

CHRIST, THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD.

John 1: 1 – 3

Congregation,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”.

These words were written by the apostle John about sixty years after the Ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Why did John begin his Gospel with these words, which remind us so strongly of the opening words of Genesis, the first Book of the Bible?

Because he wanted to prove that the Lord Jesus was the eternal Son of God. That is why his Gospel is so different from the other three Gospels. Already in those early years of Christianity, false teachers had crept into the Church, who claimed that Jesus was the adopted Son of God. They taught that because of Jesus’ perfect life and sacrificial death, God rewarded the son of Joseph and Mary by raising Him to the level of a god. Others taught that Christ was God’s Son, but in the sense that He was the first Creature God had made.

Against both of these errors, the apostle John contends. He stresses in His Gospel and in his epistle that Christ is the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, John’s great purpose with this is that Christians may have a solid ground or basis for their faith. In John 20: 30 and 31 he sums up this purpose when he says: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”.

John knew that only if Christ was the eternal Son of God, He could be our Saviour. He never tires of pointing out the necessity of believing in the divinity of Christ.

A mere human being, no matter how good a life he lived or how highly exalted by God, would have been unable to save lost sinners.

Therefore again and again believers are urged to firmly lay hold of this most important truth and never to let it go.

“Little children”, he writes in his first Epistle, “abide in him”. Stay with the truth as it is in Jesus.

The theme of our text therefore is:

Christ, the Eternal Word of God, and we will consider:

1. the divine method of revelation
2. the solid ground of salvation.

“In the beginning was the Word” – with these majestic words the fourth Gospel opens. Here we get a glimpse of the life of Christ in eternity, before the world was. That life was infinitely rich and glorious, filled with joy and happiness in the presence of the Father.

Christ refers to this blessed state in His high priestly prayer, when He says: “And now, O Father, glorify Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was”.

Also from Proverbs 8; 27 – 30 we get some idea of the kind of existence Christ enjoyed with the Father in eternity. “When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him”.

Now the apostle calls Christ the Word. Why does he give Him this title? Well, what is a word? A word is something whereby I make known an inner thought.

I have in my mind a thought, but you don't know what it is. Only when I decide to speak I reveal what I am thinking. By means of words I communicate to others my ideas, desires, wishes and feelings. Words reveal my character. They show my intellectual caliber and moral character. By what I say I reveal what kind of person I am.

Now applying this to Christ as the Word of God, we see that He has expressed the thoughts of God, revealing His will, and He has done this in such a way that when we see Christ, we see the Father in all His wonderful attributes and perfection.

As you know, the Bible is also called the Word of God. That means that the Scriptures reveal God's mind, express His will and lay bare His heart. But if the Bible is the written Word of God, Christ is the living, the incarnate Word. In Him the Word has become flesh. As such He has "dwelt among us", John says in verse 14, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth".

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Before heaven and earth were created Christ was with the Father. When the Father decided to create, He did so through the Son. In Genesis 1 it says: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light".

When God spoke He expressed Himself. A thought was revealed and became visible. God spoke through, or by means of the Son. John says: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made". In Colossians 1: 16 we find the same truth recorded: "For by him (the Son) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him".

How this brings out the divinity of Christ! The whole work of creation is ascribed to Him and only God can create, that is bring something into existence from nothing. Man, with all his boasting, is unable to bring into existence a single blade of grass. Christ would not have been able to create anything either if He had only been a creature. But not only was Christ the Word of God in creation, but He has also revealed to us God's thoughts concerning redemption.

God is a Spirit, the Bible says, and as such He cannot communicate with man, a creature of the dust. Certainly He could not have this communion with man as he has become after the fall. Because of sin man became flesh. And Spirit cannot have fellowship with flesh, nor can flesh understand Spirit. Only God can understand God. Therefore God has sent to us His Word. That Word has become flesh. The eternal Son of God has assumed human nature and through Him God can speak to us, and has spoken to us. Christ has revealed to us the thoughts of God concerning our salvation. These thoughts are very high. We could never have grasped them.

Therefore the apostle John says in verse 18 of our chapter, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”. He is the Mediator between God and man, the prophet Who explains to us the will of God concerning our redemption.

Do you see now why the apostle is so concerned that we stay close to Christ, the Word? He alone can tell us how to be saved. He alone knows the mind of God because He was with God before the world was created. He was there when God made His plan of salvation. Together with the Father and the Spirit the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity came up with a plan whereby hell-worthy sinners could be saved and yet God’s justice would be honoured.

Without the eternal Son of God, salvation would be impossible. Had He been only a creature, even the first and highest creature, He could not have known the mind of God, let alone carry out the work of salvation.

Therefore Christ as Word of God become in the second place the solid ground of our salvation.

The history of religion teaches us that man has tried by many different ways to return to God. Although he knows himself to be guilty and deserving of punishment, he knows deep down in his heart that true happiness can only be found in a good relationship with

the Divine Being. In other words, man has a secret yearning to be with God. So he tries to buy his way back into the favour of God by all kinds of human efforts.

That is what the pagan does. He thinks that he can appease God or the gods by bringing certain sacrifices. No matter how warped his ideas of God are, he feels unhappy about being separated from the Divine Being.

Of course it is only by the preaching of the Gospel that we come to know the true God and the true cause of our separation from Him. When the Holy Spirit convicts of sin we begin to realize that by our sins we have offended God and broken the relationship with Him. In this way the soul is made to see his unhappiness and wretchedness and longs to be delivered from it. He knows that the only way to be happy is if he may look up to a gracious God. That was Martin Luther's question. How do I find a gracious God? What do I have to do to approach God?

Answers to these questions are given from many different religious movements and churches.

The Roman Catholic church says that you must be loyal to mother church. Do what the priest tells you, obey the pope. Whatever you do, never leave the church, because she has the oldest traditions. The church dates all the way back to the times of the apostles.

Today we have many sects and cults which say similar things. Join us and you will find happiness, they say. Accept our teaching and you will be saved.

Already in John's time there were people who said this. They were the false apostles and teachers who tried to deceive the simple believers by saying: Come to us, keep the law of Moses, observe days and months Moses. O, how the people honoured him!

Moses was the man with whom God spoke face to face when he received the commandments at Sinai, on Mount Horeb. So they came to this conclusion: because Moses was so close to God you should believe in him, do what he says; obeying the law of Moses is the way to approach God. By carefully keeping his commandments you will be admitted into the presence of God.

Basically this is the same error as that of Rome. Pray to Mary, the mother of God, and she will help you. She is so close to God, she can put in a good word for you.

But we protestants have our mediators too. Godly ministers, old writers, sacred books, experienced Christians, we often put more trust on them and what they say, than trusting in God's Word.

Our text sweeps all such creaturely grounds away. No matter how close Moses was to God, no matter how important Mary was to Jesus, no matter how godly our forefathers were, we may not trust in them. We may not count on them to get us one inch closer to God's favour. Why not? They were all creatures. And no mere creature can save us, the Heidelberg Catechism says. "For God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed; and no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it."

No mere creature can save us, John says. "In the beginning was the Word". Do you need a solid ground to stand upon – Christ is that ground. Are you looking for One Who is close to God? The Word was with God. He was with God before Moses was even born, or Mary, or any other saint. He is the oldest foundation for our faith. The Church goes back to the apostles. But the Word goes back all the way to eternity, before time began and God created heaven and earth. "And the Word was God"; Christ, the Word is God, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit. What a solid foundation is here!

Do you need One Who knows God and Who can explain to you what God thinks about you? Flee to Christ! Seek refuge with Him! The only begotten of the Father hath declared God to man!

Beloved congregation, I may proclaim to you Christ, the eternal Word of the eternal Father. The same was in the beginning with God.

Moses can't help you. "By the works of the law no man shall be justified". The gap remains. The distance between you and God becomes wider and wider. You cannot bridge that gap; not by your works, not by your prayer, tears, good intentions, or

resolutions. Only by faith in the eternal Word of God. “I am the Way” this Word says, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me”.

Believe this Word and you are saved. Abide in Christ and you are with the Father, even as He is with the Father. Therefore, when the jailor asks what he must do to be saved, Paul does not say: believe in Moses, stay with us. Join our group – but “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”. What a rich Gospel this is, congregation! “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God.” Here you have the source and the basis of your faith.

But you will not taste the sweetness of this Gospel until you first lose all other grounds. These creature dependences have to be knocked from under your feet. The Holy Spirit does that. He makes you feel the uselessness of any foundation outside of Christ. Even your experiences, how necessary they are, cannot be your ground and basis of salvation. Every true believer knows of the times that all comforts are gone. Maybe it is that way with you now. There is no peace in your soul. There is no rest and no joy. There is nothing you can cling to as a hope for eternity. The law condemns you for you have transgressed all God’s commandments. Your conscience accuses you. There is a big gap, an immeasurable gulf between you and God. Death is waiting. At any moment you may have to appear before a holy and just God. And you have no ground to stand upon. Your godfearing parents cannot help you. Your books do not give you any comfort. People in whom you trusted disappoint you. You are alone with God. But He is your Judge!

Is that how it is with you? There is only one way: cast yourself upon the mercy and grace of God. But you say, I am a terrible sinner; if you only knew how wicked and evil my heart is; there is no good thing in me; I am lost!

Therefore I say to you, in your lost condition throw yourself into the everlasting arms of Christ, the eternal Word. He has declared God. He has revealed the thoughts of God concerning sinners, lost in sin and trespasses. And these thoughts of God concerning lost sinners, are thoughts of peace. In Christ, God is a God of love and grace. That is the

miracle of grace, that He has come into this sinful world to save and to seek that which is lost! O, what grace is here displayed!

At Christmas we remember that this Word of God became flesh. God sent this Word into the world. See Him in the manger of Bethlehem. The eternal Word of God in the form of a Baby. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”.

But this Baby will grow up. He becomes a Man, the Man of Sorrows. He will suffer and die and in this way bring about reconciliation for sinners. He gave His life as a ransom for their sin. He accomplished what no mere man could ever do. By His suffering, death and resurrection He restored a lost and sinful people and brought them back into fellowship with God.

O, cast yourself upon this Word of God, which says: “be not faithless, but believing”. Behold, here I am, your Redeemer, your Saviour! Have you fallen yet at His feet with Thomas, stammering, “My Lord and my God”?

All who may do that are eternally safe. For then you become one with Him Who was with God in the beginning. Through faith in Him you will also be with God unto all eternity. Now I don’t need any creatures anymore to bring me to God. I rely only on the only Name given under heaven among men: the Name Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

Do you have questions about His power to save you? Any doubts about His ability? Listen. The apostle John says: “All things were made by Him”. Christ is the Creator – “without Him was not anything made that was made”. Do you think then, troubled soul, that He could not save you? He Who made the world and everything in it is certainly able to deliver you from the power of Satan, sin and death. O, I know it may seem hopeless many times. When you look at yourself and you see your sin, your corruption – that fountain of wickedness here – you ask, is it possible yet for me? You know you deserve to go to hell. Because the distance between God and yourself was caused by your sins. And when you see that gap getting wider by the day, you sometimes doubt whether you will ever be saved.

There is so much sin to overcome. So much unwillingness to go the Lord's way,
So much rebellion against the Lord's leadings in our life has to be overcome.
Yet, Christ is able! He Who called the universe into being can certainly call you out of
the grave of death and sin. Pray to Him, sinner, and ask Him to use His power on your
behalf. You don't realize it yet, but He has already done so. At Calvary He has displayed
His great power in defeating Satan, the prince of darkness. There the victory was won.
What you need yet is the eye of faith to see this and appropriate it. O, for a view of the
Saviour, Jesus Christ! The Word become flesh, the Creator become humble servant to
obtain salvation for His people!

And those of you who by grace have put your trust in the Word: abide in Him; stay
close to Him. He is the only foundation of your faith.
"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," said Christ, the
Word. With this eternal Word as your refuge, you are safe for time and eternity, body and
soul. Because He is the Creator, He has everything under His control. Without His will
nothing can happen. Clouds, wind and weather, sun, moon and stars do His bidding.
Food, clothing and shelter, money, goods, house and work, we depend for all things on
Him, without Who nothing was made which was made. What a comforting thought this
is! Just as the ravens fed Elijah, so the Lord Christ can find ways and means to supply all
your needs, child of God. Not a hair can fall from your head without His will.

Do you have this comfort? Do you trust in this eternal Word, Which was with God in
the beginning? Your Saviour is the One Who created everything. That means He rules.
But that means also that He never forsakes the works of His hands. O, how ashamed we
ought to be, people of God, that we don't trust Him more than we do!

Kohlbrugge writes somewhere : "We are never worried that the stars will fall from
heaven. Somehow we know and trust that God will keep them running in their appointed
circuits. But when it comes to trusting that same Creator for our daily bread or our
salvation, we are often afraid that He will forget us".

But He will not and cannot forget His own. Listen: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me”.

One question and we go home. Is this eternal Word of the eternal Father your Saviour yet? A big question, you say. Yes, so it is, but a question we must answer now while it is called today. We are all creatures of God, fallen creatures. That means that we are living in a broken relationship with God. Therefore we all deserve God’s wrath and eternal punishment. But in His great mercy He has found a way whereby sinners can be saved.

Christ has revealed that way. He Himself is that way. “I am the way, the truth, and the life” Jesus said. “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me”.

Whatever you do, don’t bypass that Way. It is the only Way to the Father. Outside of Christ God is a consuming fire. Unconverted sinners, you will certainly be consumed by that fire unless – unless you may turn to Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father.

O, see God’s love in sending His Son to die for sinners on the cross. Already in Paradise we see Him coming to a fallen Adam in His seeking love: “Where art thou?” And today He is still calling lost sons and daughters of Adam – especially you, young people. “Where are you my son, my daughter – give me your heart!” O, say it then, Lord, take my heart and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

These things were spoken to you by means of this sermon, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life through His Name.

AMEN.