

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: Lost and Found

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Scripture: John 1:1-4, 10-12, 14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Transcript:

Good morning, BelPres. It's so good to be with you all, and to worship online together. My name is John Kim, and I'm also one of the mission pastors here on staff.

Now, how many of you guys were able to watch our Christmas Eve services? What was your favorite part? Mine was Oh Holy Night. I just want to say thanks to Brennan and to Jake and all the worship teams. You guys just rock. It was such a meaningful evening. I'm not crying, you're crying.

So Father, only you can come into our lives and speak grace and truth. Would you change us to be more like your son, Jesus, in every way. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Now, some of you know, I have some crazy growing up stories and I've got another one for you. Now, there's a disclaimer, okay? Things I did as a kid, parents, you can use me as an example of what not to do, okay?

Now, when I was 10 years old, and this was back in the '80s, my parents moved into a new suburb in Dallas, Texas. And I remember that our house was one of the very first homes built in the area. And I was so excited to go explore and find what I can. And as a latchkey kid, my parents left me home for hours, and one morning I said to myself, "I am going to explore the land." I got my backpack. I packed some chips. I grabbed some quarters and I just started off on my bike.

Now, I wasn't the smartest cookie in the bunch. So I thought if I would just go straight down the street and just keep going in one direction, I could find my way back home. Boy was I wrong. I didn't realize that streets don't just go in one direction, in a straight line. I had to take left turns and right turns. But I didn't care, I was on a journey. And I was so excited, and I just rode and rode.

Now, along the way, I found a 7-Eleven. I bought some gum, a comic book, and I just kept going. I didn't care that I had to cross a highway. I almost died, by the way, doing that. I found a park to explore. I wasn't scared at all until I realized that it started to get dark.

I was out all day riding in one direction, I thought. And it was getting darker by the minute. And I started to ride my bike back in the direction I thought where my home was. And I rode faster and faster, taking left turns and right turns, trying to beat the sun going down. But soon enough it was pitch dark. And I couldn't recognize any streets or signs or landmarks, I was pretty sure I was going in the complete wrong direction.

I was completely lost. And I was a scared ten-year-old boy. And I just stopped and I sat on the sidewalk with my hands over my head saying over and over, "I'm lost. I am lost."

Now, there've been moments during the pandemic I have felt lost. Not being able to see my aging dad has been very difficult. My wife not being able to visit and see her mom who lives on the East Coast. My closest cousin, her husband passed away from cancer during COVID, and they have three of the most beautiful young boys. I couldn't be there to support our family.

Maybe you feel lost, too. Maybe you've lost loved ones during this time, or lost your job, or maybe peer relationships have broken down and nothing is going right for you. Maybe your grades in school are just failing. And maybe your mental health makes it a struggle just to wake up each and every morning. Or maybe you feel lost because there are things in your life that are poisoning your soul. Whether that is feeding an addiction, pornography, an adulterous relationship, or your love for money and desire for success have made it impossible for you to find your way back.

So let me encourage you, and share how we can find our way back. That being lost is only temporary. God's not finished with you yet. And that the Bible gives us this supernatural grace and truth that is found in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one who finds us when we're lost. He finds, he brings healing and forgiveness when we have hurts and brokenness. And restores us to living an overflowing life full of God's presence, purpose, and hope.

Take a look at today's texts coming from the gospel of John chapter one, verse 14. It says this, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." In just this one verse, it's packed full of meaning, of who Jesus is and why we can trust him with our lives when we're lost.

The first reason we can trust Jesus with our lives is because he is fully God and fully man. You have to go back early in the passage and see where John is taking us. In verse one it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He was with God in the beginning. Now, John is making the connection that the Jesus of Nazareth was not just a prophet, not just a rabbi or a son of a carpenter. But God who became flesh, God who became man, Word becoming flesh.

This is the most profound truth of all. That's why we celebrate Christmas. Not because of all the fanfare, and the stable, and the manger, and the shepherds, and the wise men, and the gifts. They're all part of the birth of Jesus, but the real story is that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. So when John uses word to describe the second person of the Trinity, he is using a term that most Jewish and Gentile readers would have known. And the Greek word in this passage is translated as logos. And it was common both in Greek philosophy and in Jewish thought.

In the old Testament, the word of God is often personified as an instrument of God's will and it is often seen as wisdom persona fide, as you see in the Psalms and the book of Proverbs. So the Jewish readers by introducing Jesus as word, John is pointing them back to the Old Testament where the logos or the word of God is the personification of God's revelation. And in the Greek philosophy, the term logos was used to describe the intermediate agency by which God created material things and communicated them to us. For Greek readers, logos was thought of as a bridge between a transcendent God and the material universe. So you see the true logos of God in Jesus Christ. The living word of God. Fully God and yet fully man who came to reveal God to us.

Now, Christmas for many of us are images of nativity scenes and Christmas trees and presents. But can I just, for a moment, say that Jesus is so much more than that. That the God of the universe, the God who created over 400 billion stars in our galaxy. And that's just in our galaxy. The God who created the heavens and the earth, who led the Israelites as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. That that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ.

So if you feel lost and you think you can't find your way back, and if you feel like your situation is too difficult to bear and you have no hope for a solution, do you know that God became man? That Jesus is not just a feel good story. Jesus is God. His power is complete over everything. No miracle is too big. No sickness is too fatal. No sin is too far gone. Jesus became man so that he could become the savior of the world. That whoever believes in him shall not perish, but find and have everlasting life.

Now, the second reason we can trust Jesus is because he is always close to us. Look at verse 14 again, the Word made his dwelling among us. The word dwelling can be translated as tabernacle or to pitch a tent. We see the tabernacle in the Old Testament, which was a portable dwelling place of Yahweh as the Israelites traveled through the wilderness toward the promised land. It was also called the tent of meeting, because this was a divinely appointed meeting place between God and his people. And in the same way, but in a much more deeper sense, Jesus is the place where we meet God.

I love Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this verse in *The Message*. And it says the word became flesh and blood and moved into our neighborhood. Not only moved into our neighborhood, he pitched his tent among us. Now, the idea of pitching a tent is having a close relationship. God desires not to be far from us, but close in spiritual intimacy. He will never leave us.

A few years ago, I went with a BelPres team to Beirut Lebanon. And we traveled to the Beqaa Valley where we saw the Syrian refugee camps. Now, when you go into the camps, it basically is a group of structures held up by wood frames, lined with plastics tarps as walls. And floors are made of dirt, and the rooms are small, where an entire family along with grandparents and extended family would live in this small crowded little room. It was a difficult thing to see and experience.

One of our global partners took us to a tent where they taught refugee children reading and writing. And because refugee children were not legal citizens they could not have a formal education. And as we went into the classrooms, which were basically divided areas in this refugee tent, we met several young adults who were from places like Kentucky and Alabama.

And to be honest, to see the single young adults in the refugee camps was a shock for me. It's a dangerous place for Christians to be. When they shared their story of how on... back on their college campuses and in the churches that they came from, they heard about the refugee crisis, and they felt God's love for the refugees so much that they were willing to leave everything behind to live here among the refugees.

You could see it on the smiles of the refugee kids that they loved them, and that the missionary teachers also love them in return. You can't help but think that the refugee camps, made up of tents, is where God pitched his tent to be among these refugees. And that these young adults knew that God wanted to be close to them. Give them the hope that Jesus loves them and they can trust in him, and know that Jesus gave his life up for them.

We believe that God pitches his tent in all of our neighborhoods. That's why we have our all-in groups. We are the reflection and light of Jesus in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our apartments, our condos, our assisted living homes.

I love the story of how communities can make a difference. Last Tuesday, hundreds of people lined up the streets of the [inaudible 00:13:09] neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia, for UPS driver Anthony Gaskin. They gathered to thank Gaskin for being a positive light during the dark days of the pandemic. During COVID Gaskin has delivered over 180 times to this neighborhood.

One neighbor said, "Anthony always smiles, waves and goes above and beyond to deliver packages with care. Thank you, Anthony, for all you do." Another neighbors said, "My six-year-old daughter hasn't seen either side of grandparents in over a year, and this has been very hard on everyone. Many of the packages you deliver are from them. The joy the packages bring makes it all worthwhile. Thank you for always delivering them with a kind smile and a friendly wave."

The Word made his dwelling among us, and Jesus pitched his tent in our neighborhoods. He desires for us to be close... He desires to be close to our hearts. And when we trust him, he brings his love and forgiveness and transforms our lives and our community.

When my next door neighbor's husband moved away to help his family struggling with health issues. Now, this was over eight years ago. His wife and mother-in-law who are still here, both, also have health issues. So my wife and I made a decision to pull out their trash bins and put them back each and every week. And we've been doing it ever since. It's one of the ways we can show our neighbors that we care and reflect who Jesus is. God pitches his tent so that we can love others like Christ loves us.

BelPres your homework for this week, think and do one thing for a neighbor. It could be serving, or baking a dish, baking cookies, or just having a socially distance conversation with mask, of course. Just do something that can reflect the overflowing love that Jesus has that's coming from your own heart.

Now, the third reason we can trust Jesus is because his grace and truth supernaturally overflow in our lives. The end of the verse says that, Jesus is full of grace and truth. Eugene Peterson says he was generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

You know, when I think about apostle John, I find it interesting about himself, his biography. Apostle John was a son of Zebedee. His brother, James was also one of the 12 disciples. And that John and his family were fishermen on the sea of Galilee, along with Peter and Andrew. John himself wrote about himself that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. And you only see this in his gospel, six times in fact, but nowhere else in Matthew, Mark or Luke. Do you see that John as the disciple whom Jesus loved. I just love that. You'd got to love that. Yeah, Jesus loves me the most.

Well, when all the disciples left Jesus when he was crucified, John alone was there at the foot of the cross. And when Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and she runs to the beloved disciple and Peter, they both run. And it was the beloved disciple who was first to reach the empty tomb. Of course, John himself wrote that.

Now, in all my thoughts of who John was, I always pictured him as someone who is meek gentle, kind, loving. I mean, this would be a disciple Christ would love the most, right? But here's the kicker, Jesus refers to James and John as the sons of thunder. In Luke nine we see how the brothers wanted to call down from heaven fire on a town and destroy all of the people because they refused to receive Jesus. And what does Jesus do? He rebukes them and he gives them the nickname, the sons of thunder.

And I can tell you that John definitely wasn't the meek, gentle disciple I had pictured. He and his brother were seasoned fishermen, like the crab fishermen on Discovery's Deadliest Catch. I mean, if anything, John and James probably had raging tempers and maybe had some anger issues. Now, I say all of this because that's who Jesus is, full of grace and truth. Grace, because while John may have overly talked about Jesus's love for him and wanted to bring judgment on a town by burning up everyone, Jesus overflows with grace to love John even with all of his faults. And Jesus was full of truth when he rebukes him.

You get both grace and truth, not one or the other. Grace is the love and mercy given to us by God because God desires us to have it. Not because we deserve it or because we've earned it. Grace is unmerited divine love.

Truth is shown when Jesus sees the blueprint of our lives. There is no secret, no hidden agenda that he doesn't know about. Our thoughts and our motivations are open and seen as clear as day for Jesus to be the truth in our lives. When God sees us as we truly are, he doesn't condemn us or seek to punish us. Instead, he gives his life up for us. That unconditional love paid the price for our sins and brought redemption and forgiveness and restoration.

Now, are you in need of God's overflowing grace and truth in your life. If you need someone to pray for you, maybe you want to place your trust in Jesus today. And you can ask for it, there's an online button, if you would click that we would just love to pray for you.

So I'm sitting there on this sidewalk, scared and tears are just flowing from my eyes, and I'm completely lost. And I can't find my way back home. And I feel this tap on my shoulder and I look up and I see an older woman. She looked like a grandmother, white grayish hair, smiling at me. And she said, "Son, are you okay?" And I told her, "I'm lost and I can't get home." And she asked, "Well, do you know your address or your parent's phone number?" And I said, "I don't know that." And she smiled again, and she said, "Well, you know what, we're going to figure this out together."

And one thing I can remember about where I lived was our street name, Vista Willow, and I told her that. That's the only thing I could remember. Well, soon after getting in her car and driving around what seemed like forever, I saw our street sign Vista Willow, and I told her that's

my house. And I was so happy. She took out my bike from her trunk. And then I had the key in my backpack, and I just ran straight to the door and went inside. I totally forgot to thank her. I didn't even wave goodbye. My parents weren't home. Typically I would fall asleep late at night before they would arrive from work. But because of her love for me and care for me when I was lost, I will never ever forget her.

Now, as a college student in our campus ministry, that kind of love prompted me to do service projects with the aging community in our area. We went to nursing homes in our area where we spent time playing games, reading books, singing worship songs, eating and serving meals. I mean, every time I saw a grandmother, I saw that grandma who helped me when I was lost. And I feel her love with me every day. And every time I think of her.

Even today, before the pandemic, one of my favorite things as a pastor that I get to do on Sundays here is being an assisting pastor. I get to greet and meet all of you at the entrances. And for those of you who are grandmothers or older women, I have a special place for you in my heart. And that's because I see God in you. I see God who loves me and helped me when I was completely lost.

You see, no matter how lost you are, Jesus came from heaven to become man so that he could find you here, where you are. No matter whether you're lost because you've been running away or because of your circumstances, Jesus finds us and he takes us back home to himself. He loves you so much that he gave his life up for you.

So in this new season, while we're all in this pandemic together, let's experience the supernatural presence of God in our lives. That God is with us. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only son, who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

Father, we're so grateful to you this morning because of your son Jesus. Thank you that you pitched your tent close to us. Thank you for the forgiveness of sins that we experience because of the blood of your son. We accept that and we love you, and we respond to the unconditional love that you have for us. May we reflect Jesus's life and reflect that in our community. As you pitch your tent and drew us close, may we pitch our tents and love others in our community and around the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does John tell us about the "Word" in John 1:1-3?
2. John's introduction of Jesus is different than the other Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Why do think that is?

3. What is the significance of Jesus being God to you? How does that impact your life?
4. In what ways do you see God pitching His tent in your neighborhood?
5. When you look at yourself, do you fall under, I am more about "Truth" or more about "Grace"? Why is that? Typically, people tend to lean toward one side or the other.