

John Chapter 1 v 1 - 14

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[0 : 00] Lovely. Good. Well, I hope that all those gifts that you're going to be sharing and enjoying will bring you something more than fleeting pleasure, but some enjoyment as well.

And trust that you'll have a lovely day. Just to say that the only notices really are that this coming Sunday, as every Sunday we'll be meeting together, 10.45 in the morning, and Barry's going to be preaching then. And then in the evening at six, we've got our annual sort of review, really. It's a time downstairs, six o'clock, when we share what the Lord's been doing in the year. So bring something to share. It may be something that the Lord has blessed you with, reading scripture, a hymn, something like that. And Richard's going to be leading that time.

So you're very welcome to join us as we meet together. And then very soon, in fact, a week on Saturday, January the 4th, we have a wedding here. Marnie Ashburner and an Iron, who's got a Welsh name. Britain. That's not very Welsh. An Iron Britain. An Iron the Britain. And Marnie Ashburner being married here on the 4th. So please pray for that wedding. That'll be a joyful day. And everything will go well as these two lovely Christian young people are married. We're going to sing once more together. As with gladness, 197. As with gladness, men of old did the guiding star behold.

I'm going to read now from the Bible. If you have a Bible and you want to follow, it's the Gospel of John. Gospel of John in chapter 1. Not the traditional Christmas readings. We had those on our carol service on Sunday evening. But again, at the beginning of John, we're told about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. But we're told especially about who he is. Who is this incredible child, this man. And so John in chapter 1, we're going to read the first 14 verses. John chapter 1, beginning at verse 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made. Without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was God was God. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through Him all might believe. He Himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own. But His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made

[3 : 52] His dwelling among us. We've seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. I don't know where you put your Christmas presents the night before Christmas, whether like us you put them around the base of our Christmas tree. That's where we tend to put them. I don't know if you do that or not, or bring them out of a cupboard, or whatever it may be. But I wonder, have you ever been in this situation, and perhaps maybe this morning you might be, when you go to the tree and you take the presents and you read the tag and you hand them out and you all open one and share and so on, and you get to one final present which hasn't got a tag on it. And somehow it's fallen off or been lost. What are you going to do with that present, that present which has no tag? You don't know who it's from, you don't know who it's for. What would you do with it?

Well, perhaps you might just ignore it. It doesn't seem very exciting, it doesn't seem very interesting, you as well will put that away for another day. Perhaps you might give it a bit of a shake, hoping that you can judge what's inside it, and when you shake it, yeah, you think you know what it is, give it a squish, or whatever it may be, and well, it's just not worth opening that present. Perhaps you just

put it to one side and think, well, I'm sure it'll come back to me who that present was from, or for, I'll remember it later on. Or perhaps you say, we've got so many presents, we've got everything that we could possibly want, we don't need any more, we'll just put it back in the loft, forget about it, leave it. Or are you curious? Are you someone who says, I just can't possibly bear the thought of not knowing what's inside? I've got to find out, I've got to open up the present. Every Christmas, many people treat Jesus like the unopened present, because Jesus really is the unopened gift of Christmas.

throughout his life on earth, the majority of people did not receive him as God's gift. We read that there, he came to his own, and his own did not receive him. He came into the world, and the world didn't recognize him. It's much the same today with many people when it comes to Jesus. He's that extra bit of Christmas that really doesn't seem to be all that interesting. He's that bit of Christmas that really, we can just leave for another time. We can ignore. We can just put to one side. We can put back in the loft. But this Christmas morning, I want to give you some, I hope, convincing reasons to open the unopened present of Christmas. I want to give you some reasons why you should open the gift of God. That is his son, Jesus Christ. The first reason I want to give you is this, is we know who this gift is from. When the tag falls off, you don't know who it's from, or who sent it, who gave it.

That might give you a clue as to what sort of gift it is. We know who gave his son. We know who sent this Christmas gift. God the Father. As we read there in verse 14, we've seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father. Over and over again, Jesus spoke about the reality that he is the one who has been sent by God. Even those who were concerned or confused about who he was, recognized that this was someone whom God had sent, because he could only do the things that God could do. Everything that God gives bears his signature. God is not someone who hides away.

You might think he is, but he's not. Or God who does something but never tells us. God puts a gift tag on every one of his gifts, so that we can be sure that the things he gives us come from him.

[8 : 06] Paul, when he wrote to the Christians in Rome, told them about this truth. He said to them, since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power, his divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

The world in which we live on a day like today shouts out a designer, a creator. It tells us that this world is no mere accident. The more that we look into space, the more we seek to find out the origins of the universe, we're brought back to this situation. This world is unique. There's nothing like it in the whole universe and beyond. It's God's gift to us. Everywhere we look in this world, we see God's signature. Even back in the Old Testament, in the Psalms, they knew that was the case. David wrote this wonderful song of praise to God. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day, they pour forth speech. Night after night, they reveal knowledge. They have no speech.

They use no words. No sound is heard from them. Yet, their voice goes out into all the earth. Their words to the ends of the world. Throughout history, throughout time, men and women have looked up at the stars in the heavens and looked up at the world around about and realized there is a creator and maker. Every gift that God gives, he signs his name on. You just look at your own body, the abilities that you have to see and hear and touch and taste and smell, to think. You look at humanity. Yes, it's spoilt. It's corrupt by sin.

But as God made us, we have creative abilities. We have dreams. We have powers, as it were, beyond anything else given by God to show us that we are made in his image. The Bible says you are fearfully and wonderfully made. We know this gift has been sent by God. This Jesus Christ who is born in the stable in Bethlehem. This one who is born to a virgin. This one who lived a life that showed all the way through that clearly he was the Son of God sent into the world. Jesus himself, when speaking to those who sought to put him down and sought to tell him that he was wrong to speak of himself as being the Son of God said this, I have a testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to do, by that he meant the miraculous things that he did, the works that the Father has given me to do, and to finish the very works that I'm doing, testify, declare, witness that the Father has sent me. This gift of God. Don't ever say that God has never done anything for you. Don't ever say that God has never given anything to you. God has given and sent this marvelous gift. And this gift, we know who it's for as well. We know it's from God, but who is the gift for? The tag has fallen off, the unopened gift. But this gift, we know that it is for us. All the

way through that passage that I read in John 1, we read about this. He is the light to all mankind. He is the one that gives light to everyone and who's come into the world. He is in the world, and the world, he made the world himself.

The world, mankind, you and I. The gift of Jesus Christ, God's Son, is to everyone on this planet. Whoever you are, whatever your background, whatever your country of origin, whatever your language, whatever your color of skin, whoever you are, the gift of God is the gift of his Son to you. [12 : 25] Everything in this world that we have comes from God. The fact that you're able to be alive this morning is because God has given you life. We know that. We see death around about us in the world.

We know that God is the life giver, and everything we have comes from him. And everything that God has ever done, he has done for us. You ever thought of that? Why did God make this incredible and beautiful world? Yes, it shows off his artistry. It shows off his wonderful wisdom and design, but he made this world for us to enjoy, us to get the most out of, for us to inhabit and live. God has given us a home.

And why is it that you are alive? Why is it that you have this body in which you walk and talk and speak? Because God has given it to you. Everything that God does, he does because of his love for you.

For the people of this world. Don't ever think that he has given up on this world. Don't ever think that he has no concern or care about your life. The fact that you have food to eat and clothes to wear are all expressions of the great care and concern of God. And the sad truth is that those who do not have clothes and food, it's not because God does not love them, or God does not care for them, but there we see the very ravages of sin. Why are men and women hungry? It's because others are greedy. Why is it men and women are homeless? It's because others are thirsting for more power. We see it sadly all around about us. It is not God who is the author of our disaster. It is us.

Everything we have comes from God and everything in the life of Jesus was living for us. The very reason he was born into this world was for you, for your sake, and for mine.

He lived his life totally committed to and caring for others, the people of this world. He said himself, just as the Son of Man, that was the way he described himself, just as the Son of Man, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Wherever Jesus went, whoever he met, whatever he did, he did for the sake of people. Not for money, not for greed, not for power, not for influence. Every word and action of his for others were the words of comfort to those who were struggling or acts of healing or struggling or acts of healing for those who were unwell were all done in love for others. And the clearest statement, the most plain, obvious declaration of the love of God that he gave his Son for this world is when the Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, when he died for us. Again, Paul writing to the Christians in Rome,

[15 : 27] God demonstrates his own love for us in this way. While we were sinners, Christ died for us. Not when we were good people or nice people or lovely people, but when we were sinners. And sinners we are.

Whoever we are, whatever our circumstances, we are those who have constantly through our lives lived our way instead of God's way. And we see the consequences of that, not only in the world about us, but in our own lives and families and situations and relationships. Brokenness, heartache, suffering, sorrow, but more than that, a broken relationship with God who made us. But out of love for you and for me, Christ laid down his life, gave himself to demonstrate not only his love for us, but to win for us the prize, the greatest gift of all. The gift is from God. The gift is for you. And you won't know what's in that gift until you open it. You'll never know what is in Christ until you receive him as that gift of God.

But the trouble is that so many people ignore Jesus, leave him as the unopened Christmas gift, because they think they know what he contains. They think they know what Christianity is all about. They think they know what God has brought and given in his Son. And they think they don't need what he has to give. He hasn't got anything, this Jesus, that I need. He hasn't got anything, this Jesus, that I want.

We've come perhaps to that conclusion because we've been suckered and brainwashed into thinking that everything that we need is solid, tangible, real, material. And those material things that we have so much of in our own society are all that we need. We don't need what Jesus can bring. We don't need what Jesus can give. If we want anything, we'll go to the shop or we'll get it online or we'll purchase it in some other way. The last place we would look for what we need is Christ. But if

you think that Jesus only has spiritual things to give, that he has nothing solid to bring, nothing real or material to bring into your life, then you're completely wrong. Remember when Jesus walked the earth, the people that he met with and spoke to, the effect he had upon them was tangible, real, life-changing, affecting. You can't get anything more real and solid than being raised from the dead. [18 : 22] Just ask Lazarus amongst others. You see, you'll never know what is in the gift of God in Christ until you actually open that gift. You think you know, you think he's got nothing for you, but you're wrong.

You're wrong and you'll continue in that ignorance until you do open that gift. And that's why I want to urge you and reason with you this Christmas morning. Don't leave Jesus as the unopened gift of Christmas, but rather open and receive this gift of God for you. Because when you do, and only when you do, will you get to enjoy what is inside. Verse 12, yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. In Jesus are all the blessings of God, all the riches of his treasures, all the wonders of heaven. Paul writes to the Christians at Ephesus, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Aha, you say, just as I thought. It's all about heavenly blessings. It's all about spiritual treasures. They aren't any use to me on this earth. I don't need those sort of things. I need things I can touch, things I can see. Really? Is that really true of you?

Can you really say that everything that you need and want can be found in the things that you see and touch, the things that you hear and taste? Of course not. Of course not. We know that our lives are much more than simply the things that we possess. We know that they can never grant us peace of heart.

They can never take away that sense of shame or guilt. They can never give us joy, which enables us to face troubles and difficulties. They can never give us love.

They can never cause our hearts to skip. Those come from relationships. Those come from something much more than the tangible, the earthly material. They don't come from Amazon. You can't carry them in a bag. All the greatest wants and needs of you and I can only be found in the gift, which is Jesus Christ. What we really long for, what we really desire, what we really need, because what we need and want is only met when we find ourselves as children of God. When we come into the embrace and the love of a heavenly Father who made us and who has made the way for us to be reconciled to him, restored to him, made right with him. Why did God send his son into the world? Why did he give the most precious possession in one sense, the one that he loved and had loved from all eternity? Why did he give his son to suffer and to die for the likes of you and me? I'll tell you why. So that you and me can become sons of God ourselves. So that we can become his children, his sons and his daughters. So that we can be brought into this marvelous family for which God has made the world. He made the world, he made you, and he gave his son for one purpose, that you might be brought back to him, that you might enjoy God himself. This is something money cannot buy. This is something that nothing in the world can give us, that sense of our sins forgiven, of peace with God, of life everlasting, of a relationship and a friendship once broken but now healed. Really, would you leave that gift unopened? Go back to the very beginning of what I said and think of that gift, you don't know what it is, it may be very small, and you think, well it can't be worth a great deal, it can't be of any real importance.

[22 : 35] Seems to be trivial, but when we open it, we find this glorious diamond. It's worthless, I'm sorry, not worthless, priceless, that's the word, priceless.

And all the time it's just been sitting there. All the time we've sort of left it and forgotten about it, and then we've come back to it and we thought, no, it can't be worth anything, it can't be worth anything. Dear friends, how many times have you thought about the Lord Jesus Christ, have you thought about the things of God and you said, I don't need that, that's worthless to me, I don't need that, I need this, I need that, I need something else that's going to give me the contentment, the peace, the joy, the satisfaction, the happiness, and we've looked all over the place for those things and we have never found them, have we? Until we come to that one gift of Jesus Christ, God's Son. How do we open that gift? It's very simple. To all who received him, to those who believed in his name. It's not about becoming a good person, earning God's gift, it's a gift, it's freely given, we can't pay for it. It's about putting our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came and lived and died for me. Saying, Lord Jesus, I want not just that you would open yourself to me, that you would open myself to you. The way in one sense that we enter into Christ and all his blessings is when we open

