

John 1:14

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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] In John chapter 1 we read in verse 14, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Well we mentioned previously in this service about how the Word is that which is from the very beginning. And we have there in verse 1, in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Now we take these two verses, verse 1 and verse 14 together. The Word is made flesh and the Word was God. The only aspect of God, the only person of the Godhead who has been made flesh is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And therefore we know that verse 1 is a reference to Christ. That it is Him from the very beginning, from all eternity, He has been God the Son.

There was never a time that He didn't exist. There was never a time that He didn't fill the heavens and the earth and all creation and beyond it. Until that time when the Word was made flesh.

[1 : 07] If this is God the Son and God fills all the universe, that there is nowhere that God is not. All the vastness of the planets and the constellations and the stars of space.

He is bigger and greater than all of that because He made it. And if He made it, then it must be of less power and less vastness and less greatness than He Himself is.

Because He will only, in a sense, whatever is created by Him must be less than Him. So He has more power, more greatness, more ability, more vastness and all these things.

But for a time, for a time whilst He dwelt there as the Word is, verse 14 as we will come to it in a week while, it's translated literally tabernacled, spent time amongst us.

God the Son, one out of the three persons of the Trinity, was made flesh. Now that means that having filled the vastness of the heavens and the earth from all eternity, there came a time, as Galatians says, when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.

[2 : 25] It means that one person of the Godhead contracted in His essence of being, of identity, to what size?

Well, when the two elements, the biological elements of the father and the mother come together, and conception takes place in the womb, it is reckoned to be the new little life, the little cell that is created thereby, reckoned to be in the womb approximately the size of a pinhead.

It means that God the Son is contracted when He becomes flesh to the size of a pinhead. And He becomes flesh in the womb of the Virgin.

And like us, there in the womb, the cells begin to multiply, and the recognisable form and shape of the infant begins and grows and feeds there within the womb.

And the infant child is formed and grows there. And we think, oh yes, the miracle of life. And it is a miracle of life. It is an incredible complexity and sophistication that takes place in the conception of a child.

[3 : 44] This is what God undertook Himself. He had created man in His image. Now He had become man. And up until that time, the entire Godhead was pure spirit.

As Jesus said to the woman at the well of Silenia, God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. And up until that time, the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was all just pure spirit.

But from that time forth, human flesh, manhood becomes part of the Godhead. Now that's an incredible thing to get our heads around, that there was a time when the Godhead was just pure spirit, and then there became a time when human flesh became part of the Godhead.

Taking manhood into God, as the Athanasian Creed puts it. So humanity is brought within the Godhead.

Now that's an incredible thing, even to be thinking about, to begin with. But the Word was made flesh. There is this contraction to this, not only this tiny size.

[5 : 01] And you know, I'm sure you all, and most of you will have been parents or grandparents or aunts or uncles, and you've held, you know, little recently born children in your arms. And if you've got toddlers or if you've got older children, you forget just how tiny they are when they are newly born.

Tiny and helpless. God not only consented to become this tiny human flesh, but He consented to become, in His flesh, helpless.

His mother, and maybe His father too, I don't know in that culture in time, His mother certainly had to feed Him, change Him, bathe Him, put His different clothes in Him, look after all His natural bodily functions.

All of that had to be done for God the Son. You know, one hesitates almost even to say it, if it weren't something that we know to be true.

This is what God consented to do. Why would He do this? Why would He so lower Himself and humble Himself? Well, He does it so that He can become that which humanity needs.

[6 : 14] He does that so that He can become the representative human being. And in being human can then fulfil all that humanity failed to fulfil, and then offer it up as a perfect sacrifice on the cross.

This is why He has come. This is what He has come to do. In one sense, He puts great honour upon the human condition.

But in another sense, He does it because humanity, human beings, are those who have fallen. They need somebody to fulfil for them what they couldn't do themselves.

Even from the Garden of Eden, they couldn't do it. There is this contraction, this helplessness for a time. But secondly, there is this huge honour that is put upon the human race.

You know, we read in the Hebrews, for example, that He didn't take on Himself the nature of angels. You know, when He breathed the first begotten into the world, Hebrews chapter 1, He said, He didn't take on Himself the nature of angels.

[7 : 41] That would have been a fine, holy, pure, spiritual thing to do. The holy angels are unsullied by sin. They're not the fallen ones. They haven't become demons. They haven't sinned in any way.

That wouldn't have, you know, diminished in quite so much. But to take upon Himself the form of humanity, by His doing that, He puts honour upon humanity.

Now, when somebody who is great and famous comes to somebody's house or place or whatever, who is not famous, it puts a certain honour on them.

You know, if, like, say, a queen or somebody else is visiting and staying away or a parvour and they're going through the crowds and you're shaking hands, everybody's waving their new flags, and then they stop at somebody and they chat to that person or shake hands with them and then everybody's snapping away with their photographs.

And then whoever it is, the famous person, they spend a few moments talking to everybody, so jealous. Oh, I wish they would talk to me instead of just waving as they go past. But the person they take time with is honoured by their doing that.

[8 : 50] When I was a student many years ago, I had to preach for a time in a country church in Orkney, where they still had in one corner of the old parish church there, they had a whole set of black and white photographs and books and everything, which were commemorating a visit 20 years earlier by the Queen Mother to that church.

And they still had all this record. 20 years later, they were all the photographs and everything. They were so honoured by the fact that Queen Mother had been to visit their church and as if this was putting great honour on it.

That's how they regard it. Now, of course, we can say, well, the Lord comes amongst us every week and we shouldn't put great honour on people. But the point is, they felt honoured by her coming.

Now, think then of humanity. Think of our human flesh. How weak and contracted and limited we are as human beings. This is what God became.

He puts huge honour upon the human body by entering into it, by becoming a human being himself.

[10:01] Now, we know that already the human body has a certain honour. Remember that it is made in God's image. Genesis chapter 1. We all know what it says there, you know, verse 26.

Let us make man in our image after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, over the capital, over all the earth, every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So, God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them. Now, that's no accident.

In his image. However we understand it, there is something of God that is perfectly represented in the two parts of humanity, the male and the female, which together recognize or reflect the image of God.

There is already a huge amount of honour that inputs upon humanity. It is the ultimate work of sophistication. You know, time and again we find, you know, if you think of the huge amount of nutrient, for example, in human blood, that all this that's flowing around your veins, if somebody has lost a huge amount of blood, you know, they're white, they're pale, they are dying, but they get a blood transfusion, the colour begins to flow back into them and they begin to recover strength because blood is in them again.

[11:28] Now, there's blood circulating around the body the whole time, keeping it warm, bringing all the nutrients to every part of it. Think of, you know, think of the less pleasant aspect to it. Think of how, you know, Mijis, they feed on blood.

Likewise, mosquitoes, they feed on blood. All these little parasitic insects, they burrow into the flesh and because there is so much nutrient and richness in blood, they are able to get all that they need just by a tiny little microscopic drop of that blood is all that they need.

Now, think of all the organs and all the design and all the amount of potential storage space in the human brain. How sophisticated all the technology that's in there, if I can use the word technology, you know, if man was to try and recreate that, it would take that to fill a whole warehouse with all the storage space of it and God has got this into this tiny little space and it's all kept in a warm-blooded human body all the way everything pumps and fits together or we've already talked in previous weeks about the irreducible complexity of the human eye and how that works.

All of this, it's all just there in the human being, the human body. Now, this is a miracle of biological sophistication.

The biochemistry of it all, it's just beyond really our knowledge. We find out more and more about humanity and the way it reacts with disease and with different kind of parasites and with microbes and all these other things and the way that it reacts with this body or that body, whatever.

[13:11] We find out more and more, but the more we find out, the more we discover how little we know. It is the ultimate work of sophistication, God's ultimate work of art. You think, well, that's a bit, that's a bit sort of vague, isn't it?

To say, you know, we're God's ultimate work of art. Don't take my words from it. Go back again to Genesis 1 where you see time after time, day after day, when everything that God has made, he says, God saw that it was good and God blessed it.

God saw that it was good. God saw that it was good. It comes to the creation of men and women and it's quite distinct because on the sixth day when he brings forth all the creeping things and creates all of them, we read verse 25, Genesis 1, God saw that it was good.

And then he says, let us make man in our image. And God saw, verse 31, everything he had made, he told it was very good. When he makes that which is his own image, it is very good.

And creation has been crowned. It has been completed. It has been perfected. Now that's part of the honor that is in the human body.

[14:21] But the other thing that we also learn when God becomes a human is that also with his resurrection, which, you know, after he dies and rises again, we learn from that and we'll look at this also a little bit more in the Philippines tonight, is that this human body is intended to be forever.

You think, well, that's not right. No, we die. We get buried and that's the end of it. No, that's not the end of it. That's not even the end of it for our flesh. Because at the resurrection of the last day, our bodies are raised and reunited with our souls, either in heaven or in hell.

There's a resurrection of the just and the unjust. These human bodies are intended, when they are raised and thus perfected, to be able to withstand eternity.

Now that is great news if you happen to be in a blessed eternity, because it means that the body in which you are raised, which is the same body but with different qualities, is that which is united to your soul in glory and that's what you inhabit for all eternity.

Christ is already in glory from hence whence he will come again to judge the quick and the dead. There is already a man in heaven, the man Christ Jesus, in his resurrection body, which will never decay or age or die, is going to be the same for all eternity.

[15:50] That's what our resurrection bodies are going to be like. They're going to be like him and they're going to be perfected as he is perfect and they will withstand in eternity without age or decay or disease or anything like that.

Now the downside, of course, is that if we happen to be in a lost eternity, then our bodies are such that they can withstand any amount of torment, flame, darkness, separation from the Lord, whatever it is, the agony, suffering and torment of hell.

It's not going to be like here where, let's say, you will get burned at the stake, you get tortured to death or whatever, there's only so much the body can take and then it dies, it shuts down.

And at least that's a mercy in the sense that there's only so long you can go on enduring it before the body just shuts down. And that, that doesn't happen with the resurrection body in a lost eternity. The human body is designed by God and intended, as we now know through the resurrection of Christ, we now know the body is intended to be forever.

[17:02] God puts great honor on the human body. It is sacred to them because it is made in his image.

Now that, if you think about it, has frightening, huge consequences. Not only for the ease with which people take the lives of others and the unborn and the brutality with which man treats his fellow man, but when we consider and recognize that the human body is sacred to God and we recognize it is intended to be forever, either in heaven or in hell, the resurrection body is going to be able to last throughout eternity and it will be the same body in which you were raised up, the same body in which you have lived this life, but with different qualities, then we begin to see something of the priority that God has placed upon the body.

He is lowering himself to become confined within it, but in a sense, he is entering into what was always intended to be the pinnacle and crown of his creation.

He is entering into a human body. He is becoming human because God has made one in his image intending to be mankind and to become mankind not only at a point in time, but thereafter for all eternity.

The word was my flesh and dwelt among us. Now we said earlier that this word dwelt means literally tabernacled. It is only for a time that Jesus is with us physically on earth.

[18:54] Now, it's not an exact science, but it is reckoned that he was probably, you know, it says in Luke's account he began his ministry when he was about 30 years of age. He's reckoned to have been about three, three and a half years of his public ministry before his crucifixion and then resurrection and so on.

So let's call it 33, 34 years. Let's, you know, let's have a conservative estimate. Let's say 34 years in total. That's not a long time.

Most of us can probably remember where we were, what we were doing 34 years ago. If you're too young for that, then you're well blessed. But, you know, 34 years ago from now is only, what, 1981? Now, so if Jesus had been born in 1981, this year would have been the year in which he was crucified and rose again and ascended into heaven.

Think, well, it's only a short, you know, span of time, you know, when you consider that he was born in 1981, then, you know, for the first few years he's a child, it means his, his sort of incident in the temple would be, what, about 1993.

[20:00] He'd have been going to the temple and then he'd even sit amongst the teachers and so on and then he'd go back to Nazareth and it would only be, you know, about, what, 2011, 2012 that he would then, then have been sort of beginning his public ministry and now, oh, he's gone.

If I can say that reverently, you know, so it's, it's a short period of time. When we think in terms of Bible times and we think in terms of Bible incidents that we read them and we're familiar with and we go back to the Bible all the time, it's almost as if this life was sort of going on for years and years and years and years as if kind of long lasting and because we lived for maybe 70, 80 years or whatever as if Jesus was always kind of the same age all that time.

If he had been crucified and resurrected and ascended into heaven this year, he would have been born probably about 1981 and all that through the 80s would have been his childhood and that incident in the temple early 90s and everything of his public ministry would not be the early 2000s, it would only really be since 2011, 2012, that sort of time.

It's very, very short. so when it says the word was made flesh and dwelt tabernacled amongst us, we only had him for a short.

It's not a tabernacle, a tent, it's not like a permanent house or palace, it's intended to be temporary, it's intended to be, you go camping sometimes maybe, you take your tent, you pitch it out in a campsite or a hillside or a valley or whatever, you stay for a little while and then you pack up your tent and move on.

[21 : 44] You don't intend to build a house there and stay, you don't intend to be in that place forever, you intend to be a few nights, maybe move on. Jesus came amongst us intending that it would only be for a short time but that short time changed the world, changed everything of God's relationship to man.

the key thing is not so much simply his birth as we know but what he did in that three and a half years and explicitly his death and resurrection thereafter.

How do we know that? Well, if we look at the bit that in the authorised version is in brackets it says, we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

Now, that could be a reference perhaps to his baptism when the Spirit descends like a dove. It's more likely to be the Mount of Transfiguration and maybe the Ascension afterwards.

Peter, remember 2 Peter 1 puts it this way, verse 16, We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but were eyewitnesses of his majesty for he received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

[23 : 13] You might think, well, that could be his baptism, you know. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the Holy Mount. So that means that Peter is making reference not to his baptism, not to Jesus' baptism but to the Mount of Transfiguration where, you know, that Jesus was transfigured before them and Moses and Elijah appeared with them.

We've got it. Matthew 17, for example, they appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with them. His face did shine as the sun, his raiment was white as the light. O Lord, it's good for us to be here, said Peter, if you will, let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold, a voice out of the cloud which said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and were so afraid. Jesus came and touched them and said, arise and be not afraid. And while they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only.

They saw his majesty. They saw, as it were, the curtain of heaven pulled back at touch and the brightness and the glory that shone out of it.

[24 : 30] It's like if you're in a pitch black night in somebody's, in a house and they pull back the curtain, light floods out in the way of standing outside and then the curtain goes back again and it's all dark again.

And it's like that with the Mount of Transfiguration. heaven gets peeled back for a few minutes and the glory that shines out of there says, we saw something of his glory.

We heard the voice from heaven that spoke. Now, of course, this is not that dissimilar to what we have at his baptism. A voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. The spirit of God descending like a dove. Matthew makes reference to that as well. But, in Luke's account of the Transfiguration, this is the glory as of the only God of the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is the occasion that they're speaking about. He says that when Moses and Elijah appeared with them, they appeared in glory and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

[25 : 32] This is the big thing that Luke recognizes. This is what Moses and Elijah are talking to him about. This is bound up with his glory. The glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

We beheld this glory and it is all about his death on the cross. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not running down the birth of Christ. The birth of Christ is glorious. It is phenomenal. Never been done before. God, appearing on the human stage, it is as necessary to the cross and the resurrection as the time in the womb is to the child on the outside. You know, all of us, let's say we live to be 90. Let's speculate. We might live to be 90. Nine decades. Those nine decades, they have to have those nine months in the womb beforehand. We all have to have. None of us is here today unless we have had that nine months in the womb of our mothers beforehand. So likewise, just as that nine months translates for the nine decades, so likewise, all the life of teaching and time and now the glorious eternity of Jesus, this is essential. [26 : 45] It's got to have the birth of Jesus. The word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We've got to have the birth, but the birth has its significance only in the light of what comes afterwards. in one sense, you cannot really, truly celebrate the birth of Jesus. It's not something to celebrate unless you recognize what he has come to do, that he has come to die upon the cross, that he has come to purchase forgiveness, salvation, glory for those who will trust and believe in his name. Now, this is the other point here in the authorised version, I don't know what the other versions, this verse in brackets, we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only do, of the Father. Now this means, as you'll know, I'm sure if you remember your English lessons at school, that a sentence makes sense and the whole thing about brackets is, or parentheses, is that the sentence must make sense even if the parentheses, the brackets, were not there. So you have to be able to read a sentence that's got brackets in it. It's got to make just as much sense even if the brackets are taken out. So verse 14, what we have here is, the word was made flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. It's not the glory as of the only begotten of the Father which is full of grace and truth. It's the word that was made flesh and dwelt among us is full of grace and truth. The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, that's in brackets, that's in parentheses. [28 : 20] It's got to make sense without that. The full of grace and truth is the word was made flesh, it is the baby Jesus. It is Christ coming among us who is full of grace. Now what is grace? Gratence. It is the free gift. He is filled, he is overflowing with the free gift of God. He is the free gift of God personified. Zechariah, we said this with chapter 4 verse 7, Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zechariah, you be, but thou shalt become a plain. He shall bring forth a headstone, the head of the corner, thereof with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it. Now where that is repeated in Zechariah there, where it is repeated, grace, grace, the repetition implies beginning and ending, start and finish, the alpha and the omega. The Bible is grace from start to finish. It is God's free gift of himself that now there has come in the flesh the seed of the woman, not of the man, of the woman, the virgin, who had bruised the serpent's head. [29 : 31] He is full of grace, the free gift of God. Now remember what it says in Romans, the wage to the sinner's death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And this is from all eternity he has been this. From all eternity he has intended this. And from all eternity he has intended that his children should be with him in glory. Now remember what Paul writes in the Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, free gift, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. So from all eternity, from before the foundation of the world, not only did God intend to come in the flesh before the foundation of the world, but before the foundation of the world he had chosen in him every single soul who would in the fullness of time believe and accept Christ, who would be elect according to his grace. And just as he himself became flesh in the fullness of time, as it says in Galatians, when the fullness of time has come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law. [31 : 02] So likewise, it means that every single one who's a believer, a born again believer in Christ, it means that there was a set time for them too. When each one of them should become flesh in the womb of their mother, be born, be brought forth into the world of whether their life was going to be long or short, there was a set time for them who were chosen from all eternity.

The honor that he is putting on redeemed humanity, the honor that he is putting on the human body, his highest work of creation, he tabernacled for amongst us, amongst us, dwelt with us for a time full of grace, the free gift of God and full of truth.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. He also said, remember, when he prayed for his disciples, John 17, verse 17, sanctify them through thy truth.

Thine word is truth. And who is the word? In the beginning was the word. The word is with God, the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him. Without him was not anything made that was made. The word was made flesh. And who have the last? Jesus is the word of God, the truth of God, personified.

[32 : 25] In other words, as he himself is the son, he that hath seen, he hath seen the Father. If you want to know what God is like, this is where you look. You look to Jesus, full of grace, the free gift of God, full of truth, the revealed declaration of God.

This is what this kind of year is about. God making himself known, revealing himself to mankind, coming in their form, humanity with all its limitations and all its helplessness, having to be looked after by others, having to be cared for, being contracted, not able to fill the heavens and the earth for now.

in this contraction, in this weakness, and yet this perfect biological sophistication, the very crown of creation, the human body, God becomes flesh.

The free gift, grace, and truth. This is what it's all about. This is the most true thing in all the world. Is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, day to day, and forever. He is full of that truth. He is that truth personified.

[33 : 47] And you may depend upon it, and believe upon it, and commit to it, because it is far more true in its depth, in its weight, in its power, in its eternity, than any other so-called truth in this world.

This is the ultimate truth. It is full of truth. And it is full of grace. God's free gift. Gratis.

Grace. His gift to us. If you are going to be celebrating this week, then remember what you are celebrating for.

And remember why it is important. And remember who it is all about. And what he has done for sinners like us.

You may depend upon it. You may commit to it. And you must believe it. For it is the truth of God in the flesh.

[34 : 54] May the Lord bless to us these few thoughts. Let us pray. Let us pray. We are not yet. We are not yet. We'll get it. We'll be right back. With those of whom we hang in the flesh, and we shall see the Lord bless to you again next week.

We are going to go police on fire. This is hoping that may not cause many things so that we exjet someincoln in nature. To be secure in support, As long as possible. We just have to record our ■■■ando estado, so thatyour car is not already done.

And not good enough. We change the Spirit. Maybe then let me know. Happy Progress. Church on fire is early, and stay at home and happen new things. Quicker and bad■■ are now but it sets on fire.