

DATE: December 4, 2011

TEXT: John 1:1-5

TITLE: WHO IS JESUS?

SERIES: "GOD'S AMAZING GIFT"

An expanded description of the gift.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Who is Jesus?

ILLUSTRATION: **Show picture of sign –“Jesus is the reason for the season.” The pastor of a church in California put a sign in front of his church during the advent season that said, “Jesus is the reason for the season. Merry Christmas.” He received a complaint from a woman in the community who took exception with the message. She closed the conversation by saying, “I don’t think the church should try to drag religion into every holiday.”

2. Who is this Jesus, the reason for the season?

ILLUSTRATION: Richard DeHahn tells a story of two young women who were enjoying a nice lunch in a very fancy restaurant when a friend spotted them from across the room. The friend went over to say hello and while she was there, she asked them about some neatly wrapped presents on the table. “What the special occasion?”

One of the ladies replies, “Oh, this is my two year old’s birthday and we decided to have birthday party.” With a curious look on her face, the friend asked, “But where’s the birthday boy?” “Oh, I left him at my mother’s. We couldn’t have lunch at a nice restaurant like this and bring him along!”

Richard DeHahn then pointed out, “There’s a parable about Christmas there somewhere.”

Through the eyes of the world, Christmas means many things. To a child, it is about gifts or toys. To a merchant, it’s dollar signs and certainly long hours. And, to others, it is about family.

3. To those who know Jesus in a personal way, Christmas is about something more.

4. It is about Jesus.

5. Who is Jesus, the reason for the season?

EXAMPLE: In Matthew 16, Jesus asked His disciples the question, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” He then asked them, “But what about you?” he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (Matthew 16:15-16)

6. Who is Jesus?

7. From the opening section of the gospel, John addresses this question, “Who is Jesus?” The first 18 verses, most often called the Prologue, contain a summary of John’s most reflective convictions about who Jesus is.

8. Everything stands or falls on the person of Jesus.

9. John helps us to grasp who Jesus is.

I. (1-3) JESUS IS THE LIVING WORD, ABLE TO SPEAK TO OUR NEEDS

1. Today, I asked you to turn to the gospel of John, one of the four gospels.
2. Addressing the issue of why there are four gospels, the ancient Christian writer, Origen (185-254 a.d.) answered, "There are not four gospels, but one four-fold gospel."
3. Each gospel presents a different perspective on the life of Jesus.
4. There are significant events in the ministry of Jesus that Matthew, Mark, and Luke include but John leaves out.
5. The synoptic, or first three gospels, focus more on what Jesus taught and did.
6. John focuses more on who Jesus is.
7. John wrote with the specific purpose that we might believe in Jesus.

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

8. It is through believing that we experience the life Christ came to bring us.

ILLUSTRATION: Commentator, Charles Erdman said of the gospel of John, "Its stories are so simple that even a child will love them, but its statements are so profound that no philosopher can fathom them."

9. When we look at the four gospels, we see that each of them started the story of Jesus in a different place.
10. The Gospel of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus, tracing His ancestry back to Abraham and then moving right into the birth of Jesus.
11. The Gospel of Mark begins the story of Jesus with the ministry of John the Baptist, who prepares the way for Jesus.
12. The Gospel of Luke begins with the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist. And then, once Luke gets to the genealogy of Jesus, he traces His ancestry all the way back to Adam.
13. The Gospel of John does not begin with the earthly story of Jesus but rather, it begins with the eternal story of Jesus.
14. John widens our perspective of Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: I am not really a camera person, but I am aware of the difference a zoom lens can make. With a zoom lens, something far away and small can appear large and close or, by reversing it, the object can be made to appear small and distant.

15. Through the lens of John, the greatness and wonder of Jesus leaves one breathless as we focus in on Jesus, God's amazing Gift.
16. He does not ease in, but jumps into profound truths of who Jesus is, using multiple words to describe Him.
17. John proclaims Jesus as the Savior of the world.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)

18. In John chapter 1, John opens our eyes wider to who this Amazing Savior is, offering compelling reasons for believing in Jesus and receiving this Amazing Gift of God.
19. The opening words, “In the beginning” scream for our attention, laying claim to the past, briefly and decisively on behalf of Jesus Christ.
20. The book of Genesis states, “In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth.”
21. Here, scripture states, the Word shares in God’s boundless eternity.
22. Three times in verse 1, we hear, “The Word,” “The Word,” “The Word.”
23. Each time “the Word” is used, it widens our view of Jesus.
24. The Greeks thought of Logos, translated as “the Word,” as the great ruling principle of life and the universe.
25. To the Hebrews, the Logos was identified with the Word of God.
26. In the OT, the Word of God is connected with God’s active power.
27. The Word of God represented His actions, His self-revelation, and how God revealed Himself and acted.
28. Here, John uses “the Word” to refer to the Son of God, declaring “the Word was in the beginning.”
29. Jesus is introduced as the revealer, the one through whom God spoke in the beginning and through whom He continues to speak.
30. Jesus is eternal, and He has been there for you from the beginning.
“I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’” (Revelation 1:8)
31. Jesus Christ used those terms to describe Himself—terms that refer to His deity.
32. When used in Scripture, the words have an almost unfathomable meaning.
33. Jesus, the Alpha, had no beginning, for He existed before time, before the creation of the universe.
34. As the Omega, He is not the “end” as we know it, for He will continue to exist into the everlasting, never-ending future.
35. As hard as it may be for us to grasp, the Word started before the beginning.
36. In other words, “The word is not to be included among created things.”
37. There was not a time when the Word or Christ was not.
38. The second declaration is that the Word was with God.
39. John introduced the Word as one who, from eternity, has a most intimate relationship with God.
40. The gospel of John makes it clear God wants us to really know Him.
41. God is not a God of silence but a God who speaks.
42. His Word is given so we can know Him.
43. Through the Word, we can know Him, for the Word was with God in the beginning.
44. **In Jesus’ prayer, recorded in John 17, he prayed, “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” (John 17:5)**

45. No one can tell us what God is like as Jesus can, for no one knows God like Jesus does.

46. The third declaration is that the Word was God.

47. And "the Word was God" means the essential nature of the Word is Deity.

ILLUSTRATION: One of the greatest of the controversies of the early church gathered around the significance of this opening verse. There was a man by the name of Arius, who was one of the presbyters of Alexandria in Egypt, and he had a superior by the name of Alexander, and they engaged in controversy over the nature of the Son of God. Arius taught that the Lord Jesus Christ did not possess eternity of being. He taught that the Son had a beginning and was the greatest of the creatures of God. He then denied the eternity and deity of the Son. Surprisingly, Arius obtained a lot of followers. But, there came conflict from Alexander and others, and finally, at the Council of Nicaea, the Arian doctrine was denounced by the Christian church, The teaching of Arius, however, still was influential and there are many religious groups today that deny the deity of Jesus.

48. The Word shares without rival in the eternity, intimacy and very character of God Almighty.

Paul wrote, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." (Colossians 2:9)

Hebrews says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." (Hebrews 1:3)

49. Verse 2 emphatically reiterates the eternity of the Word, emphasizing that the Word was in the beginning, face-to-face with God.

50. The relationship was one which existed in *eternity*, and which was therefore a union of *nature or essence*.

51. The Word, this Christ, this expression of the invisible God, had been in a state of continuous existence in intimate fellowship with God and He was God.

52. John will not let us settle for a small man-made Jesus.

(v. 3) "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:3)

ILLUSTRATION: A grandpa and his granddaughter were sitting talking when she asked, "Did God make you, Grandpa?" "Yes, God made me," the grandfather answered. A few minutes later, the little girl asked him, "Did God make me, too?" "Yes, He did," the older man answered. For a few minutes, the little girl seemed to be studying her grandpa, as well as her own reflection in the mirror, while her grandfather wondered what was running through her mind. At last, she spoke up. "You know, Grandpa," she said, "God's doing a lot better job lately."

53. The Word is the Creator of life, and no matter how you look, you are fearfully and wonderfully made and you are valuable.

54. John links the Word to the world through Creation.

ILLUSTRATION: **“The virgin birth is far less mind-boggling than the power of all Creation stooping so low as to become one of us.” — U.S. author, Madeline L'Engle (1918–2007)

55. All that can be called “created” has come to be through the work of the Word.

“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16-17)

ILLUSTRATION: **Augustine who died in the year 430, said this about Jesus in one of His sermons:

He so loved us that, for our sake,

He was made man in time,

although through him all times were made.

He was made man, who made man.

He was created of a mother whom he created.

He was carried by hands that he formed.

He cried in the manger in wordless infancy, he is the Word,

without whom all human eloquence is mute. —Augustine

56. Identifying the Son of God as the Word reinforces the Son’s closeness with God by involving Him in that activity appropriate for God alone- the activity of creating.

57. His work in the beginning has great significance for us today.

58. Because He is the creator, He knows how we work.

59. He is the source of all life.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1969, in a science lab in New Jersey, Canadian physicists, Willard Boyle and his colleagues, invented the concept of an electronic eye. Using their knowledge of mathematics and the behavior of light, they provided the science behind digital cameras known as a charged-coupled device or CCD. The CCD technology revolutionized photography, as light could now be captured electronically instead of on film. CCD technology is used on the Hubble telescope and the Mars Lunar probe. It was Boyle's invention that allowed us to see the surface of Mars for the first time. In 2009, Boyle was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics. A few years after the original invention of CCD technology, Boyle walked into a store to purchase a new digital camera based on his invention. During the visit, the salesman tried to explain the intricacies of the digital camera, but stopped, feeling it was too complicated for his customer to understand. According to one long-time friend, Boyle was normally a humble man, but on this occasion, he was taken aback by the salesman's arrogance and disrespect. So Boyle bluntly replied: "No need to explain. I invented it." When the salesman didn't believe him, Boyle told the salesman to type "Willard S. Boyle" into his computer and see for himself. A Nikon representative in the store heard the exchange and immediately came over to have his photograph taken with

the famous inventor. (Allison Lawlor, "Master of Light invents a photo revolution," Globe and Mail (5-21-11))

60. At times, we almost act like that impatient salesman in our relationship with the Lord.
61. We tell the Lord how life works or how we think it should work.
62. The Lord simply and confidently responds, "No need to explain. I invented life."
63. Jesus is the living Word who has been there from the start.
64. He is able to meet your need because of who He is.

II. (v.4) JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF THE LIFE GOD WANTS YOU TO HAVE "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

1. Life and light are two of the great basic words on which the fourth Gospel is built upon.
2. It is John's great thought that Jesus is none other than God's creative and life-giving and light-giving Word.
3. Life is one of John's characteristic concepts, for he uses the term 36 times.
4. He is the source and author of life, for through Him life came into being
5. Were the creation to be unplugged from the sustaining power of the Word, all life would immediately cease.
6. Life is in Him through faith in Him.

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (I John 5:12)

7. Jesus brings a quality to a life He enters that can be found nowhere else.

ILLUSTRATION: **Author and philosopher, Henry David Thoreau once observed, "Far too many people come to the end of their lives and discover they really have not lived at all."

8. Jesus the living can take you from just existing to LIVING.
9. Jesus is the Life that shows us how to live, for He is the Light that is the light of men.

"...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

10. We must not fill our lives with religious things but with Jesus, who is the Life.

11. We must not fill our lives with things, but with Jesus, who is the Life.

12. For John, it is the incarnation of the Word that makes sense of all of life.

ILLUSTRATION: *The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity—hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory—because at the Father's will, Jesus Christ became poor and was born in a stable so that thirty years later he might hang on a cross." (— J. I. Packer, English-Canadian theologian (1926—)

13. The one who gives life is the Life.
14. John is speaking of a life discovered only in Jesus.
15. As one preacher said, Jesus is the strength of earthly life, the secret of effective life and the source of eternal life.

16. The life John has in view mainly is new life, spiritual life, saving life, the gift of eternal life, the opposite of spiritual death now and final condemnation later.

17. Life is the opposite of destruction, condemnation, and death.

“...but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (II Timothy 1:10)

18. Life is found in Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: Pastor Adrian Rogers used to tell the story of his friend Byron Richardson. Byron and his wife were driving through the Smoky Mountains on vacation when his wife said, “You better get some gas into the car, as it is getting late.” Byron respond, “It is okay. We have plenty of gas and I’ll stop in time, don’t worry.” She drifted off to sleep. Byron was driving and night fell. When the needle on the dashboard went to Empty, he begin to look for a gas station, but there was no station in sight. He prayed. He was driving on vapors when he saw a little grocery store with an old gasoline pump. He stopped in and asked if they sold gas. The mountaineer-grocer nodded his head and said, “Yep” and walked out to fill his tank. Byron was so overcome with relief that he stood up straight and, taking a whiff of mountain air, said, “Its great to be alive, isn’t it?” Byron said the old man never lifted his head but replied, “I don’t know. I ain’t never been no other way.”

19. The truth is that we are not fully alive until we have life in Christ.

20. The “Word” is God’s personal revelation to men.

21. This revelation is personal in that it proceeds from God and is directed to men.

22. His life, manifest in the incarnation, is the light by which we can live life to the fullest.

ILLUSTRATION: T.S. Eliot asked the question, “Where is the Life we have lost in living?

23. Jesus is the source of life.

24. In the busyness of life, we must make sure we don’t miss out on true life that is only found in Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: (Prop A large puzzle piece that says Jesus on it. *8-12 inches or so). On May 17th 2010, the headline in Britain’s *TELEGRAPH* newspaper read, “Pensioner’s seven year jigsaw battle ends with one piece missing.” Eighty-six year old pensioner (retiree) Jack Harris started the puzzle just after Christmas of ’02. He then spent the next 7 ½ years working on the 5 foot tall puzzle. “Sadly,” reports the *TELEGRAPH*, “he was dismayed to find that he had only 4999 pieces with one tiny hole in the middle.” “He was just so disappointed when he found one bit was missing. It’s sad, really, because now it will never be completed, ” said Harris’ daughter.**

25. What a shame it would be to work so hard at something only to find out at the very end that all your hard work never had any hope of completion.

26. Imagine discovering, too late, that there had been a missing piece all along.
27. That will be the jolting experience of all those who go through life without Jesus Christ!
28. Jesus is the source of the life God wants you to have.

III. (v.5) JESUS IS THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

(v. 5) The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

1. Every time you read in the Scriptures about light, you will also find a corresponding statement about darkness.
2. The light and the darkness are always set in obvious contrast to each other.
3. Jesus is the Light.
"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46)
4. The chief aim of the light is to reveal God.
5. Jesus is the Light that shows a man the road, lighting the road at every step of the way.
6. Jesus is the Light that reveals our need for God.
7. Jesus is the Light that reveals God as He is.
8. Jesus is the Light that lights up sin and shows its true color.
9. Jesus opens our eyes to sin and its consequences.
10. To John, the Christless life was life in the dark.
11. The darkness stands for life without Christ.
12. Darkness has not received the truth of the revelation.
13. Darkness is hostile to the light.
14. The darkness of sin is all around us, immediate and entrenched, as John seems to say.
15. But His light shines through to us.

ILLUSTRATION: *The last words of G. K. Chesterton were these: "The issue is now clear. It is between light and darkness, and everyone must choose his side."

16. The light is continually in action.
17. The shining of the light is an ongoing, continuous activity.
"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

18. Jesus is the Light that shows us how not to walk in darkness.

ILLUSTRATION: I think of the old cemetery in Indiana that has a tombstone bearing the following epitaph: "Pause, stranger, when you pass me by. As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. So prepare for death and follow me." And beneath those convicting words, some passerby scratched some additional ones that read as follows: "To follow you I'm not content until I know which way you went."

19. To follow Jesus is not to walk in darkness.

“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (I John 1:6-7)

20. Even as John writes, it is shining.

21. In every generation the light of Christ still shines in spite of the efforts of men to extinguish the flame.

22. However gross the darkness may be, the light of the divine word shines on and is not obliterated

ILLUSTRATION: One writer tells about a missionary to Japan who had to return home during World War II because of the conflict. She was very discouraged and dismayed as she approached the New York Harbor. Then it came to her as a whisper from above, “All the darkness of the world cannot put out the light of a single candle!” It encouraged her, giving her the lift of encouragement she needed.

23. The Light of Jesus still shines.

24. They could not snuff out the Light of Christ with the cross.

25. The Empty Tomb meant that Jesus is the Light that shines in the darkness.

“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”(John 1:5)

ILLUSTRATION: Four members of a family in Haiti cowered at their home during the February 1998 solar eclipse and were found dead the next day by what officials said was accidental poisoning. Police say the four died of an overdose of sleeping pills taken to alleviate their anxiety. But suffocation was also suspected because the family had plugged all openings to their home to block out the sun. Thousands of Haitians hold to the superstition that an eclipse will blind or kill them. They did not understand the light or what was taking place. They tried to push out or keep out the light.

26. The NIV uses the word “understood,” suggesting that darkness has failed in the realm of thought and perception.

27. The focus being the darkness did not admit or receive it.

28. When that light and life came amongst us as a human being, the darkness did not grasp, or master, the light; it neither comprehended it nor overcame it.

29. NEB translation, “The light shines on in the dark, and the darkness has never quenched it.”

30. RSV says, “And the darkness has not overcome it.”

31. The light includes the promise of ultimate and final victory for the Light and all for which it stands.

32. The shining light of the Word ultimately and irreversibly will triumph over all forms of darkness.

33. The light of Jesus breaks through the darkness.

34. Jesus confronted darkness in the hour of His death.

35. The light shines in the darkness now because of Jesus and what He has done.

36. The greatness of God is most clearly displayed in His Son.

37. Jesus shines in darkness.

ILLUSTRATION: David McClasland wrote about an American businessman, Mark Bent, who spent \$250,000 to develop and manufacture an affordable solar-powered flashlight. Thousands have been distributed free or at low cost to people living in African refugee camps. One daily solar charge provides 7 hours of life-giving illumination for people in homes, schools, and medical clinics where darkness had encouraged crime and violence.

38. He helped to provide light in the midst of darkness.

39. Darkness is the absence of light.

40. Jesus came to provide light in the midst of the darkness of sin.

41. Jesus came to give Light in the darkness of loneliness.

42. Jesus came to give Light in the darkness of despair.

43. The celebration of Communion is the celebration that Jesus the Light came to give light.

CONCLUSION: Who is Jesus?

These same questions have occupied the minds of men down through the centuries. It was the question that was continually raised during the Lord's earthly ministry. As Jesus rode a donkey into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the people turned to one another and asked, "Who is this?" (Matthew 21:10). Even His disciples asked the question among themselves when Jesus stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee: "Who can this be, that even the winds and waves obey Him!" (Mark 4:41).

Who is Jesus? He is God's Amazing Gift!

Who is Jesus?

Jesus is not just another prophet, Rabbi or wonder-worker.

Jesus is not a reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires.

Jesus was the Creator come to earth and the beginning of a New Creation.

He embodied the covenant, fulfilled the commandments.

He is our Lord and God, Savior of the world, and substitute for our sins—

Jesus is Word. Jesus is the Life and Light that shines in the darkness.

One thing we will be constantly reminded of in John's Gospel: the message of Jesus demands a response, a response of belief or unbelief. We are forced into that decision even in the opening verses: "Will I believe Jesus is who John claims He is?"

Who is Jesus to you?

I. (1-3) JESUS IS THE LIVING WORD WHO IS ABLE TO SPEAK TO OUR NEEDS

II. JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF THE LIFE GOD WANTS YOU TO HAVE

III. (v.5) JESUS IS THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

Who is Jesus to you?

Will you let Him speak to your needs?

Are you living the life Jesus wants you to have?

Is He your light?

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