

The Children of God

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[0 : 00] We come now to our Bible reading. Perhaps you turn with me to the first chapter of John's Gospel. And if you have one of our big church Bibles, you'll find this on page 886.

And I'll read the section which is known as the Prologue, the first 18 verses of chapter 1, which speaks of how and why the Son of God, described initially as the Word, came into the world.

So John's Gospel, chapter 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

[1 : 14] He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him. Yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness about him and cried out, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me. And from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

[2 : 29] For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only begotten who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

This is the word of the Lord, and may the Lord add his blessing upon it for us tonight. Well, let's turn up our John's Gospel, chapter 1 again, page 886, if you have the big Bible.

My title for tonight is The Children of God. And you'll see that that phrase comes in verse 12. But to all who did receive him, him there is Jesus, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The Bible describes Christian people in a variety of different ways. For example, disciples of Jesus, followers of Jesus, people who belong to the way, brothers and sisters, those who are forgiven, those who are justified, those who are saved.

The apostle Peter describes Christians as God's people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. The apostle Paul speaks of Christians as those who are in Christ.

[4 : 20] Now, all of those descriptions are very illuminating and very encouraging. But there's something especially delightful about John's description of Christians as the children of God.

John is describing here a precious status and a cherished relationship. All of us have seen enduring and happy relationships between parents and their children.

Relationships where the parents have cared deeply for their growing children and where the children have loved and trusted their parents and have responded to their love and their discipline. We may not all have received that kind of treatment when we were children ourselves, but we've seen it operating in other families and we've come to appreciate how valuable it is.

And yet, even the best and most secure relationships between parents and children are only a pale reflection of the relationship between God and the children of his own family.

Do you remember how Jesus once said, If you human fathers who are evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

[5 : 30] In other words, how much better a father is he? There is nothing that a human being needs more than to be a child of God. Because when we become children of God, we have all these other blessings as well.

Forgiveness, justification, we're accepted and loved and cherished and protected. But to be a child of God means that we have a relationship that outlasts the brief struggles of our life on earth.

A relationship that goes on everlastingly in the glorious home that Jesus has prepared for all his people. Now, I think you'll see that our verse 12 has a striking implication.

And that is that not all people are children of God. Not at all. It's those who receive Jesus and those who believe in his name who are then given the right to become children of God.

And in putting it like this, John is going to cause many of his modern readers to take a sharp intake of breath. Because many people today, you'll hear this on the radio very often, will say and think that to be a human being, any human being, is to be a child of God.

[6 : 44] But that cannot be true if verse 12 is true. John is teaching that only those who receive the Lord Jesus and believe in his name have this wonderful right given to them to become children of God.

Now, all people are God's creatures. All have been created by God. But only those who receive Jesus and believe in his name become God's children with a new status, a new identity, and a new destiny.

Now, this verse 12, of course, is not a random or isolated statement. It has a context. It's part of John's fascinating account of how and why Jesus came into the world just over 2,000 years ago.

And John's account is a unique account. We noticed last week that while Matthew and Luke begin their Gospels at the stable in Bethlehem, John starts very much further back.

His first verse echoes the very first verse of Genesis. And he locates Jesus, whom he calls the Word, as being already there, like God the Father when creation began, always there.

[7 : 53] The Son of God has no beginning any more than God the Father has a beginning. Both are eternal. Now, the moment came, the moment in time came, described in verse 14, when the Word became flesh.

That was the moment when the eternal Son of God became a human being. What John says in verse 14 is his version of Matthew's and Luke's account of Jesus' birth at Bethlehem.

John doesn't need to retell the Bethlehem story in his Gospel. Matthew and Luke had been writing their Gospels some 20 or 30 years before John, so the record of Bethlehem was well known.

John has other purposes as he begins his Gospel. And his purpose in these opening paragraphs of chapter 1 is to show us how and why Jesus came into the world.

And one of the main reasons for his coming was to give people who believe in him the right to become children of God. So I want to take verses 6 to 14 this evening under four headings, so that we can get a clearer view of how this theme of the children of God relates to the coming of Jesus into the world.

[9 : 05] First, then, there is the testimony of John. Verse 6, there was a man sent from God whose name was John.

Now, we mustn't get confused here. John the Evangelist, who's writing this Gospel, he's not writing about himself here in verse 6. He's writing about the other notable John, John the Baptist.

And John the Evangelist describes John the Baptist here in a most interesting way. You'll see if you look at verses 6 and 7 and 8 that there's no mention of water and no mention of baptizing.

The important thing about John the Baptist in the eyes of John the Evangelist is that John the Baptist is John the Witness. Why did he come? Verse 7, he came as a witness, to bear witness about the light.

Now, the light is Jesus. He's the light described in verse 5 that shines into the darkness. So, John the Baptist has come to bear witness about him. The role of John the Baptist is to say, look at Jesus.

[10 : 12] Don't look at me. Look at him. You don't see them very often these days, but just occasionally in the old towns and villages of England and Scotland, you will see little old finger posts.

Do you know what I mean by finger posts? It's a road sign. I guess they were set up in days when cars were far fewer and cars didn't go so fast. A finger post stands about perhaps only 7 or 8 feet tall.

It's a slender metal post painted black and white with arms pointing in 2 or 3 or 4 directions. And painted on each arm, it might say, for example, Kirkmure Hill, 5 1/2 miles, Lanark, 7 3/4 miles.

And sometimes on these posts, a little human hand is painted up there with a pointing finger, showing the direction that the motorist must take if he wants to go to that particular place.

Now, John the Baptist is like a finger post. He came to point people in the direction of the light. Follow my finger, he says to the world, and you will find the one that you need.

[11 : 19] We should understand that John the Baptist is the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets. All the Old Testament prophets, from Moses right through to Malachi, pointed ahead, down the road of history, to the coming king.

But John's arrival was itself announced and foretold in the Old Testament. And that's what we see here in John chapter 1. Look on to verse 19.

John is causing a stir in Israel, John the Baptist. So the Jewish establishment leaders send priests and Levites from headquarters, from Jerusalem.

It's a rather important delegation in verse 19. And they send these people to find out who this he-man is, dressed in camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey. So there's their question at the end of verse 19, a simple question, who are you?

And look at the evangelist's quaint and emphatic way of describing how the Baptist answered that question. John writes, verse 20, he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I'm not the Christ.

[12 : 29] Isn't that a remarkable way of answering the question, who are you? By saying I'm not somebody else. If somebody came to me and asked me, who are you? I would not say I'm not the Prince of Wales.

Unless there was a rumor going around that I really was the Prince of Wales, in which case I might be rather keen to deny the rumor. Now that's what's going on here. Luke says in his third chapter, verse 15, That's why John says here in John 1.20, I'm not the Christ.

Let me read on, verse 21. And they asked him, what then? Are you Elijah? He said, I'm not. Are you the prophet? He answered, no.

So they said to him, who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? He said, I'm a voice. I'm the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

So John the Baptist knew exactly who he was. He knew that he was the fulfillment of a very important prophecy in the great prophet Isaiah. I am the one, he's saying, whose job is to clear the road, to prepare the way, to clear away any barriers and roadblocks, so that the Lord himself can come to his people.

[14 : 00] So John knew who he was, and he knew who Jesus was. And John's role, to go back to verse 7, is to be a witness, a testifier.

So what is the content of John the Baptist's testimony? Let's follow it through. Seven quick points. First, he testifies that Jesus is the light.

Verse 7, he came, John came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. That, if you like, is the evangelist's short summary statement of the Baptist's testimony.

His message is, Jesus is the light. But let's look on. Secondly, John testifies that Jesus has a preeminence. Verse 15, John bore witness about him and cried out, This was he, of whom I said, he who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.

He is the one of highest rank. He is preeminent. Third, John testifies that Jesus is the Lord, returning in person to Israel.

[15 : 09] Verse 23, as we've seen, I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. Fourth, John testifies to the greatness of Jesus again in verse 26.

I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I'm not worthy to untie. Fifth, John testifies that Jesus is the final Passover lamb.

Verse 29, the next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and he said, Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Sixth, John testifies that Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 33, I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water, that's God the Father, said to me, he on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And then seventh, John testifies that he's the Son of God. Verse 34, I have seen and have borne witness, testimony, that this is the Son of God. So doesn't John the Baptist have a rich and varied testimony to Jesus?

[16 : 27] In just two or three short paragraphs, John tells the world that Jesus is the light, the preeminent one, the Lord, the Passover lamb, the baptizer with the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God.

All done in the first 34 verses of this gospel. John the Baptist is John the witness. He is telling the world who Jesus is. He is the finger post.

Now let's notice something else. This first chapter of John's gospel not only echoes, but fulfills the first chapter of Genesis.

Genesis 1 brings to us the making of the old creation. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And then very early in Genesis 1, God brings light.

God brought light into the world, created by the powerful words of God's mouth. Let there be light. And there was light. And then as you read through Genesis 1, the whole creative process unfolds at God's command, day by day by day, until its completion on the seventh day.

[17 : 37] Now John chapter 1 not only echoes Genesis 1, it fulfills it. If Genesis 1 describes the making of the old creation, John 1 describes the coming of the new creation.

Do you see the day by day pattern? Verse 29, the next day, he saw Jesus coming toward him. Verse 35, the next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples.

Verse 43, the next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee and called his first disciples. Chapter 2, verse 1, on the third day. In other words, the third day after that.

And you can work out the seven days there. The whole program is being rolled out. We start here in the beginning. But this time, the focus is on the word who creates.

All things were made through him. And then we discover light. But this time, not as a neutral force or power, but as a person. The light shines in the darkness.

[18 : 41] And the darkness has no power to assail it or to master it. And this light, who is Jesus, is the one who has the power to baptize people with the Holy Spirit.

That means to fill them with the very life breath of God himself. To bring them to life. To cause them to be born again. The new creation is populated with people who have been born again.

And when people are born again, look again to verses 12 and 13. They are born by the power of God. By the will of God. And with this new birth comes the right to become children of God.

Jesus is going to say to Nicodemus in chapter 3. Unless a person is born again, he can't even see the kingdom of God. Let alone enter it. Nicodemus, the chief theologian of the old Judaism.

He cannot be part of the kingdom of God unless he is born again. Judaism, left to itself, is simply a part of the old creation which is destined for death. But when the Jew or the Gentile pagan, and I guess most of us were Gentile pagans at one point, when a person is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, that person becomes a part of the new creation, the new world, which is brought into being by the arrival and the achievements of Jesus Christ.

[20 : 04] To become children of God means to become part of the new family, the eternal family, whose life is sustained by the very life breath of God himself, the Holy Spirit.

So the testimony of John, it's a thrilling thing. Now secondly, a much more sobering thing. Let's notice the rejection of Jesus.

I'll read verses 9 and 10 again. And as I do, watch out for the shock that comes in the second half of verse 10. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through him. Yet the world did not know him. And verse 11 only intensifies that sense of shock.

He came to his own, his own people, his own domain, and his own people did not receive him. It's not only the world that doesn't want to know him, even his own people, the Jewish people, don't want to know him or receive him.

[21 : 08] Imagine the Queen being away from this country for a week or two on a state visit. When the state visit ends, she gets back onto the Royal Plain, and she flies back to Britain.

And just imagine her plane coming in and landing at Heathrow Airport. And as soon as the plane has come down to earth and has landed on the tarmac and comes to a full stop, thousands of people rush out and surround the plane, carrying placards and banners, which say, Queen, go away.

We don't want you. You're not welcome here. She would be devastated, wouldn't she, and heartbroken. She'd think to herself, have I not loved and served my people for all these years?

Are they rejecting me, the monarch who has been so concerned for them? Now that's the kind of situation, except it's much worse that verse 11 is describing.

He came to his own, his own domain, but his own people did not receive him. And that verse 11 is a key verse in John's Gospel because it sounds a mournful note, which we hear again and again as we read our way through John's Gospel.

[22 : 20] One of the characteristics of John's Gospel is the series of confrontations and disputes that Jesus has with the leaders of the Jews. You'll find that particularly in chapters 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10.

And whenever Jesus has these arguments with the Jewish leaders, the argument always hinges on the question, Who is Jesus? Jesus patiently, persistently seeks to show them and convince them that he is the Son of God, that he's the Christ.

But they cannot accept it. They say, You're not. You can't be. You're an imposter. You're a Sabbath breaker. You're deluded. You're demon-possessed. You're a blasphemer. He says, I am.

I am. I am. I am who I say I am. But they not only don't receive him, in the end, they form a determination to kill him. And they succeed.

As you get to know the four Gospels better, you come to realize that it was the Jews who purposed to kill Jesus. It was not the Romans. The Romans, and Pontius Pilate, the governor, was simply the political machinery that had to be negotiated by the Jewish leaders.

[23 : 36] But, and this is the sadness that lies at the heart of John's Gospel, it was Jesus' own people who did not receive him. As he said in Matthew's Gospel, I came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But it was the lost sheep of the house of Israel who crucified him. Of course, thank God, not every Israelite rejected him. John was a Jew.

The apostles were Jews. Paul was a Jew. Nicodemus was a Jew. There were many others. The early church had many Jews in it, as well as Gentiles. But the majority of the Jews would not welcome Jesus.

That's what verse 11 is saying. It's with a very heavy heart that John records these arguments that Jesus had with the Jewish leaders. Paul has an equally heavy heart.

He writes this in Romans chapter 9. I'm not lying. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

[24 : 37] For I could wish myself accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. Isn't that extraordinary?

Paul would be willing to be cut off from Christ, to be sent to condemnation, if that could be the means of the Jewish people coming to Christ. Paul, like John, loved the Jews.

And he was deeply saddened and frustrated that so few of them came to Christ. And when John says in verse 11 of chapter 1 that the Jewish people did not receive Jesus, surely he is sending out an invitation here to Jewish readers.

Brothers, brother and sister Israelites, will you not think again? Will you not read through my book and allow yourselves to be persuaded that Jesus is the long-awaited, the long-expected Christ?

But if verse 11 shows the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, verse 10 shows his rejection by the Gentiles. The world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

[25 : 42] Paul writes in Romans chapter 1 of the Gentile world suppressing the truth about God and turning to idols instead. The rejection of Jesus is not just a Jewish problem, it's a world problem.

And think of the way that this has featured in our own lives. I know that the great majority of people here tonight are Christians, but just think back to earlier times in your life. Were there not moments in the past when you did not want Christ to be your king and master?

Moments when you wanted to do something which you knew involved a defiance of his wishes. You didn't want him to be your king then, did you? That's a miracle of grace and love that the hearts of any of us should have been turned around.

But that's what he's like. He is gracious and persistent, and he is willing to bring new life and new birth into the hearts of even the most determined rebels.

Well, let's thank God that he is so kind. But John in verses 10 and 11 is teaching us not to underestimate the hostility of the natural human heart towards Jesus.

[26 : 54] Without the miracle, the supernatural miracle of the new birth, we do not want him to be our ruler. That's our natural state. Now thirdly, let's allow John to teach us about the purpose of God, the purpose and will of God, in verses 12 and 13.

His purpose and will, of course, is to bring people to new birth. You'll see that verse 12 begins with a prominent but. But to all who did receive him.

It's a but of mercy and joy and relief. If verses 10 and 11 have been deeply depressing, verse 12 opens a door into a new world.

John is saying to us, the gloom of verses 10 and 11 is not final. The good news is this, that to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

So according to verse 12, there are two things that need to happen to us if we, or other people, are to become children of God, receiving and believing.

[28 : 07] The first thing is to receive Jesus. But to all who received him. That means, of course, to welcome him into our life, into our heart, into our home, our work, our play, our everything, to receive him.

Christmas is coming. Christmas is nearly here. And many of us will be welcoming people into our homes, won't we, for Christmas. Most of those that we welcome in will be people that we're looking forward very much to seeing.

There might be one or two for whom we have to prepare rather carefully. They mightn't be strapping on the bulletproof vest because Great Aunt Henrietta is bearing down upon us from Frinton-on-Sea.

Frinton-on-Sea is a town in Essex, by the way, and it bristles with Great Aunts. But most of the people that we'll be welcoming into our homes, we shall look forward to welcoming with really joyful hearts.

We'll give them the best of everything, won't we? The best guest room, the best food, the best cup and saucer to drink from, the best seat by the fire. Now, to receive Jesus is to welcome him like that, but not just for a few days, for life, forever.

[29 : 19] Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in. But the soul needs to be meek, in other words, glad for him to be our Lord and Master.

We receive him not as householders who are receiving guests, but as servants and friends who are welcoming their master home to take charge, to run the place.

Master, here is my life, all of it, at your disposal. That's what Zacchaeus did. Remember in Luke's Gospel, Jesus was walking through Jericho and he looked up into the branches of the sycamore tree and there was this little man looking down at him.

And he said, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down. I must stay at your home today. So Zacchaeus hurried and came down and, Luke says, received him joyfully. The same word is used, received him.

Now that's the first thing that happens here in verse 12. But the second is to believe. Now people who don't know what the Christian faith is all about usually think that belief in Jesus means belief that he existed or belief that he exists.

[30 : 25] But that's not at all what John means. That phrase in verse 12 reads, believed in his name, but John's Greek literally translated means believing into his name.

Into his name. There's a strong sense of movement. Movement from position A where I'm outside Jesus Christ completely and uninvolved with him to position B where I've moved myself and my identity lock, stock and barrel into his realm and kingdom and keeping.

Receiving him means us welcoming him into our life and believing into his name has a movement in the other direction. It means that we are moving ourselves into his life.

So each of those verbs receiving and believing implies a movement. Receiving is movement from him to us. Believing is a movement from us to him.

Becoming a Christian is not just a bare intellectual acknowledgement that he is the son of God. Now it includes that of course but it's so much more than that. It's a movement of love and trust from us to him and from him to us.

[31 : 36] In fact Jesus says in John chapter 15 abide in me and I in you. It's a mutual thing. We take up residence with him and he takes up residence with us.

Let me illustrate. Believing into his name is not just a matter of taking up residence with him. It's also a matter of placing full confidence in him.

I think we're all sitting on the same sort of chair here aren't we tonight? Is that right? Is that chair comfortable? So comfortable that you're asleep? Okay. Now if I sit down here on this chair just at the moment I'm not entrusting my, I don't know if you can see at the back but I'm not entrusting the full weight of my person on the chair because I'm leaning a bit forward and some of my weight is going down on my feet.

But if I move myself a little bit back here like that and then I take my feet completely off the ground like that you'll see that even if I were the size of a Scottish front row forward a prop forward I think this chair would support my weight entirely.

I'm putting the whole confidence of my weight in this chair at this very moment. Now that's the sort of idea that is involved in believing into Jesus.

[32 : 58] That sort of movement whereby we rest the whole confidence of everything in our life our present our future our eternal future we trust him with everything we entrust everything that we are to him.

Now verse 12 describes what we do as the Christian life begins we receive and we believe into him. but verse 13 describes what God is doing simultaneously who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but born of God to become a child of God to be born into the Lord's people and the Lord's family to be born again is something that comes about because of him through his purpose and will.

Notice John's denials in verse 13 not this and not that he is saying the new birth is not like the old birth like our first birth our first birth is a matter of blood and flesh and man bloodlines and human ancestry and the physical or fleshly business of conception and then childbirth the will of the husband and so on human procreation John is saying the new birth is not like that it's not a human business at all its origin is in God and his will Jesus tells Nicodemus in chapter 3 that the new birth is a birth from above from heaven to be born again is to be given a new nature and a new identity from God the Father in heaven now verses 12 and 13 when you take them together are a lovely short summary of what happens to us when we become Christians these two verses show us the part that we play and the part that God plays in this mysterious and wonderful process of being born again

Christians can sometimes get tied up into knots over this can't they they say is it our doing or is it God's doing well John's reply is that we do have a part to play that's what verse 12 is about but God also has his part to play in verse 13 God's part of course is the decisive one and prior to our part in fact Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 1 that Christians have been chosen to belong to Christ from before the foundation of the world that is rather a long time ago God's part is prior to our part but we do have a part to play and we do have a responsibility and that is to receive the Lord Jesus and to believe into his name and if you've never done that nobody else can do it for you you must act you must receive him and put your confidence in him and lean the full weight of your trust upon him and if you do that once you've done that you will come to see with a growing sense of assurance that God has taken hold of you and has begun to reorientate your life away from King self and towards King Jesus whom you have now received and believed in to be born again to become a child of God is the one thing that every human being needs in fact it is the only thing that matters in the end ten billion years from now it won't matter whether you were rich or poor healthy or sick popular or disliked good looking or plain fulfilled or frustrated happy or sad but it will matter whether or not you were born again into the family of God this same John the evangelist writes this in his first letter chapter 3 see what kind of love the father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when Jesus appears we shall be like him to be born into the family of God is to inherit the family likeness as soon as we are born again our character begins to be reconfigured and made increasingly like that of Jesus himself now fourth

John speaks of the sight of the glory of Jesus in verse 14 the sight of the glory and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth now that verse is part of the witness of John the evangelist to the truth about Jesus we've looked earlier at the witness of John the baptist where it occurs in chapter 1 but here in verse 14 John the evangelist is speaking for himself he's telling us about what he has seen and understood it's in this verse more than any other in the bible that the incarnation of the eternal God is expressed incarnation simply means becoming human flesh not just putting on a human body briefly as you and I might put on a coat for a short time and then take it off again no becoming a human being because only one who is truly human can justly bear the sins of his people as our representative

[38 : 27] Jesus went to the cross as representative man truly man there can only be true representation where like represents like only a man a second Adam could bear the judgment with which the first Adam had long before been threatened in the day you eat of it you will surely die only a man could bear and exhaust that bitter judgment so as to take the bitterness completely away and yet this human flesh and blood man is so much more besides because he dwelt among us literally tabernacled among us just as the tabernacle lived with the Israelites in the wilderness representing the very presence of God in their midst so Jesus for a short while dwelt amongst his people God in man dwelling amongst men and what did

John see as he looked at Jesus glory and what kind of glory he tells us glory of a unique kind the glory of the only son the only son is that a strange thing to say when John has just been talking in verse 12 of many sons and many children of God yes Christians are children of God and Jesus also is the son of God and we shall be like him in the end and yet he will be eternally distinguished from us only he will be seated at the right hand of God the father only he will forever bear the scars of his suffering long after every tear has been wiped from our eyes he is singular he is unique he is the only begotten and just notice the origin of his glory in verse 14 it is the father's glory glory as of the only son from the father how and where did John see the glory of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration well certainly there but surely he came to see the glory of Jesus in every part of his master's life that glory was characterized by the grace and truth of his master's words and work above all

John came to see his glory in the place where it would be least obvious to the casual observer at the cross where Jesus hung in the humiliation and the barbarity of that dreadful gallows that was grace and truth grace stooping so low being prepared even to be abandoned by his father so as to win our eternal safety now the world of course will continue to reject him we must expect that and yet God loved the world and we too must love the world and keep on holding out the good news of the gospel to a dying world but to be born into God's family to have such an elder brother as Jesus unique and yet like us and to enjoy his company forever that's why he came into the world to open the gateway into a new world to give us membership of a new family to give us belonging rather than isolation life rather than death and to make us the children of God let's thank him again with all our hearts tonight to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God well let's pray together dear God our father how can we thank you sufficiently for this grace and kindness that you have given to rebels and sinners like us we once shunned you did not want to hear you didn't want to think about the implications of the gospel but you have had great mercy upon us when we have not deserved it and we have come to see something of your love something of your kindness and tenderness the grace and truth of your own heart displayed in the person and the words and above all the work of Jesus and so we pray dear father that you will fill our hearts more and more not only with the

Holy Spirit but with a greater love for him and for you and that you will help us to serve him with all our hearts and to delight in him and we ask it in Jesus name Amen Amin Amen Amen Thank you.