

**December 25, 2018 Christmas Day**  
**The Incarnation: A Riches to Rags Story**  
**We Have Beheld His Glory**  
**John 1:1-18**  
**Pastor Robert Woodyard**

**Introduction.**

We want to say thank you again for all the gifts, cards, pictures, notes of encouragement and delicious Christmas goodies. Some of them we don't know who gave them, so thank you. We love the privilege of sharing another Christmas with you and we thank God for all of you. We have been celebrating with all our family, five sons, three daughters-in-law, two granddaughters and two more grands on the way, eating and sharing gifts and lots of love.

This advent we have spent a considerable amount of time in a fairly small but densely packed part of God's Word seeking to understand the heights and depths of what happened on that first Christmas.

In this short passage the apostle John makes at least 20 amazing affirmations about Jesus. 20 ways we beheld His glory.

1. He is the Word.
2. He is the pre-existent Word.
3. He has a privileged place with God.
4. The Word is God.
5. He created everything that was made.
6. He is life.
7. He is light.
8. He overcomes darkness.
9. He came into the world.
10. He gives us the right to be called children of God.
11. He is the only begotten of the Father before all ages, distinct from the Father yet sharing the same essence with the Father.
12. He became flesh, incarnate as a man.
13. He condescended to dwell in our midst.
14. He's greater than John the Baptist.
15. He's greater than Moses.

16. He makes visible the invisible God.
17. He is at the Father's side.
18. He's full of glory.
19. He's full of grace.
20. He is full of truth.

We beheld His glory when we considered Jesus is the cosmic Christ, the infinite, eternally pre-existent, all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the universe, of all the galaxies, supernovas, quasars, and comets, who hand crafted every one of the 10 to the 24th number of stars and named them, who created a universe that is not big enough to contain Him. He inhabits all of it and is not stretched to the limit.

This Jesus also created our little planet and filled it with trillions of living creatures both great and small and sustains life on this planet every second of every day.

This invisible, incomprehensible God dwelt in absolutely stunning splendor and majesty in heaven, a glorious place that defies human description to the point we have to use created stuff here on earth to try to paint a picture of heaven, stuff like gold and precious jewels, pearls the size of boulders, colors we don't even have words for yet.

We beheld His glory when this invisible, incomprehensible God came down and visited this little piece of dirt. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Jews were expecting a Messiah to come, one who would be Savior, but no one expected how low He would come down.

This God came down to the squalor of the slums of Kolkata and the brothels of Amsterdam and opium dens of Afghanistan and ivory towers of intellectual atheism and temples of ignorant idolatry and to the crass and selfish materialism and consumerism of American culture.

He came down to those caught in the bondage of sexual immorality and in the despair of incurable diseases and the hopelessness of broken relationships and the loneliness of abuse. He came to those who are like sheep without a shepherd, to those wandering, drifting, trying to make sense of daily life.

He came to those who have lost faith, or never had it, to those who have wandered from their hearts true home, to those trying desperately to find some meaning, some

hope, some joy that lasts longer than the fleeting pleasures of drugs, alcohol, sex, work, success, money, or affirmation or acceptance.

And here is the staggering thing and glorious thing about what Jesus did. From before the foundations of the earth He planned to come, from before the beginning of time He wanted to have a human body so He could die for us and for our salvation.

Remember the words in Hark the Herald Angels, “hail the incarnate-deity, pleased as man with men to dwell.” He was God and God can’t die, so He had to get a body just like ours, one that got hungry and sweat and got sore feet and felt pain

“He needed a back to receive the lashes of the cat of nine tails, a forehead for the thorns to sink into, hands and feet for the spikes to be driven through, he needed a cheek for Judas to kiss and for the soldiers to spit on. He needed a brain and spinal column and nerve endings to feel the pain and suffer, a body to die.

He needed a body to show his love for us, to show his desire to be with us, to be like us, so we could be like him. He needed a body to lay down for His friends, a body to die for the ungodly, for sinners, for those who have wandered, strayed, neglected, ignored, forgotten him. He needed a body so we could see him and maybe for the first time then see the Father” (John Piper).

Today is the day we celebrate the glory of when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Today is the day, the dividing line day, the day that forever changed history; the day all humanity uses to mark and divide time whether they believe in Jesus or not; the day that has changed so many of our lives and can change all of our lives forever, not just here on earth but for all of the eternity that awaits all of us on the other side of death.

Today is the day to acknowledge the gift of all gifts.

A week and a half ago our oldest son Todd gave Phama and me a gift, dinner and a night lodging at the Willows, the resort where he is a manager on Lummi Island. We don’t have time for me to go into the extravagance of this gift. A twenty course meal prepared by an award winning chef. It truly was a dining experience, and them a beautiful home on the island to stay in.

We were treated like royalty, made to feel special, we were given a gift we didn't deserve or earn, and couldn't possibly repay.

What do you do when offered an incredible gift? Receive it with gratitude, and thank, honor, praise the giver. Make much of the giver, not just the gift.

We should be the most humble and the most thankful people on earth when we consider how much God has been done for us in Christ and how little we deserve it.

The incarnation on Christmas is like winning the world's biggest lottery only infinitely better.

We are going to go now to our homes with families and friends and feast and celebrate as we should. There is the greatest reason in the world to celebrate, the Word has become flesh and dwelt among us and dwells among us.

This is the most lopsided transaction ever experienced. The God of all Gods has come to us in our flesh to show us His love and save us from eternal judgment.

Our text gives two possible responses, rejection or reception. Some didn't recognize Him, didn't recognize the gift, and didn't receive Him. But to all who believe and receive, He gave the right to be children.

After all we have said about the incarnation of Jesus and realize how much we can't understand because we are finite flesh, He is infinite God. In the end it is simple *cause for thanks and for worship*.

Some of you have come home to be with family on this special day. And some of you are here for the first time in a long time. Jesus is here to say "I have the right, authority, permission, privilege, from God, to extend to you the grace of God."

God has demonstrated His love for us knowing full well all our sin, all our rebellion, all our resisting, all our neglect of Him, all our disinterest in Him and His gift, all our living for ourselves this past year, all our wandering and all our fulfilling the lusts of our flesh.

As I alluded to on Sunday, God is not like Santa Claus, with a list of those who are naughty and nice, with guilt to make us get our act together and clean ourselves up and stop sinning before God will accept us and love us.

God gives us a pure gift in Jesus. Jesus lays down His live for us, offers us free forgiveness and salvation and the right to become the sons and daughters of God.

**Romans 8:32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

It's better than winning the lottery. God is the first and greatest giver and He has given us Jesus who is the greatest gift of all. The giver is the gift. Don't let your heart remain cold to what God has done for us. Two kinds of people, rejection or reception. Two kinds of people:

**II Corinthians 4:4, 6** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ... 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Has Satan blinded your eyes to the glory of Jesus and His free offer of salvation; or do you have eyes to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus?

Behold Jesus, behold His glory. Read this text at home again today and think on these things and ponder them in your hearts and respond to this greatest of all riches to rags story.

Give Jesus the only gift you can offer back, your faith, trust, hope, admiration, love, joy and sincere affection and gratitude.

**II Corinthians 8:9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

## **Conclusion.**

Now as I say at this time every year, now is the time to go to our houses for feasting. Go and enjoy and celebrate your Savior's birth. Feast, Christians, feast. For all who believe you have a right to be very happy, He gave the right to be the children of God and that is cause for rejoicing. In the words of Solomon, "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart."

Let your faith give you great joy, for to us a child has been born, a Son has been given and He is Jesus Christ the Lord and we have beheld His glory. Glory to God and Amen.

**Prayer:** Bow your heads please. Do you know Him? Do you want to know Him? Is your heart strangely stirred within you? Do you want to trust Him with your life, with all that you have and are? Do you want to make Him your Lord and King? If you do then I invite you to pray to Him tonight and ask Him to do just that, to come into your heart and become your Lord and Savior. Acknowledge that you are a sinner that needs a savior, confess your sin to Him and confess that with as much faith as you have right now, believe He is everything He says He is and that He came down to earth to die for your sins and mine.

Holy Father of all joy, thank you for this day. Open our eyes to see that in your presence is the fullness of joy inexpressible. Thank you for thinking of this day before the beginning of time. We can scarcely imagine how you stood on the threshold of heaven and said good-bye to your only Son to be born in a manger. Thank you for the indescribable gift of the incarnation of your Son. Thank you for making it possible for God and sinners to be reconciled. Thank you that by His birth we no more may die. May those who have been spectators stop holding back, and surrender to the truth and power of your redemption. All glory and praise belongs to you. Glory to God in the highest. Glory to the new born King. We love you Lord Jesus and we pray in your name. Amen.