

## John 1:1-4

November 28, 2021

"Ow", the elderly man grimaced as he repositioned his body on the cold stone slab. He was a wanted man. People wanted him dead. "It's time we got started, don't you think? It's time we put that pen to parchment and wrote something down. But what should we write?", he asked his assistant seated nearby.

"Just tell them what you heard. Tell them what you saw," the young man prodded. "You got to look upon him. You got to touch him with your hands!"

"And it's been fifty plus years. You are the last one standing. All the others have long since passed away. You are the only remaining eyewitness."

"So, why not start with the very first time you saw him, that first time you heard him. That time you were out fishing with your dad and your brother and Peter..."

"And he said those words!", the old man interrupted.

"What words?"

"Those wonderful, life-changing words."

You mean when he said, **“Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch”**? And then when you did, so many fish found your nets that they began to break and so heavy were they, that your boat began to sink?

“No, not those words,” said the elder, shaking his head. It was what came afterwards.

“You see, we were frightened by that catch. Our sea legs were literally shaking in their boots when we realized what we were up against. Here was a man with the power to make fish come out of nowhere, jump into our nets and sink our boats, just by saying so. His speech had the power to create something out of nothing and at the same time, bring an end to our family business.”

“No, it wasn’t that word that drew us to him. It was what followed. You see, instead of dismissing us, as such powerful ones are wont to do, he invited us to follow him. And he calmed our frightened hearts by saying, **“Do not be afraid, from now on you will be fishers of men!”**”

“And so, we followed him, and we walked with him and we listened to him, day in and day out, for three whole years! And all the words he spoke during that

time changed our lives, and the lives of everyone else who dared to listen!”

“No, we need not start with the first time I heard him. Brother Luke has already recorded that story perfectly well. We should go back further, for this Word predates any of us. And truth be told:

**Proposition:**

**There is no word like this Word.**

**And we must hear him!**

“Now take up your pen young man! Write down what you hear and ponder what I say.”

And standing with determination, the elder, better known as John, began to recite:

**John 1:1-4**

**<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the word,  
The word was with God,  
And the word was God.**

**<sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God.**

**<sup>3</sup>All things were made through him,  
And without him  
was not any thing made that was made.**

**<sup>4</sup>In him was life**

## And the life was the light of men.

And we will stop right there. John went on to record 21 chapters of his experience with this Word. But there is plenty in these four verses alone to occupy our thoughts this morning. For in them John made it clear that there is no word like this Word. And that this word must be listened to.

But why must this word be listened to? John gives us two reasons.

- Because of what it was.
- And because of what he does.

And those two reasons will serve as our main points this morning.

First...

### **Because of what it was.**

Notice how many times John uses the word “**was**” in describing the Word in verses 1 and 2.

I count four times.

1. In the beginning **was** the Word.
2. The Word **was** with God.
3. The Word **was** God.

#### 4. He was in the beginning with God.

Each one of these “was” statements describes a different aspect or trait of the Word. And as we shall see, they are unique to this Word. No other word can be described this way.

Let’s examine them one by one.

First,

##### V-1a) In the beginning was the Word

Now that sounds very odd. We never describe things that way. We never speak of anything as being in the beginning. That’s because everything we know of has a beginning. Everything has a starting point. Before it begins, it doesn’t exist. So, nothing can be in the beginning.

But according to John, this Word was!

You see, this word predates the beginning. When the beginning of the universe happened,

- this Word already “was”.
- This Word already existed.
- Notice the past tense of the word “was”.

And what’s more:

- This Word had no beginning.

- It was always there.
- And it will always be there.

Listen to what the Psalmist says about it in the Old Testament.

Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89

It was there and it is still there. And what Peter says about it in the New.

But the word of the Lord remains forever. 1 Peter 1:25

This word that was in the beginning and is firmly fixed in Heaven will be there forever.

And what does this forever Word mean for us? It means that this Word:

- Has been around.
- It's seen a thing or two.
- It's stood the test of time.
- It doesn't change.
- It's **the same yesterday, today and forever.**
- It's trustworthy.
- In short, this word is reliable. It can be trusted.

There is no other word that can be trusted like this word!

But there's more. Verse 1 also says

### V-1b) **The Word was with God**

You see, this Word wasn't alone in the beginning. It had companionship. It was "with God".

- God and the Word were together.
- They always were together.
- And whatever they did, or planned to do, they did with each other.

And not only this, they were into each other.

What do I mean by that?

Well, if we look at John's original language, we will see that the word "with" can also be translated "towards".

So that when John said the Word was with God, he was also communicating that

- The Word was towards God.
- The Word was facing God.
- The Word was looking at God.

And therefore, it could be said that the Word was

- Focused on God.
- Fixated on God
- And joined at the hip to God.

Whatever God wanted the Word to do, it did.  
Whatever God wanted the Word to say, it said.  
Wherever God wanted the Word to go, it went.

And what does this attribute of the Word mean for us? It means that

- If you want to get to know God, know the Word.
- If you want to hear God, listen to the Word.
- If you want to obey God, follow the Word.

There is no better access to God than by his Word.

And that's not all. John 1:1 has one more unique description of this Word. Not only was the Word in the beginning. Not only was the word with God,

### V-1c) **The Word Was God**

You see, this Word has all the character attributes of God.

- This Word knows all things.
- This Word sees all things.
- This Word rules all things.
- This Word can do all things.

Nothing stands in the way of this Word.  
Nothing can thwart this Word.  
Nothing can stop this Word.



Whatsoever God is, so also is this Word!

And what does the fact that “this Word is God” mean for us? It means that:

- Nothing is impossible for this Word.
- Nothing escapes the notice of this Word.
- Nothing is worth fearing more than this Word!

In short, we must listen to this Word!

Follow this Word!

Heed this Word!

That is a scary thought, one might say.

If this Word is all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful, wouldn't we want to avoid it at all costs? Wouldn't we want to steer clear of it to keep from being crushed by its weight?

Afterall, this Word is perfect. We are not. We cannot possibly measure up to its requirements. That's why John was trembling that day at the lake in the presence of the Word. That's why he and Peter said depart from us for we are sinful men.

But thankfully, the gospel of John doesn't end after verse 1. There are other verses. So, let's examine them and listen to what they have to say.

Verse 2: “**He was in the beginning with God**”. What's new there, you might ask? Isn't that a repeat of verse

one? Haven't we already talked about "was" and "in the beginning" and "with God". But look again. There is a difference. There is one new word in this verse. And remarkably this little word makes a huge difference.

## V-2) He was in the beginning with God

This Word that was with God in the beginning wasn't an impersonal force or an abstract idea. That's what you could get if you just read verse 1 by itself. This Word was a He.

- This Word was a person.
- This Word had personality

And perhaps most importantly, this Word was and was very personal!

He has thoughts, he has plans,  
he has emotions, he has desires,  
and he loves.

You see, prior to "the beginning", the Word wasn't just "with God".

He loved God and was loved by God.

He wasn't just fixated on God or focused on God, he was intimately relating to God.

He even had a favorite name for God. A name that John reveals a few verses later. Look down at verse 14. Where speaking of this same Word, John declares:

“...we have seen his glory as of the only Son from the Father...”  
John 1:14b

To this Word, God was Father  
And he was God’s son. They were family, forever.

But the pronoun “he” in verse 2 has further implications. Not only does it speak of the Word’s personal relationship with his Father. It hints at his future relationship with others. Other persons whom He and the Father planned to create.

You see, the word “he” is not just a preferred pronoun. It’s not some random gender designation that he chose to identify himself by. Rather, it’s an accurate description of who he is.

For he, like his Father, is very masculine. In fact, he is the very definition of masculinity. He can be no other.

And what do I mean by this. How is he so manly?  
He’s masculine, in that:

- He desires to create life
- He’s eager to sustain that life
- He’s willing to guide that life.

- He's poised to protect that life
- And he's willing to give up his life, for the betterment of those who are his.

In short, a masculine person is defined by these traits and is willing and ready to selflessly love those who belong to him.

And that is precisely what this Word was poised to do at the end of verse 2. This was still in the beginning – there was no one else yet. He was ready to share the love he had with his Father with others.

- He was ready to create.
- He was ready to give life.
- And he was ready to rescue that life when it went astray.

The Word is ready to spring into action which brings us to the second reason why this word must be listened to.

### **Because of what he does.**

Everything in the first two verses describes what the Word was. Now in verse 3, John turns to what the Word does.

First

### V-3) All things were made through him

This Word made all things. Not some things. **All things were made through him.** Note how John's language doesn't leave anything out. Everything that was made **was made through him. And he says it again negatively - And without him not any thing was made that was made.**

Certainly, John has creation in view here. After all, his language in verses 1 and 2 sounds suspiciously like the first verse of the Bible, which says:

**"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen 1:1)**

And John's third verse reflects the Genesis story as well as God is speaking. here God brought everything into existence by the word of his mouth.

**And God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. (Gen 1:3)**

There is a subtle difference. But at the end of the Genesis account, God rested from his work and stopped creating. In other words, the creative word ceased. Nothing else came into existence. The Word seemed to go silent. And the new creation seemed to be left to fend for itself, without further assistance or direction from God's Word.

And if you remember how the story went, things basically went off the rails. God's newly created image bearers, Adam and Eve, decided to disobey the one and only command God had given them and, in so doing, set themselves and God's entire handiwork on a path of self-destruction. They chose death over life. They chose darkness over light.

But not so in the first chapter of John.

John 1:3 doesn't even use the create word. It uses a word that could more accurately be translated "became" or more accurately, "came to be." You see, according to John 1:3. Without Him not one things became. Not one thing came to be. Not just things created in the first chapter of Genesis during the creation week, but all things that have come to be since then.

In other words, not one thing that has ever come into being did so without the say so of this Word.

- Every baby born came to be by this Word.
- Every healing bestowed came to be by this Word.
- Every blessing granted came to be by this Word.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.

James 1:17

How? By this Word.

You see, there truly is no Word like this Word, who speaks and all things come to be.

No other word can do this. No other word can make things come to be. Think about it. What happens when you hear words,

- be they from friend or foe?
- Be they in books or online?
- Be they written or spoken?

When you hear a word, you choose how to respond.

- You can receive it.
- Or you can reject it.
- You can listen to it.
- Or you can ignore it.
- You can laugh it off.
- Or you can respond to it in anger.

In every case you have a choice. You decide how to respond. Any other kind of word cannot change you by itself. It needs your concurrence to affect you.

Not so with this Word. The word described by John makes things that are not, come to be, without their permission.

But that's not all. According to the next verse, verse 4,

this word also makes things that are dead, come to life.

#### V-4) In Him was life

Look at verse 4. It says, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

At first glance this verse sounds a little like the Genesis account again,

In Genesis 2:7 we read,

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Gen 2:7

There it is, the breath of life! God gave Adam the breath of life. Isn't that what John 1:4 is talking about when it says, "In him was life"?

Not so fast. Remember what happened to the man, Adam, when he disobeyed God? He died...not physically at first, but spiritually. He lost his spiritual relationship with God. He became, as Ephesians 2:5 puts it, **dead in his trespasses**. And, yes, eventually his body died, too.



Now if he was both physical and spiritually dead, what became of that breath of life that God breathed into his nostrils? It was gone. It wasn't there anymore.

Death overcame that life. Death eradicated that life. In the end death prevailed. Death won.

Now, is that the life that John 1:4 is talking about?  
No, a thousand times no!

The life written of in John 1:4, is a different kind of life. We know this by how John describes it. He calls this life "**the light of men.**" And in the next verse he talks about how light overcomes darkness. Darkness does not overcome light, rather light dispels darkness. When light encounters darkness, what always happens? light wins! Like a candle in a dark room. A little light beats out the darkness.

And if the life of John 1:4 is anything like the light of John 1:5, it too must win. It too must defeat its mortal enemy. That means, the life of John 1:4 defeats death. In John's use of the word life, life wins!

And there is no life like this life. Every other kind of life eventually dies. In every other instance death wins.

But the life proceeding from the Word in John 1:4 is not like any other life. It wins!

Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?

1 Corinthians 15:54c-55.

As an illustration of the power of this life, of the power of this Word, let's listen to the words of an Old Testament prophet. Follow along as I read from Ezekiel 37.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones, ...and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man can these bones live?" And I answered, "O LORD God, you know. Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD God to these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

So I (the son of man, who was a stand in for a future son of man) prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its

bone. And I looked, and behold there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was not breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the LORD God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breath on these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Ezekiel 37:1-10

You see, there is no word like this Word,  
that causes things that are not, to come to be  
and cause things that are dead, to live and see.

Hear him out. Listen to him. Let his life-giving Word breathe life into you this Holiday Season. There is more to say about this Word, but that will be in future weeks. He didn't just speak from heaven but He came down, became flesh and lived among us. This Word walked on the earth where John saw Him. And this Word experienced death for John and for us. And this word rose from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God again. And those who receive this word and follow him will be raised to newness of life. There is no word like this word who gives us life.

PRAY