.

John was in Jesus inner circle of three along with Peter and James. John also had a special friendship or bond with Jesus.

It was John, as he was standing beside Mary as Jesus Crucifixion, that Jesus said to John, "here is your mother". And to his mother, "here is your son". From that moment John took Mary into his home.

Perspective, deep mentoring, a close friendship gave John insight and understanding. The breath of which is shown in the way John begins his Gospel.

Genesis vs1 “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.” John vs 1 “In the beginning was the Word, (the Logos) and the word was with God and the Word was God.”

The word translated as Word, capital W, is Logos. It’s loaded with meaning. If the Greek philosopher wanted to somehow point to the mind of God, or divine reason, or the power that shaped the universe, this word Logos would be used.

So John, pointing to the divinity of Jesus, uses the word Logos in connection with Jesus. John is trying to show that in the beginning, in Jesus, we find the mind of God, divine reason, and the power that shaped of the universe.

It could be explained this way perhaps.

If I were to say, such and such rugby player had all the attributes of say, Jonah Lomu, you would immediately transfer a whole bunch of understanding about the skill and ability of Jonah to this this other player.

That’s kind of what John is doing. God like qualities and actions contained in Greek thinking within this word Logos, are attributed to Jesus through the first 3 verses.

- “The word, the Logos, was with God”
- “The word was God”
- “He was in the beginning with God
- “All things came into being through him” that is through Jesus.

The point. Vs4. The one who came into our world to bring life and light, Jesus, was the very one who at the very beginning brought creation into being with a word. “Let there be light” and there was light.

We don’t always think of Jesus being the one responsible for creation. But, John here, and the apostle Paul in Colossians, among other places make it pretty clear.

Why is this an clarification important? Because the one who brought about the first creation, is also the one who brings about a new creation as believers in the Lord Jesus are, as it were, born again, made new.

It's worth reflecting on this because there is a very real pastoral provision and encouragement when we understand the authority and power that Jesus has.

When we understand and appreciate who it is that's in our corner. Who it is that's a part of our life.

It's always hard to find parallels that do justice to what you are trying to explain. But imagine walking down a dark grotty anyway in a dodgy part of town. Now would you feel more comfortable if a punny specimen like me was walking with you. Or if say Richie McCaw or someone was with you?

There are seriously encouraging pastoral perspectives to be had when we rightly understand who it is that walks with us. If indeed we are walking with the Lord Jesus.

John's starting point then gives us perspective. And perspective is important from a practical standpoint?

- Because when we have perspective we are more able to face the challenges in life.
- When we have perspective we are more likely to have hope, confidence, patience, endurance, faith, joy, peace.

That is of course if the perspective has the effect of seeing Jesus rightly, God with us and God for us.

I am perplexed that so much of the debate, discussion and scholarship about Jesus is often done, it seems, with the intent of cutting him down to our size.

- Minimising his power.
- Discrediting his influence.
- Doing away with the supernatural and the miraculous.

Why might we do that? Might it be because putting limits on Jesus takes away something of the challenge contained in the first Christian creed. Jesus is Lord. Three words that are designed to change and control our lives.

Does the gospel challenge us? Absolutely. But it challenges us from the perspective of love. And because of that I want God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be as involved and interventionist as possible.

Further, I find little hope or point in cutting almighty God down to our size. I don't want, or need a small and ineffectual God. I don't see the point. Well, good news. There is nothing small or ineffectual about the way John presents Jesus as he opens his gospel.

Jesus the Word is God.

Jesus the Word, was with God in the beginning. Jesus the Word is the very one that brought creation into being.

With that perspective it's to v 4-5 in John's intro I want to focus on briefly as we look at the light and life that is found in the Lord Jesus.

Firstly, Jesus is Light and life for all people. One of the great hopes and encouragements of the gospel is there is no one, and there is nowhere that the love and grace of God can not reach if we choose to accept it.

My belief in the fact that there is always hope for anybody, was my anchor, my mantra, my go to phrase, when I was the Rolleston prison chaplain for a few years some 10 years ago.

As I was working in that environment, my hope, my belief that helped me cope with with what I sometimes had to deal with, was the belief that no one is beyond the love and grace of God.

I very often reminded myself that God is in the transformation business as I walked and talked with the men in prison. Always hope. Always hope. Always hope. I said it to myself. I said it to the custodial staff. I said it to the mem. I photocopied it and I stuck it on notice boards, white boards, anywhere I could. When I walked into difficult situations the custody staff would sometimes say "well pardray there's always hope isn't there".

One day a couple years in, as I was passing the office next to mine where a delightful bunch of ladies, who had the challenging and sometimes frustrating job of trying to find work for the men given employment is a huge part of the rehabilitation process, as I went past their office this was on their door. slide Photo

“If you want hope try next door”. With an arrow pointing to my office. I should have put a sign on my door. If you want hope try Jesus.

Life and light for all people. No one is beyond the love and grace of God. That is one the starting points of the gospel for John
Second and connected point. The light shines in the darkness.

I'm not sure I could imagine a darker, more heinous, traumatic and heartbreaking situation than working and ministering in a sex offenders unit. My first year or two my office was in the Kiamarama wing. Which interestingly means, “let there be light or insight”.

There are of course all kinds of darkness in our world. The starting point for John, is that God, in and through Jesus, meets us in that darkness. More than that, Jesus does not just enter it. On the cross He experiences it. And to a capacity and depth that we can not grasp or fathom. So whatever we might face in life, Jesus has faced worse. Jesus' understanding of our situation and our struggle is unparalleled.

Our third point. The victory of the light.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. Present continuous tense in Greek. That emphasise the point that the darkness did not overcome the light, nor can it, ever.

So whatever it might look like. Whatever it might feel like in our hurting and needy world, Jesus' light and life, his overcoming of darkness, is continuous and ongoing.

As it stands we get glimpses and glimmers of light from time to time. But one day light will fully prevail and darkness and death will be no more. That is the promise and hope of the gospel. That is the promise and hope that can transcend what we experience now when we have perspective. Or more correctly, when we have Jesus.

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.” Jesus came into our darkness. Jesus took on board our darkness, our sin.

As we crucified the Lord of Life it may well have looked like it was over and darkness had snuffed out the light. Not a bit of it.

As Jesus died the 18 mtr high 9 mtr wide and 10 cm thick curtain, a curtain that was so heavy took 300 men to manover it, a curtain that

signified the separation between sinful humanity and the holy God, that curtain, was torn from top to bottom. From Gods end down to ours.

The message? God has made a way for all through the death of Christ to enter into the very presence of God.

Jesus resurrection would further validate that truth and usher in a way where we would not just be able to dwell in Gods presence, but be one with God in and through our union with Christ.

Perspective. We close with the principle of arguing “from the greater to the lesser” which is kind of what John is doing as he recalls Genesis to begin his gospel.

If I were to stand here this morning and lift a 50 kilo bag of cement a few dozen times do you think I would have any difficulty lifting a small bag of popcorn?

You have seen me do the greater thing. Therefore the lesser is not going to be a problem.. Just so, John is arguing from the greater to the lesser. In his introduction he shows Jesus to be the powerful and creative Word of God that changed the universe.

Why then would we not be hopeful and expectant, that the one who spoke creation into being could also speak hope and life and transformation into our lives, or the life of anyone who is struggling.

Perspective. The one who brought the first creation into being is also the one who makes new creations of us.

- Light and life for all people, if they accept and invite it.
- Light in the darkness. No matter how dark.
- The victory of light. Even life from death.

Do you find such perspectives encouraging? I hope and pray so. The rest of John’s gospel fleshes out and builds on what he signals in his introduction.

Let’s pray... Lord Jesus, light of the world, the one in whom there is life, even life eternal, encourage us we pray. Give us a sense of perspective that we might face life with optimism and hope. In our hurting and needy world where anxiety has reached epidemic proportions. May it be that that hope and life might flow from us to others, amen.