

Summer Communion 2025 - Evening Service

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Preacher: Rev. Gordon Matheson

[0 : 00] Would you turn with me please in your Bibles just now back to John's Gospel, chapter 1. We're going to read again at verse 14.

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

Amen. Let's just bow our heads in prayer to God. Heavenly Father, as we come to You for a short time just now, O Lord, we ask and pray Your blessing upon the Word of truth as we seek to study it together.

We thank You that tonight we come to worship a triune God, a God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we thank You that in our salvation these persons are active and engaged.

And we want tonight, Lord, to see the glory of Jesus. The glory that He has because He is the only Son from the Father.

[1 : 15] But a glory that we can only see if the Spirit of truth reveals Him to us. And so we want to pray tonight for the Holy Spirit to work in us.

We need our hearts opened to receive. We need our minds made able to receive the Holy Spirit and His ways and His teaching.

And so we pray that tonight we would indeed be receptive to the Spirit's speech. To the Spirit's action.

And that by the Spirit of power and truth, we would know Your salvation. Help us in this, we ask, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

So, this weekend, my theme for us has been seeing Jesus. We were looking last night at the idea of how we see Jesus as we are looking in self-examination for a reason and reasons for us to be able to go on in His service.

[2 : 33] How can we have even the confidence to come to the Lord's table? And we saw that the reason for that is nothing in ourselves. It's not as if we are exceedingly good as Christians, as servants of God.

But that rather, we thrive as Christians when we see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus Himself. And the two examples we were thinking about were the two men who were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

How Moses had been transformed in bringing the good news of the law to the children of Israel.

The good news of God's deliverance to them when they were in slavery in Egypt.

And brought them to deliverance through that. And how Moses himself was a flawed man who needed to see God in order to be used powerfully. The other person that we were looking at last night was Elijah who was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Also, again, the pinnacle of the work of the prophets calling the children of Israel back to God and to truth and fidelity with Him.

[3 : 40] And we saw how he too was a man who was characterized by weakness. And yet, when he saw God, he was encouraged.

And he needed that refreshing. He needed that awakening to the reality of who God is. Then this morning we were thinking, again, just to recap, we were thinking about seeing Jesus clearly and how He speaks Himself.

How He speaks clearly of the finished work. And how that's what we need to see clearly. That the work is truly finished for all that He has done. And for all of the blessing that we would receive because of it.

I want this evening to go back to the beginning of John's Gospel. And think about how all of this kind of fits together in the present. It's all good and well to say, well, we're thinking about the

transfiguration of Jesus.

That was something that happened visibly to the disciples. And you might be saying, well, that's how John, like he writes in this verse, we have seen His glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father. You could be thinking and saying, well, John was there on the Mount of Transfiguration.

[4 : 46] He saw Jesus glorified. You know, and just in that instant that they were there on the mountain, he saw the radiance of Jesus shining through.

As the Gospels tell us, it was almost as if His garments had been bleached whiter than it was ever possible to bleach anything in the whole world. There was just a brilliance about Him that John says He has seen.

We have seen His glory. But I would put it to you tonight that that is not what John was referring back to. John is talking about a different experience.

And the reason we can say that is because John, as he opens his Gospel by talking about seeing the glory of Jesus, he ends his Gospel on the same note. He ends his Gospel with a reminder about what the whole purpose of his Gospel is.

That we might see Jesus. That we might hear of Him. That we would see Him not just with our eyes physically, but that we would see Him with our spirit, with our soul, with our hearts.

[5 : 49] And that we might believe in His name. And John's purpose in writing the Gospel is that we would believe in Jesus.

Now, on the one hand, we can say, well, as Jesus Himself said, blessed are you who have seen because you believe. How much more blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

I suppose that's where we are tonight. How do we see without seeing? How can we say we have seen Jesus? Even in something as simple as the Lord's table, where we have these tangible signs, these physical things that we can handle, bread and wine.

But can we really say that we've seen Jesus? So how does this all work? What happens that we can see Jesus and His glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth?

I think what we need to grasp is that what we're talking about here is the work of the Trinity. I mentioned this this morning, that before the world ever began, part of the finished work of Jesus at the cross is finishing the covenant that He had with the Father.

[7 : 06] So before the world was ever made, God the Son had agreed with the Father that the covenant would be fulfilled, that He would come and die in the place of sinners.

And that experience of Jesus at the cross is the pinnacle of this glory revealing, the revealing of the glory that He has with the Father.

And the Father is the one clearly who sends, and the Father is the one whose justice as a judge needs to be dealt with.

Before we get lost in that and trapped there, we need to stop and just remember what is the primary motivation of God in this. It is not simply God being satisfied that His justice is dealt with. The primary motivation of God in all of this is His love.

God loved us, John 3, 16, that He sent His Son into the world to save us. So the overriding character and motivation of our God in all of this is not somehow dealing with an academic thing of justice that needs to be served.

[8 : 13] It is to love His rebellious creatures and to show abundant mercy to them. So the character of God is one of love. And the Father lovingly sends the Son into the world to die in the place of sinners.

The Son lovingly comes to endure these things. But the question for us remains, how do we see it? And this tonight is where the third person of the Trinity comes into this work of salvation.

The Holy Spirit who comes. And it's interesting, in John's Gospel, the word that unites the Holy Spirit to this verse that we're looking at is the title, the name given to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth.

That the Spirit of Truth comes, and it's by the Spirit's work that we are able to see Jesus tonight. So I want to look tonight at that work of these three individual characters, the persons of God, the Trinity, and to see just a little snapshot of their work in our salvation so that we will be able to see Jesus.

The first of these, we've already labored on some of this over the weekend as we've looked at this, that we read this verse here, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[9 : 38] I think I was preaching on this passage before with you last year, and we noticed then that the way John records for us here, the way John's introduction works, he's referring to the writings of a Greek philosopher and writer called Heraclitus.

And Heraclitus was quite a popular philosopher around Ephesus where John had been ministering, and he wrote of this thing that he called the logos, the word that somehow brings order out of the chaos of the cosmos.

And John takes that idea that was prevalent in the community in Ephesus where he had been ministering for many years as the pastor, and he fills that with a spiritual significance which is entirely true, you know, theologically, that Jesus, God the Son, is the Word who brings order into all of the things that we see, the Word who has made flesh.

And we've seen that. It's by the authority of Jesus, we know from the New Testament, that all things are created and all things are made. It's by the authority of Jesus that salvation comes to us.

It's by the authority of Jesus that the church today is sustained because today Jesus is still active. He's still actually working on our salvation.

[11 : 01] That might seem a strange thing to us when we think that he's already said it's finished. Well, yes. But he has an ongoing role. Today he's seated at the right hand of the Father. He is the Lamb who was slain in the midst of the throne.

And there is the Lamb who was slain. He is the one who receives. Remember, as John tells us in the Revelation, he receives the book, the scroll, of the history and the story of this world.

And John's dismayed because it seems as if no one's in control. It seems as if no one can unlock the scrolls that bind the history of this world in its closed form, that nobody therefore has authority over it.

Nobody can see what's written there until the Lamb in the midst of the throne is found to be worthy. That Jesus today is ruling over all things.

That he's exercising that authority as the dust of this earth seated upon the throne of God. This is our King then, the one who is today risen in that glorious authority over all things.

[12 : 11] And so we know that he has been made, as John says here, he has made flesh and he has dwelt among us. That's a wonderful thought. That our Savior is not someone far from us.

He's not someone alien and foreign to our experience. The Savior that we are invited to see is one of us. He was human.

As we saw this morning, he thirsted. He experienced thirst and sorrow and pain in his life. And we are able to come to him as a great high priest who has experienced these things and understands and empathizes with God's people in all that they have experienced as they've gone on.

But he's also dwelt with us. And this is where, I think, we start to see some of the great purpose of God unfolding in what it is that we're invited to see in Jesus.

We're invited to see someone who wants to come and be with us. And when John writes here that we have seen the glory of Jesus who came and dwelt among us, he's not just talking about what has happened in the moments of the incarnation that he's writing about in the past tense of the years in which Jesus walked in this world, the three years or so of his public ministry amongst them.

[13 : 46] The dwelling of the Word made flesh among God's people, among us, is not finished. It's not over.

And you see that running throughout John's Gospel. Jesus comes again and again to talk about the future, to talk about what that future is going to be like. His high priestly prayer, for example, in John 17, he's talking about us being with him and seeing him in the future.

It's the same in John 8 when he's talking to the disciples about the distress in the face of the reality of death. But he says, even if I go, I'm going to prepare a place for you.

And if I've prepared a place for you, I will come again to bring you to be with me where I am. The goal of Christ's coming, the goal of God's salvation towards us, is to restore and better and improve upon the harmony that was there right at the beginning of the story in the book of Genesis, where God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden.

But his reason for doing so was not just to leave them alone to themselves, to enjoy one another's company, but was that he might come amongst them, walk with them in the cool of the day, fellowship with them, interact with his creatures and delight in them and share with them his love and his care and his attention to them.

[15 : 15] That is the purpose that we're moving towards. That's the goal of our salvation that will one day be revealed in the new heavens and the new earth, where Christ returns and breaks through into the reality of this world, where all things will be made new, where there will be this transformation of all things that have been broken and marred because of sin.

All of it restored and perfected in the new heavens and the new earth. And the chief character of that will be the presence of God among his people.

That God's radiance is going to shine there and we will see him and we will be with him. The Son, God the Son, became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we are tonight invited to see the wonder of that. And having begun to see it in this world, having begun to taste of the radiance and the brilliance of his salvation and having begun to taste the beauty of his fellowship and his company and have begun to experience just a little of his power in delivering us, all of the times where as Christians we've cried out to him to help us.

There is more to come in the lives of God's people because we will be with him forever in the glorious future that he has prepared.

[16 : 45] There is secondly the work of the Father. The Father, it's pretty clear in this passage, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Now this is an incredible little statement that the Father is showing us something in and through the work of the Son.

The coming of Jesus into the world is not an isolated event. It is the climax of a series of God's self-revelation to us which climaxes in the coming of his Son.

And you see that in different places running throughout the Old Testament, the idea of the glory of God being revealed to the children of Israel. It runs throughout it.

We see something of the majesty of God in the things he has done. It begins actually all the way back in Genesis. Tonight, I'm speaking with the youth fellowship tonight after the service.

[17 : 54] And one of the questions that the kids have asked me to give an answer to is how old is Jesus. And that's a really interesting question.

We'll unpack it a wee bit. I don't want to give away too much for the ones who are here. So, I wouldn't normally say this, but you could switch off your ears for just a second. But, the marvel of this is that right from the very beginning of creation, the first thing that God made was not the earth itself.

the way that's described in Genesis chapter 1, the story of creation, that's described as almost being pre-existing. The earth was without form and void.

It's an interesting expression in Hebrew, *tohu wabohu*. It's just chaotic. And it's into that chaos that God speaks and says, let there be light. And so, God's speech in a sense is the word of the sun that says, let there be light and order begins to be formed.

There's a division between light and darkness, day and night. And light begins to shine. But it's not until day 4 that God creates the sun.

[19 : 04] So you're left thinking, well, where's the light shining from? And the only answer that actually works is that the light that's shining is the radiance of God himself. That the first thing that's shone into the nascent creation of this world was the radiance of God.

And the glory of God and the story of the light and the radiance of God shining throughout the Old Testament thereafter, whenever God's light shines, it's always like that.

A brilliant radiance that shines out towards the people. And it brings order to it. you've got the pillar of fire, for example, when the children of Israel are leaving Egypt.

The pillar of fire that moves to defend them from the pursuing Egyptians. The pillar of fire that moves from place to place as they're to move their camp.

The pillar of fire that gives leadership and direction to them. The pillar of fire that shines at night, that radiates light and comfort and safety over the camp of this displaced people.

[20 : 18] As they wander through the desert towards Mount Sinai. You've got God's character displayed in the way that light acts, don't you? You see the loving character of God as he defends his people, as he ministers to them, as he shows them the way, as he lightens their lives.

You see the majesty of God again in the light and the glory of God that descends on Mount Sinai when God speaks to the people once they arrive there. There's that terrifying experience of the cloud of fire and lightning that engulfs Mount Sinai.

And God speaks to them and gives them the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. And again, the people are quaking in terror because all of a sudden they have seen in the light and the glory of God that was revealed, they have seen just what he is like, an awesome God.

And they recognize their own sin and their unworthiness and they say, Moses, don't ever let him speak to us like that again. So moved are they by the presence of the light and the radiance of God. You see the same thing coming again in the tabernacle. Once the tabernacle is consecrated, the glory of God descends upon the holy of holies. And so much so is the radiance of that that actually only once a year is the high priest able to go in to that presence of God and the holy of holies to sprinkle blood over the mercy seat.

[21 : 43] And the radiance and the glory of God is again revealed there. But it's revealed in a place of reconciliation. The glory of God that's revealed in the light of the Shekinah glory is a light that occupies a place of salvation for God's people.

A place where they can say there is a blood offering that has covered us, that delivers us, that secures us. And instead of being terrified of God, we can trust in Him and know Him. and experience His presence. You have that imagery of God's holiness being a consuming fire that runs throughout the Old Testament and into the New.

And what we're seeing there is something of the glory of our God, something of the glory of God the Father present now in the ministry of Jesus.

God is a And the reason we have to think about that and unpack that a bit more is simply to ask this, what does John mean when he talks about having seen the glory of God, the glory is of the only Son from the Father?

[22 : 57] God? And the answer is simply this, to know our God, to know what He is like, to understand His character, to appreciate what a kind of God it is that we worship.

We have to look at Jesus because Jesus is the one who shows us our God. Jesus shows us the Father.

It's one of the recurring themes of John's Gospel. You can't know the Father if you don't know me. You can't come to the Father unless you come through me. There's no route to be with the Father unless you come through me.

So Jesus is the one who shows us intimately and perfectly what the Father is like. God. And I wonder tonight if that's what you see in God.

I mean, what is your perception of God like tonight? What do you think He's like? A lot of people, if people acknowledge there's a God at all, a lot of people will say God is hostile.

[24 : 09] He's harsh. He's judgmental. He's got something against me. A lot of people, if they acknowledge there's a God at all, will speak of Him in terms of fear, disrespect.

They might ask questions and say, well, if God is such a loving God, then why does He allow so much suffering? Why does He allow babies to die, for example? Why does He allow entire communities to experience starvation and devastation?

Why does He allow so much suffering to take place? He cannot possibly be a loving God. As if in our own wisdom, we are right to question Him. And yet, instead of these things, the Bible invites us to see Him in the face of Jesus.

And to see in Jesus one who wants to take away suffering. To see in Jesus one who wants to take away pain, who wants to deliver people from their lostness and their darkness.

This is our God. This is the character of God. God has sent us to you. And so tonight, if you want to know salvation, if you tonight want to be saved, and you want to have confidence about how that salvation can come, and how that salvation can be yours, and how you can know you have it, then the Father has sent someone to show you where it's found.

[25 : 41] God has sent us to us. And His Son has come to reveal us, to us, the grace and the love of God the Father.

That's why John here says, we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace.

grace. Tonight, what we need most of all, what we need the highest, need the deepest longing of our hearts, the thing that makes the biggest difference to us in every aspect of our lives, is simply to experience the grace of God.

To experience for ourselves firsthand the outpouring of God's grace towards undeserving sinners.

The riches of His love, the promise of forgiveness, the hope of everlasting life, and this, the promise of a place, an undeserved place where we will go and be with Him and stay with Him and know Him forevermore.

[27 : 02] The Father wants to pour grace abundantly upon us.

He wants to pour out His gifts upon us. That's what grace is, the free gift of God. And He has said the place to receive it is in seeing and savoring Jesus for yourselves.

And so will you not come to Jesus tonight and receive grace in abundance? And finally, though, I'm saying that the Holy Spirit is present in all of this as well.

And what's interesting as you read this is you wonder, well, how do we see this? What reveals this to us? I mean, where does this happen? And in John's gospel, the theme that comes out is that the Holy Spirit is working to do revelation.

The Holy Spirit is the one who comes and brings the grace of God into the experience of His people. The Holy Spirit is the one who works in God's people, the one who works in sinners, ultimately, to transform our vision and ability to see so that we will see Him.

[28 : 34] And one of the names that Jesus gives the Holy Spirit is this name, the Spirit of Truth.

You see it in John 14, for example, John 15, John 16, sequence of chapters where Jesus is talking about the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people.

And what's really fascinating in these passages is that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth that comes, is the one who brings what Jesus is talking about to Nicodemus, brings the new birth. He's the one who makes it possible for us to be regenerated.

That's what the new birth means. New life coming into the experience of men and women. And tonight, that's what the Holy Spirit does in speaking to us and in coming into our lives and into our experience.

You see it in, like I was saying there, John 14. If you want to take a note of these, you can, but John 14, verse 17. There, we read these words.

We'll read from verse 15. If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father, and he will give another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of the truth, whom the world cannot receive, and neither sees him nor knows him.

[29 : 48] You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. See, again, the Holy Spirit is the one who comes into the lives of believers, brings that same thing that John has talked about in his introduction, the dwelling of God among his people.

It was there physically in Jesus coming into the world, and it'll be there forevermore in our presence with him in the new heavens and the new earth. But today, now, here, at this moment, if you're a believer, the Holy Spirit dwells within you.

The Holy Spirit is the one who is the seed of God, implanted in your life, in your heart, in your soul, and brings forth the abundance of new life there.

And Jesus goes on into the next chapter in John 15, verse 26. We read there that the helper, when he comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me, and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning.

The Spirit is the one who bears witness. The Spirit is the one who shows us. The Spirit is the one who brings that revelation to us.

[31 : 10] And when we think about it like this, you know, we've seen over this weekend the work of the Father in loving his people and sending his Son to die for them.

We've seen the work of Jesus and how he cries out, it is finished, at the cross. The work of the Holy Spirit is a work of, if you can think of it this way, it's a work of illumination. The Holy Spirit doesn't draw attention to himself.

He draws attention to Jesus. It's like when, you know, in the winter, when you're standing down in the harbor in Stornoway, and you look up over the harbor towards the castle. And the castle is floodlit.

It's bright. It's radiant. It's clear. And this is the Holy Spirit shining, making clear the work of God, making clear the person of Jesus, revealing to us that glory was of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The last passage is in John 16, where we read there, verse 13. I still have many things Jesus says to tell you, but you cannot bear them now.

[32 : 24] But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into the truth. For he doesn't speak in his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

You know, he will glorify Jesus by making him known to us, by enlightening us in the truth, enabling us to grasp these things.

And so when we read in that verse, in John 1, verse 14, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory. We can say that too. Because we have seen Jesus through the Spirit's revealing.

You know, it's amazing to think that this morning that's what the Holy Spirit was doing as we partook of the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit was helping us this morning to see Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is the one who's helping us to see that Jesus is full of grace and full as well of truth.

[33 : 32] Full of faithfulness, full of reliability, full of someone that we can be confident in for all of our future and for all that is in store.

And so tonight, I wonder, will you close in with this triune God's salvation that comes to us through Jesus Christ?

The love of God made known to us and the fellowship and experience of the Holy Spirit uniting us to Christ and enabling us to enjoy God's dwelling with his people and to savor that and to understand and grasp more and more of it.

Let's pray to him just now. God, we long to know the presence of God the Father and the presence of the Son and the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

We look forward to a day when that presence will not be filtered through the cloudy eyes of sin in this world but where instead we will see clearly.

[34 : 54] And for now, we need to be carried on our way. We need to be encouraged to go on, to move forward, to have confidence in how we do that. And so we pray just now that our experience would be that of the Spirit enlightening us and guiding us in the fullness of the truth that we would truly see Jesus today in our lives and in our experience.

And so tonight, Lord, I pray for anyone here who does not yet know him as their Savior, who does not know Jesus as the one who died to carry away their sin. Would you help them to look to Jesus just now, to cry out to him for mercy, and to long for his revealing to them all of the things of truth. Open our hearts, we pray. Refresh us and encourage us as we go. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing in conclusion in Psalm 98.

This is again in Sing Psalms, page 129. Sorry, page 129. We're going to sing verses 1 to 3, so four stanzas.

So sing a new song to the Lord for wonders he has done. His right hand and his holy arm the victory have won. The Lord declared his saving work and made it to be known to all the nations of the world his righteousness is shown.

[36 : 34] And so on. This is a psalm that celebrates the salvation that Christ has brought and that he still brings his steadfast love and faithfulness. That's his grace and his truth.

These same words that we're thinking about in that verse that he has remembered well and he brings these to us, the covenant that he has fulfilled and bonded himself to us through. So let's stand and sing these verses in conclusion.

Sing a new song to the Lord. O sing a new song to the Lord for wonders he has done.

His right hand and his holy arm the victory have won.

The Lord declared his saving work and made it to be known to all the nations of the world his righteousness his shown.

[38 : 03] His steadfast love and faithfulness he has remembered well.

The covenant he made with them the house of Israel Israel and all the nations of the earth have seen what God has done.

Our God who brings deliver us by his right hand alone.

I was asked to intimate that the Kirk session will close just now with the benediction at the end of the communion season. Now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with each one of you now and always.

Amen.