

The Excellent Word, Part 1

John 1:15–16

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Introduction

Well, we return this morning to our series in the Gospel of John. We have been working our way, slowly, through the prologue of John’s Gospel—those marvelous eighteen verses of introduction to the Eternal, Divine Word from the Father, who has become flesh and dwelt among us: our Savior and King: the Lord Jesus Christ. And I mentioned when I began this series that the reason I’ve decided to work through the Gospel of John is because the need of the present moment for the church of Jesus Christ, above all else, is to fix the eyes of our faith upon our glorious, risen, reigning Lord.

And that is what the Apostle John seeks to do for us: to put that glory of our precious Jesus on display. Chapter 1 verse 14: “And we beheld His *glory*.” Chapter 2, verse 11: “This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His *glory*.” Chapter 6 verse 40: “Everyone who *beholds* the Son and *believes* in Him will have eternal life.” John is on a mission to display the glory of Jesus by showcasing His identity as eternal God, His incarnation as the true God-man, His perfect life of law-fulfilling righteousness, His sacrificial death as a full atonement for sins, and His death-conquering resurrection that overcomes the world. He says in 20:31 that He has written these things “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” He wants you to believe, and he wants you to keep on believing, and so he shows you glory! And so we have turned to the Gospel of John to look unto Jesus, and to have the sight of His glory strengthen us for everything we could ever need.

And John begins by revealing Jesus to be the *Word* of God. John co-opts the extremely pregnant Greek term, *Logos*—a word that the philosophers used to speak of the supreme, organizing, stabilizing, governing principle of the entire universe. And he does that, not only to identify Christ with what the Greeks thought was the impersonal force of reason, but primarily to identify Jesus as the One who is the eternal generation and the supreme revelation of God the Father. Eternal generation identifies Him as the One who is consubstantial with the Father, but also *from* the Father—equal to the Father, but also distinct from the Father. And that He is the supreme revelation of the Father is to say that He is the pinnacle self-expression of Almighty God to mankind.

And then John began telling us about this Word. He says that this Word is eternal—that He *was* in the beginning, that He was existing before all creation. He says that this Word was eternally

distinct from the Father—that He was *with* God, and therefore distinct from Him, but also that He always *was* God, and therefore of the very identical nature as the Father. Fully and truly God, just as the Father was, but distinct from the Father, and so one God. He goes on to say that this Word is the Creator of all things, verse 3: “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” Everything that has come into being owes its existence to the Word, who never came into being, but who eternally *was*. In verse 4, John says, “In Him was life.” This Word is the self-existent fountain of all life and being, the being in which everything else has its being, the One whose existence is the ground of the existence of everything that exists, the One in whom all things hold together! He is also the One who is the Light of men: the Light of truth that conquers all lies, the Light of holiness that conquers all wickedness. When all the powers of darkness raged at their fiercest to try to snuff out this Light, verse 5: the darkness did not overcome Him, but He triumphed over them!

He is the One to whom the greatest man in history testified, verses 6 to 8. He is “the true Light,” verse 9. Other truths and discoveries and insights in the realm of nature may offer real illumination and insight. But all other lights are only reflections of the true Light—the eternal, uncreated Light that has shone from all eternity, the One who is Himself, Hebrews 1:3, the radiance of the glory of God. And the True Light’s “coming into the world” was the greatest event in human history! The coming of this True Light “enlightens every man.” He exposes every man and woman’s spiritual state, and reveals what they are. He divides all of humanity into two groups: evildoers who “flee from the Light” and thus “walk in darkness,” or believers in God who “practice the truth” and “have the Light of life.”

But though He was in the world, the world that He made, verse 10, “did not know Him.” And verse 11: “He came to His own, and yet those who were His own did not receive Him.” The One most worthy of reception, and acclaim, and adoration, and worship, was rejected by the very people who knew so many of His singular blessings to them. But there was a remnant. A small number, chosen by God before the foundation of the world, would be granted the miracle of the new birth, which would result in the bestowal of the gift of saving faith—of “believe[ing] in the name” of this Messiah, and “receiv[ing]” Him whom the world had rejected. And as a result of that receiving and believing, this Word Himself sovereignly grants to those believing children the right to become the adopted sons and daughters of Almighty God!

And then, John tells us in verse 14: this “Word became flesh.” God the Son, the eternal Second person of the Trinity, who always existed in the undivided divine nature, without shedding or subtracting or shrinking down anything from His divinity, took on a full and true human nature into personal union, right alongside His full and true and unchanging divine nature. Fully God and fully man at the very same time! “He *tabernacled* among us,” showing us that, as the fulfillment of the tabernacle and the temple of the Old Testament, Jesus is where God’s glory dwells; where God meets and fellowships with man; where God speaks to man; where God’s

people are sanctified unto Him; and where full and final atonement for sin is accomplished once and for all. Jesus is where God's people go to worship Him!

He is "the only begotten from the Father." This is another comment on the Son's eternal generation—that from before the foundation of the world—before all things—the Father eternally communicated the fullness of the whole divine essence to the Son, in an incomprehensible, inexpressible act internal to the life of the Triune God Himself. He is, as the Nicene Creed says, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; *begotten*, not made, being of one substance with the Father."

And this only-begotten Word is "*full* of grace and truth." As our great Priest, He reconciles us to God by accomplishing atonement in our stead, righteously purchasing the saving grace that effects our salvation. As our great King, He subdues our rebellion by sovereignly applying the saving grace that He purchased for us. And as our great Prophet, He leads us and guides us in the truth of God's Word, dispelling the lies that our sinful hearts are always tempted to wander after, and instructing us in the paths of truth. The One full of grace and truth is our Prophet, Priest, and King: the Divine Messiah.

And so, after beholding the glory of the Eternal and *Divine* Word, in verses 1 to 5, after seeing the witness to the Word in verses 6 to 8, and after gazing upon the glory of the *Incarnate* Word in verses 9 to 14, we turn now to verses 15 to 18, to fix our eyes upon the *Excellent* Word. John closes his prologue by speaking of how this eternal Word made flesh excels and surpasses all others, even the greatest and most significant figures of redemptive history.

In these four verses, John presents **four excellencies** of the excellent Word that set the Lord Jesus Christ far above everyone and everything. **Four excellencies** that exalt the glory of our Savior, that feed our faith, and that strengthen our souls to follow Him faithfully. And we'll only get to two of them today, but I'll state all four of them up front so you know where we're going. This Excellent Word (1) **surpasses** the greatest man who ever lived; (2) He **supplies** the grace sufficient for every sinner; (3) He **supersedes** the glorious mediator of the Old Covenant; and (4) He **shows** the glory of the unseen Father.

I. He Surpasses the Greatest Man who Ever Lived (v. 15)

In the first place, this Excellent Word **surpasses the greatest man who ever lived**. Look with me at verse 15. "John"—that is, John the Baptist—"testified about Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'""

Now, like the Apostle John's first mention of John the Baptist in his prologue, this one seems somewhat out of place. In fact, if you just deleted verse 15 from the text, verse 16 would flow quite naturally from verse 14: "...and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, *full* of grace and truth. ... For of His *fullness* we have all received, and grace upon grace." The prologue seems to do quite well without verse 15. In fact, several English translations place verse 15 in *parentheses*. The King James, the ESV, and the Christian Standard Bible all treat it as a parenthetical remark. So why does the Apostle John interject it here?

The answer is the same for why he seemed to interject verses 6 to 8 when he introduced us to John the Baptist. Verses 1–5 are a masterpiece of an introduction to the eternal, divine Word. As we've reviewed even already this morning: God the Son, the Creator of all things, the self-existent fountain of all life and being, the Light of all men, who shines through the darkness that so earnestly tries to snuff Him out! Beauty like that compels praise! It demands proclamation! And so right at the outset, we get what seems to be an almost parenthetical comment introducing to us the witness that will declare the wonder of this beautiful One.

Well, verses 9 to 14 speaks of the Word "coming into the world," as the One who "was in the world," as the Word become flesh, and dwelling among us, and displaying the glory of Yahweh God in the person of the Man, Christ Jesus. If verses 1–5 were a masterpiece revealing the Word's *deity*, verses 9–14 are another masterpiece—culminating in the *magnum opus* of verse 14—revealing the Word's humanity. If the beauty of His deity compels praise, so that the Apostle can't resist commenting on John the Baptist, the forerunner who will testify of this Divine Messiah, then the glory and the wonder of the miracle of His hypostatic union—the ineffable union of both divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, without confusion, change, separation, or division—that *also* compels praise. And so John once again interjects a reference to the witness that will testify of this magnificent miracle, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verses 6–8, we learn that John came for a witness, to testify about the Light. Here in verse 15, we learn that John actually did testify, and we learn part of the content of that testimony.

Right at the beginning, the Apostle says, "John testified about Him and cried out." But what's interesting is that the word "testified" is in the present tense in the original Greek, which is a bit unexpected. It's obvious that he's writing about a past event, but he uses the present tense to pull you into the narrative. It's a way of heightening the vividness of his retelling, as if to transport you into the actual scene as the events unfolded. It's as if the voice of John still rings in men's ears today, as his historical witness reverberates throughout history on the pages of Scripture. But, while "testifies" is in the present tense, "cried out" is in the perfect tense—which signifies a past event. D. A. Carson makes the observation that the two tenses "combine to suggest that the Evangelist is presenting John the Baptist's witness both vividly, as if it were in progress, and comprehensively, summing it up as a set piece" (130).

Having understood that, consider, now, the manner of John's testimony. He "*cried out.*" He was, as he says in verse 23, the "voice of one *crying* in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" The verb conveys that John's testimony was public, out in the open, intended for everyone to hear it. John uses this verb of Jesus' preaching in chapter 7 and verse 28: "Jesus *cried out* in the temple." And again in John 7:37: He cried out at the feast. This is public proclamation.

In 2 Peter 2:1, Peter warns the churches that there will be false teachers among them. And he says that those false teachers "will *secretly* introduce destructive heresies." When false teachers are trying to entice people away from the truth, they do it with a measure of secrecy. They whisper. Wolves arrange private meetings, away from the oversight of the shepherds who protect the flock, so they can deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting (Rom 16:18). But John's testimony was nothing like this. Calvin said, John was "in no degree obscure or ambiguous, and ... he did not mutter among a few men, but openly, and with a loud voice, preached Christ" (49). Cyril of Alexandria wrote, "He does not speak in a corner, nor does he testify quietly in a whisper. ... The message is spread abroad to all. The herald is shining bright. The voice is distinct. The forerunner is not unknown; he is great" (65). And the point that John is about to make, is that as great as John the Baptist was, Christ is greater. The One who came after Him **surpasses** Him.

Consider now, not only the manner of John's testimony, but the content of his testimony. "John testified about Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.''" The Apostle John quotes the words of John the Baptist as he said them in John chapter 1 and verse 30—identical to how they appear here. The content of John's testimony concerns the supremacy of Christ: "He who comes after me has a higher rank than I," or, "has **surpassed** me," as some translations have. Jesus was born six months after His cousin John, according to Luke 1:26, and of course Jesus began His ministry after John had already been baptizing in the district around the Jordan River and preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And so in this sense, Jesus came after John. And theirs was a society in which, as one commentator put it, "age and precedence bestowed peculiar honor" (Carson, 131). That's why, in the case of Jacob and Esau, it was such a scandal for God to tell Rebekah that "the older shall serve the younger" (Gen 25:23). "Chronological priority meant superiority" (Morris, 96).

But John says, Jesus, who comes after him, has **surpassed** him, has come to outrank him! Literally, "He who comes *after* me has become *before* me." "He is the King! I am just the forerunner who announces the King's coming! He is the Bridegroom! I am just the friend of the Bridegroom who rejoices to hear His voice! I am the lamp, who, for a little while lit up the path where you should walk! But that path leads to Him, who is the Light of the world! I baptize in

water! But He who comes after me baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire! and I'm not worthy to untie His sandals!"

And remember who this is, who is speaking, here. In Matthew 11:11, Jesus says, "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!" Jesus Himself—the eternal Word, the Light of the world, God the Son—is saying that John the Baptist is **the greatest man who ever lived**. Why? Because "God chose him to perform the most important task to that point in human history—being the forerunner of the Messiah" (MacArthur, 30). He was the last of the Old Testament prophets, even as Jesus says in Luke 16:16, "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John." And that means that he was the first herald of the New Covenant. He himself was the pivot point of all biblical history. So **the greatest man who had ever lived** up until that point was John the Baptist. And John himself says, "This One who comes after me has **surpassed** me! He has come to outrank me! He has excelled me in every way! He said I'm the greatest? Well He is greater than the greatest!"

And why is that? What is the ground of Jesus' supremacy over John the Baptist? Why does **He surpass the greatest man who ever lived**? Look at it again: "He who comes after me has come to be before me, for He existed before me." Literally, "because He *was* before me." And there's that famous *being* versus *becoming* contrast that John has been so fond of throughout this prologue: the contrast between *eimi* (the verb *to be*) and *ginomai* (the verb *to become*). "He has *become*—or *come to be*—*before* me, because He *was* before me! He comes after me, because, according to His humanity, He was born after I was, and began His ministry after I began mine. But He was *before* me, because, according to His deity, He is the uncreated, eternal God of heaven and earth!"

"He *was* before me! He has been *existing* from eternity!" John 8:58: Jesus says it Himself: "Before Abraham was, I am." The Apostle Paul says in Colossians 1:17, "He is before all things." Matthew 3:1: "Now in *those* days John the Baptist *came*," *paraginomai*, "came along." But, Micah 5:2, "*His* goings forth are...from the days of *eternity*." John says, "I am of yesterday; He is from eternity" (cf. Henry). {Concessive} "Yes, my father prophesied over me at my birth, Luke 1:76, that I would be the *prophet* of the Most High. But the angel Gabriel prophesied to Mary, Luke 1:32, that He would be the *Son* of the Most High! I am, and am honored to be, a *minister* of the New Covenant, a herald of the dawning of the age of salvation! Oh, but dear people, He is the *mediator* of the New Covenant," Hebrews 9:15. "His blood is the *blood* of the New Covenant," Hebrews 13:20 (cf. Henry). "This is the One of whom I spoke! The One who **surpasses the greatest man who ever lived!**"

II. He Supplies the Grace Sufficient for Every Sinner (v. 16)

And that brings us to a **second excellency** of this excellent Word. Number two: **He supplies the grace sufficient for every sinner**. We see this in verse 16: “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.” Verse 14 ends by saying that this glorious One, only-begotten from the Father, is “full of grace and truth.” And here John says, “Every one of us who belong to Him by faith has received from His fullness!”

O, the fullness of Christ! the fullness of our Savior! In Ephesians 4:13, Paul speaks of “the fullness of Christ.” In Ephesians 3:19 he says that knowing the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, fills believers up “to all the fullness of God.” In Ephesians 1:22–23, he says that God “put all things in subjection under [Christ’s] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Colossians 1:19 says, “it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in” Christ. And Colossians 2:9 says “in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.”

This emphasis on Jesus’ fullness might be an oblique reference to the same error John would address in his First Epistle—that early-Gnostic idea that a multitude of divine beings (of which Yahweh was just one) were emanations from an ultimate divine source. They called these emanations of divine beings the *pleroma*, which is the Greek word John uses in verse 16, and which Paul uses in all those texts we’ve just read. If so, then John is taking a subtle shot at the Gnostics and saying: What you spread out and attribute to a multitude of divine beings is actually summed up and concentrated and epitomized in this One Divine, Incarnate Word, the Man Christ Jesus (cf. Morris, 98n117).

But even if that is an oblique reference—a subtle shot at the false teachers who had corrupted the doctrine of the person of Christ—the main point is to highlight the **sufficiency** of Christ for the need of **every sinner**. You and I, dear people, are sinners! lawbreakers! We have defiled ourselves by our disobedience to God. We have fallen short of His righteous standard of perfection. And holy justice demands to be satisfied in nothing but our eternal ruin. And there was nothing we could do to satisfy that divine justice except go to our everlasting misery. How empty we are! How spiritually destitute, with no resources of our own to commend ourselves to God or save ourselves from our just condemnation! But here comes our Savior—God the Son incarnate—and He is full of grace, full of unmerited favor to be bestowed upon poor sinners!

And the emphasis on the fullness of Christ also implies that there is no other way to fill the emptiness of our spiritual poverty except through faith in Him. Calvin puts this beautifully. He says, “As soon as we have departed from Christ, it is vain for us to seek a single drop of happiness, because God hath determined that whatever is good shall reside in him alone. Accordingly, we shall find angels and men to be dry, heaven to be empty, the earth to be unproductive, and, in short, all things to be of no value, if we wish to be partakers of the gifts of God in any other way than through Christ” (50). It is “of *His* fullness” that we all receive. He and

He alone is full of the “grace upon grace” that we so desperately need. And so if we seek it anywhere but by faith in Him, we will find ourselves just as poor, just as destitute, just as bankrupt as we were before we began.

But *in* Him, dear brothers and sisters, drawing from *His* fullness, we will find the fountain of “grace upon grace,” to be inexhaustible! We will find that **He supplies the grace sufficient for every sinner**. Matthew Henry wrote, “As the cistern receives water from the fulness of the fountain, the branches sap from the fulness of the root, and the air light from the fulness of the sun, so we receive grace from the fulness of Christ.” An inexhaustible fountain! An ever-plenteous, rich root! A superabundance of light from the sun! This is the testimony of every one of God’s people. We who have feasted upon this Savior by faith have received nothing but the gracious dispensations of a loving Shepherd of our souls, nothing but “grace upon grace!”

Literally, grace *in place of* grace! What does that mean? It’s just this never-ending **supply** of grace after grace after grace from Christ our dear Savior. There is the grace of atonement—a full and perfect redemption that rescues us from the wrath of God. And upon the heels of that grace is the grace of regeneration—the sovereign miracle of the Holy Spirit whereby He births in us who were dead the fullness of the divine life. And that gives way to the grace-gifts of repentance and faith. We turn in disgust from the filth and fruitlessness of sin, we rest our souls upon the blood and righteousness of Our perfect Substitute, and we are united to Him so that all that is His becomes ours. And that is followed by the grace of justification, by which we, guilty sinners, are justly declared righteous, solely on the basis of the obedience of Jesus in our place, imputed to our account, apart from any works of our own. And then the grace of sanctification sets us apart to be God’s own possession, frees us from the dominion of sin, and progressively transforms us into the very image of Christ Himself. And the grace upon grace doesn’t stop until glorification, when every trace of sin is eradicated from us, body and soul, and we’re raised to live in sinless freedom with the Triune God forever.

Pastor John says “grace *upon* grace” is like wave upon wave—like waves of grace rolling in on the seashore. When one wave of grace breaks onto the shore and washes back out, there’s just another wave right behind it with a fresh **supply** of grace. The great commentator John Gill paraphrased it as “heaps of grace.” It’s the language of abundance, of profusion, of inexhaustibility, and limitlessness, and boundlessness.

Dear people: who needs grace upon grace? *Sinners* need grace upon grace! Not just grace for regeneration and conversion and justification, but the ongoing grace of fresh pardon for our sins. We who have received such boundless grace in our conversion—justified freely, adopted as children of God—surely we know better than to go on sinning against our Lord in our thoughts, and in our words, and in our actions. And yet, we hate, we covet, we lust, we envy; we complain, and gossip, and lie, and deceive; we manipulate, mistreat, sow dissension, and are lazy. We

commit idolatry as we worship the idols of our hearts above our great God and Savior. We prefer other, lesser beauties over *Him*, the loveliest and most beautiful of all.

And we think that sinning so grievously against grace poured out so lavishly upon us disqualifies us from more grace! Our flesh, stirred up by the enemy of our souls, says to us, “How can you be a true Christian when you still sin like this? I mean, every day!” And we’re tempted to think that ones so vile as we are need to spend time away from Christ. We put ourselves in spiritual time-out. We make ourselves go sit in the spiritual corner, until we can perform the penance of feeling bad enough about our sin.

But no, dear people! This Savior is *full* of grace! And from His fullness we all receive grace upon grace! And so, though our heads hang in shame over committing the same sins against the same Lord who deserves better than that from His people, nevertheless we go to Him—every day; every hour in some seasons—for forgiveness! We don’t wait in the corner, at a distance from Jesus, until we can satisfy some sort of self-imposed standard of self-atonement. We don’t let our spiritual emptiness drive us away from His fullness. The recognition of our bankruptcy propels us to flee *unto* Him, where we may draw once again from the fullness of His grace. And because He is full of grace, when we come to Him in repentance, we find nothing but a sympathetic high priest who loves to forgive. “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. [But] if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” And “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

And we never need to fear that we will exhaust that fullness. You may draw grace from the fullness of that fountain and you will never exhaust His **supply**. Our Savior is more full of grace than you are full of sin! There is more grace in Christ than there is sin in us (cf. Ferguson). There’s more grace in Christ than there is sin in the whole of GraceLife—all 600 of us! There is more grace in Christ than there is in the whole of Grace Church! in the whole of the universal Church! Dear people, there is deeper grace in Christ than there is sin deep inside your heart. Even the deepest sins that we commit—the darkest sins that we keep hidden from the views of others—there is no cavern of sin so deep in your soul that the grace of Christ is not deeper still. If only you come, and draw from this fountain, you will find grace, upon grace, upon grace, upon grace.

It is not as if your drawing from the well of grace that is in Christ somehow diminishes His **supply** of grace in any way, whether for you or for your fellow believers. His fullness of grace is like an ocean, that keeps washing up grace onto the shores of your heart, wave after wave after wave. You have as much chance of exhausting Christ’s grace as gathering up the Pacific Ocean a thimbleful at a time.

And in fact, so far from diminishing Him or bothering Him or annoying Him, when you fly to Him for fresh grace, you magnify His fullness. You glorify Him as the One who is so **sufficient** to **supply** your every need. In Psalm 50, verse 15, God Himself urges His people: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will *honor* Me.” In other words, “Your calling upon Me in the midst of your trouble, honors Me by demonstrating that you believe I am sufficient and strong enough to rescue you when you call!” Isn’t that glorious? Isn’t it wonderful to worship a God who is honored by **supplying** for us what we lack?

John Newton understood this. He wrote a beautiful hymn, called “For Mercies Countless as the Sands.” And he’s asking, “What can I give back to God for all these mercies I receive?” And at first he laments! He says, “Alas! from such a heart as mine, / What can I bring Him forth? / My best is stained and dyed with sin, / My all is nothing worth.” There’s nothing I can give Him to show my thanks and praise, because everything I would give is tainted with sin. But later in the hymn, he recognizes that the best kind of worship from so vile a sinner is to magnify God’s sufficiency by asking Him for more grace. He says, “The best return for one like me, / So wretched and so poor; / Is from His gifts to draw a plea, / And ask Him still for more.” The best praise from unworthy sinners who need so much grace is to go to Him, trusting that His fullness will **supply** even more grace!

O, what a Savior He is! O, what an Excellent Word He is! You may come, and drink, and drink, and drink, and you will never exhaust His supply!¹ If you are hungry, He tells you, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger” (John 6:35). If you are thirsty, He tells you, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me... ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water’ (John 7:37–38), and “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:14). If you are blind, He says to you, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will *not* walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life” (John 8:12). If you are lost, He tells you that He is “the Good Shepherd” (John 10:14), who came “to seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), who leaves “the ninety-nine [sheep] in the open pasture and goes after the one which is lost until he finds it” (Luke 15:4). If you are dead, He says to you as He did to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if He dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.”

Dear people, this Jesus **supplies the grace sufficient for every sinner**. He is more full of joy than you can be full of sorrow. He is more full of light than you can be full of darkness. He is more full of strength than you can be full of weakness. He is more full of spiritual riches than

¹ In these next two paragraphs, I was helped greatly by a sermon from Sinclair Ferguson, for whom thanks to the Lord is due.

you can be full of spiritual poverty. And He is more full of life than you are of death. Everything we could ever wish to have is in Him!

Conclusion

And dear unbeliever: that is true for you as well. Everything you could ever wish to have is wrapped up in the Person of this Excellent Word, the Lord Jesus Christ! Bread for the hungry! Water for the thirsty! Light for the blind! Healing for the sick! Life for the dead!

Your idols—the things you seek satisfaction from instead of Jesus—they do you no good. They are of no profit to your soul. Sure, there may be a certain fleshly pleasure in them, for a moment. But it's *only* for a moment. Your soul wasn't designed to be satisfied by drunkenness, drugs, fornication and adultery, money, power, fame, or any of the rest of the false gods of this world. They don't satisfy! Which is why you have to go back to them again and again, for that next fix! "Everyone who drinks of *this* water *will* thirst again"! But whoever drinks of the water that *Jesus* gives will *never* be thirsty again (John 4:13–14)—because water from the Fountain of living waters satisfies! Your soul *was* designed to be satisfied by Him. And the turmoil and restlessness of your soul is owing to the fact that you're seeking satisfaction everywhere but in the one Person you were created to find it in. It's like filling your gas tank with olive oil and being frustrated that your car won't start! The fifth-century church father, Augustine, put it well when he said, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

And so this morning, dear unbeliever, I call you to come to Christ and find rest for your soul! He Himself calls you in those very terms! "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and '*you will find rest for your souls.*' For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Here is a Savior who has lived a perfectly righteous life—who obeyed the very law of God that you have broken, and by which you are condemned. Here is a Savior who died the very death under the heavy hand of the wrath of God, which you deserved to die. Here is a Savior who has risen from the dead in victory over the sin and death that presently hold you in bondage. Turn away from your sins, and turn away from yourself, and put all your trust for righteousness in Jesus alone. And you will find in Him all the fullness that we have found in Him.

And to my brothers and sisters who have come to Him in repentance and faith, and have found rest under His easy yoke and light burden, fly to Christ every day of your life. Drink from that fountain! Draw from His fullness! And let that fullness so fill your heart with satisfaction and joy and love, that you seek it nowhere else.

I came across a 19th-century hymn by a woman named Ora Rowan, a name I'd never heard of. From what I've been able to find, this is the only hymn that has survived from her pen. It's called *Hast Thou Heard Him, Seen Him, Known Him?*, and it forms a fitting conclusion to what we've spoken of this morning. She writes, "Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him? / Is not thine a captured heart? / Chief among ten thousand own Him; / Joyful, choose the better part. / Captivated by His beauty, / Worthy tribute haste to bring; / Let His peerless worth constrain thee, / Crown Him now unrivaled King." His peerless worth constrains us to crown Him as the unrivaled King and Lord of our lives.

She goes on, "What has stripped the seeming beauty / From the idols of the earth? / Not a sense of right or duty, / But the sight of peerless worth." Do you hear that? It's not the sense of mere "rightness" or "duty" that causes us to turn from our idols. It's not merely the principle that it's wrong for us to worship these idols. It's the sight of the peerless worth of the Excellent Word! It's the sight of the Word that excels all others. She continues, "'Tis that look that melted Peter, / 'Tis that face that Stephen saw, / 'Tis that heart that wept with Mary, / Can alone from idols draw." And then she finishes by calling us to drink from His fullness, and be compelled by that fullness to faithful allegiance to Him: "Draw and win and fill completely, / Till the cup o'erflow the brim; / What have we to do with idols / Who have companied with Him?"