

Read also Proverbs 8:22-36

Have you ever introduced someone who is famous or important? Once I introduced the president of Fuller Seminary, Dr. Rich Mouw. I thought, maybe I should go to the library and check out all the books he's written, piling them on the podium – but then you wouldn't be able to see him. Or, I could list all the awards and accomplishments he has achieved. But that would take forever! When someone does a lot with their life, it is a challenge to convey the essence of their work.

Another time as an employee in their office, I spoke on behalf of the Executive Offices of the company I worked for. So I told the story of the founders, who took the airline from a concept drawn on the back of a cocktail napkin to a 35,000 employee company. It was an incredible achievement.

So, while presidents and the founders of this company are remarkable in their own right, they are inextricably tied to what they have done.

What if you were introducing Jesus Christ himself? Would you say, He's tall, intelligent, and has gorgeous eyes? Probably not. You would have to talk about what He does to capture the essence of who He is.

John, the writer of this gospel, knew Jesus personally. You could say his life wholly changed direction because of knowing this man Jesus. He first met Jesus on the seashore while running his fishing business. He left his family and business to follow Jesus, which he did for the rest of Jesus' earthly life to His death, and then His resurrection. John knew Jesus quite well. But I bet he pondered how to introduce Him.

John said this about Jesus, "He did so many things that if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25).

Jesus was so unusual, so magnificent, how do you explain Him?

John wrote more than one book about Jesus. He was so impressed, so amazed, that he wanted to help others understand who He is and what He has done. You read his books today. There are five of them in the New Testament, and when you consider the fact that they are 2,000 years old, that kind of explains the burden of introducing Jesus.

In one of John's books he said, "We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. *He is the Word of life.* This one *who is life itself* was revealed to us, and *we have seen him!* And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us" (1 Jn 1:1-2).

That's an amazing testimony. John and his brother James and his friends saw and touched Jesus. Just as I worked day after day in the offices of the founders of an airline, and escorted the president of Fuller Seminary to a chapel service, chatting with him so that I could introduce him, John lived and worked alongside Jesus Christ every day. I may be able to say some insightful things about these people but John said *Jesus is the Word of life.*

You heard the reading from Proverbs 8, which is almost like the personal voice of Jesus talking about His relationship with God in the beginning. “Jesus was there beside Him, like a master worker. Jesus was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always.” (v. 30)

Jesus lived in incredible love, which He then extends to us. To believe, John says, is to live in that love. John invites us to enter into that love.

John couldn't stop talking about it. “You need to know this guy. He is someone special, I know Him.” Let me see if I can possibly convey Him to you.

He begins his gospel: READ John 1:1-5

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

When John used the phrase, “in the beginning” what does it remind you of? Rings a bell, does it not?

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light (Gen 1:1-3).

The Word – and Jesus is the Word – gave life to everything . . . and HIS life brought light to everyone.

This is what John learned as he lived his life in the company of Jesus.

Are you experiencing that same reality by walking with Jesus? How closely do you walk with Him? Close enough to find some of that light? Experience that love?

God intended us to live in love with Him from the beginning. Genesis means, “in the beginning.” John went there to describe Jesus – “in the beginning,” he said. His hearers knew the story. We know the story. Without God, it is a story of woe. But God did not leave you or me here alone; to fend for ourselves; to be overcome by darkness. God had a better plan.

The choir sang the story: (excerpts)

*The first thing which I do relate
Is that God did man create . . .*

*Then, after this, 'twas God's own choice
To place them both in Paradise,
There to remain, from evil free,
Except they ate of such a tree.*

*But they did eat, which was a sin,
And thus their ruin did begin.*

*Ruined themselves, both you and me,
And all of their posterity.*

*Thus we were heirs to endless woes,
Till God the Lord did interpose,
And so a promise soon did run,
That he would redeem us by his Son . . .*

John said, “Jesus is the plan. He was there in the beginning.” Isn’t that thrilling? John said, *that is why there is no other way*. The only way to God is through Jesus. God had it all figured out – just what we would need.

John saw it this way:

“We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy” (1 Jn 1:3-4).

How generous. In Proverbs 8, Jesus says, “I was daily rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.” (v. 31) C. S. Lewis describes a relationship with God as a dance. Father, Son, and Spirit love one another and invite you into the dance. This is exhilarating and joyful. Why? Jesus began and sustains the world; it is possible to know the one who gives LIFE ITSELF.

But then John tells us of a problem. READ John 1:9-11:

“The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.”

They didn’t recognize him that he is Creator of all and sustainer of everything.

They did not accept the fact that he is Lord of the ages.

A pastor named Will Willimon received a visit from a congregant. The man told him that late one evening after a night of poker with friends, he had a stunning, vivid vision of Jesus’ presence right there with him. He couldn’t deny it. It shook him up – yet he did not tell anyone for TEN years. His pastor asked him, why not? Was he embarrassed or afraid others would mock him? “No,” he explained, “the reason why I told no one was I was too afraid that it was true. And if it’s true that Jesus was really real, that he had come to me personally, I’d have to change my whole life. I’d have to become some kind of radical or something.”¹

Do you think it’s radical to believe in Jesus; that it warrants your changing your whole life? It is! Certainly that causes tension. But if it can actually change our lives, it’s GOOD NEWS, not bad.

John says,

¹William Willimon, *Undone by Easter* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 40.

“But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

Those verses tell us being a disciple of Jesus has immense implications.

It tells you that you have the power of Jesus in your life, the power so strong it creates and sustains.

Jesus’ power is so solid it can redeem anything, no matter how bad it may seem.

The modern world often removes God as the agency in life that makes things happen, preferring to see life as evolving on its own. God is seen as distant, uninvolved, lacking in power. But this is not the God of the Bible. This is not the Jesus John introduces here. In Him, God keeps moving, talking, relating from the beginning up until now. And if this God moves, we must respond.

John responded. John’s life was filled with love and power and hope as a result. Will you respond? It may be radical, but the love is sure.

In the beginning . . . was Jesus.

AMEN