

advent

what Jesus aims to deliver



“Companionship”

Week 1 | December 2, 2018 | John 1

Sermon Summary

Proverbs 14:10 says, “Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy.” That’s a dose of existential reality. You are profoundly alone. At soul level, you are disconnected and unknown. And the world feels this loneliness keenly. Mental health issues born of loneliness are running rampant. National initiatives are underway in England, Denmark, and Australia to combat loneliness. Earlier this year, the UK appointed its first Minister of Loneliness. In the U.S., studies show that over half the population feels isolated and lonely.

The Good News is that there is a Minister of Loneliness who aims to deliver companionship for Christmas. John’s gospel tells us all about him. In John 1, a profound and poetic introduction to Jesus, we learn many important truths that give hope to the lonely. They also form a distinctively *Christian* worldview.

In the beginning was the Word. A Personal God comes first. Life, the Living God, gave rise to Matter. Matter did not give rise to life, as materialist worldviews suggest. If “In the beginning was the infinitely dense bit of matter that exploded and formed the universe,” your existential loneliness remains. But if in the beginning was a Logos, a logical, infinitely wise, communicative Person, then we have hope. Then we have a logical reason to live.

And the Word was with God, and was God. He was with God in the beginning. The Logos is not a philosophical principle but a person, denoted by a personal pronoun, “he.” He was “with” God, which doesn’t just mean present, it means “toward.” The Word and God, the Son and the Father, were turned toward each other in love. That means ultimate reality is not just personal but relational. And all of Creation is the expression of his artistic vision—mostly notably people, who are created in his image male and female, two (not one) because how else would a Being-in-Relationship reduplicate himself in a creature?

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. *Was.* Past tense. At one time, the life of God animated us. We lived “toward” him and he toward us. But then came Sin. The Rebellion. The Great Turning Away. And the light and life and intimacy and connection short-circuited. But then:

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. *Shines.* Present tense. John’s first use of the present tells us that Jesus not only shone during his time on earth, but that he shines on today. Evil could not keep him dead, and it can’t keep us dead either. When Jesus shines, we rise!

The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory. The tabernacle was God’s tent, the place where he lived among the people. Sometimes he manifested his presence with the glowing shekinah glory. But ultimately that wasn’t enough. God wanted to be closer; and we needed him to be. So took off the tent canvas and put on skin. He doused the shining glow and put on flesh and bones. He became knowable, relatable, vulnerable, *kill-able*.

His full glory was displayed when he selflessly died on the cross for our sins. The earlier tabernacle was the place where the priests made sacrifices to appease divine wrath and appeal for divine grace. Jesus, in his flesh, served as tabernacle, priest, and sacrifice, offering up himself for us. And now, whenever the light of his glory and grace pierces our dark hearts, we come back into the light. We come back to *life*.

To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Jesus loved us so much that he gave his life for us and to us. He's that "into" us. The call of the gospel is to receive that love and believe in it. But not just believe in—believe *into*. That's the actual Greek word. We are entirely too cognitive in our faith. We believe in things with our minds, but don't believe *into* them with our lives. Jesus is "into" us, and he wants us to be "into" him. (Like baptism, where you are immersed in his name.)

His great promise of companionship is that if we believe into him, he will give us the Holy Spirit to be in us and with us forever. John 14 contains Jesus' promise not to leave us as orphans but to come to us. In John 16 he says it's actually better for him to go, so that he can send the Spirit. You see, if the canvas tent wasn't good enough—but Jesus needed to get into real skin; well, his real skin, in a sense, wasn't good enough—he needed to get into our skin. He needed to get all the way into our hearts and souls, which he does by his Spirit. He's a true Soulmate, and knowing him, we'll never be alone again.

Discussion Guide

1. Read John 1:1-18.
2. What do you think about the fact that over half of the adult population feels lonely? Do you feel lonely? Is it a real problem in your life?
3. How does the Christian worldview summarized in John 1:1-5 begin to deal with our loneliness? What do you find most compelling in this paragraph, or applicable to your life?
4. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"—and Jesus continues to live in human flesh. What do you think is the significance of the fact that there is not just a God but a *man* on the throne of heaven?
5. From Creation...through the Old Testament...to the Gospels...to the later New Testament there has been a move from God living in heaven to the tabernacle (tent) to human flesh to human hearts via the Holy Spirit. Does this make sense to you? What questions does this raise in your mind?
6. Do you experience the Holy Spirit as a living presence in your life? Does He help satisfy your loneliness and longing? Explain. How do you think you could experience greater companionship with God?
7. Do you think you could have a substantive conversation with a non-Christian about these things? How is this sermon from John 1 useful for you as a "disciple who makes disciples"? Is there anything transferable from you as a disciple to those you might guide in following Christ? Explain.
8. Have you been baptized INTO Christ's name (which signifies the totality of his person and work)? If so, what does baptism mean to you? If not, what's stopping you from getting baptized now?