

Book of John #1

John 1:1-18

Eric Cepin
Dec. 3, 2023

I need to be parented: I can be much like a 3 yo, distracted by the electrical outlet and putting my handprints over the window that my dad just cleaned. I'm prone to do these things but now my things are adult things: my own ego and making myself better in the moment: I have an insatiable need for people to be OK with me. I find things like food and Netflix to be SHINY: and even darker things.

Advent means coming or arrival: it's the same place in the church calendar all over the world: it is a tool that God uses to re-parent you and me. Parents struggle with 2-year-olds because they understand "No" but they head to that thing anyways. You have to use your physicality to get them and remove him from the thing: advent is also like this. God takes our drifting and refocuses us on the birth and the return of Christ.

Advent invites you to three things:

1. submit to Jesus
2. receive instruction
3. act in the way of Jesus

This mirrors a 3-part formula for parenting:

1. Set up a practice opportunity: Put an object on the end table that is safe to pull over. When they are about to touch the object, instead of saying "don't do that," get down on their level (physically engaged) and invite them to submit to you as the parent.
2. Teach the child (not) to do something: in this case, you teach them not to touch that thing on the end table. You can even touch their hand to the item and flick it gently. Advent gives us instruction.
3. Give the child something they can touch. Then you teach them a whole new way of being that they CAN do. Advent offers this to us!

I am going to introduce the Gospel of John to you today; we will be in John until the end of May. John is one of four gospels. I invite you to read this over and over this coming year.

Mark shows us the Jedi gospel (Jesus is a man of action!), **Matthew** shows the Jewish Jesus, **Luke** marvels at the intricacies and details of Jesus, and **John** shows us the slow-burn Oscar-winning movie with very intense, emotional moments (woman at well, woman caught in adultery, weird scene of Jesus and his mother at a wedding).

John 20 tells us why John wrote this gospel:

John 20: 30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **31** But these are written that you may believe^[a] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The key part of this is **LIFE**, which I means to be in animation: There are 2 ideas in John: if you aren't part of the light (a believer), then you are a zombie (in the dark, not animated, not human). Over and over, you find that encounters with Jesus make you alive.

There are 7 sevens in John; you can do some research on these and look for them as you are reading it. Here are some to get you started:

- 7 miraculous signs
- 7 "It's not my time"
- 7 "I am" statement
- 7 testimonies
- 7 women that Jesus met

We will begin with the first 5 verses.

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it.

I printed John 1:1-8 out for you on a handout: good to have in front of you as we talk about it.

It's good to rearrange your bedroom: when Sue and I moved our bed closer to the window, we noticed we weren't sleeping as well. We were waking up with the light. So

we put a thick sheet on the window and now it's pitch black. Jesus is the animation of all mankind.

In my research on Advent this year, I actually found BLACK advent candles. (No one knows where advent began) They light all five black candles and each week you snuff out one until there is only one white candle left. This symbolizes you snuffing out chaos in your life until all that is left is HOPE. Before the light bursts in, this is how we were: ***We are the easily distracted 3 year old that is easily moved out of the light and needs to be refocused.***

Hold on this: the darkness hasn't OVERCOME it: Overcome means you can't take control of it.

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. **8** He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Why do we need a witness to the light? Couldn't you see the light in the darkness?

In our pitch-black bedroom, we can even use our watches to find the bathroom. If you live in darkness, you are blinded: you begin to believe you need things. When you start a diet, you get rid of everything you like and all you think about is sugar. We need someone to point to the light: we need John the Baptist. The re-parenting of Eric is to remind him that he is a witness. ***We are John the Baptists for each other:*** we need to be bold enough to enter into these places. We are invited to be pointers of Jesus, boldly like John. ***Point to the light.***

John 1:9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. **11** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **12** Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— **13** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.



Indiana Jones reaches for the grail: his father says "NO, don't do that." Jesus came to his own and they didn't RECEIVE him: RECEIVE means to take hold of. Will I reach for the father or the things that promise me

something else? Jesus came to the people who took hold of him and they believed, had confidence in his name. They oriented themselves to him.

Some kids here at the Village have been trained to get attention from an adult by putting their hand on a shoulder or arm and wait. ***Their hand begins to move you in their direction: This is what we invited Jesus to do.*** When we believe him, we become children of God which is pretty powerful, if you think about it. You are a child of the one who spoke things into existence! The one that holds all things together, the one who gives you the ability to speak. For this moment, the invitation is to just take this in: REST during advent and think about these things! You are deeply loved and cared about: we want to NOT be Indiana Jones and reach for the things that we think will give us life.

John 1:14 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. **15** (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") **16** Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

This is a poetic way of telling the birth story of Christ: I want you to wrestle with verse 14: ***The word became flesh.*** It didn't become **SOMA**, but it became **SARX**: FLESH: messy, farty, uncomfortable, cold, hot, vision messed up: the light became us, human! The Greeks loved the idea of the word holding all things together: but this word also became FLESH, human. For Hebrews, events mattered and they wondered if John was the one.

Jesus dwelt means planted a tabernacle with us, he was knowable! The light became flesh: we are fleshy. As his child, I have become a light. I need to be reminded that I am a light in the way of Jesus. I don't usually feel this way; instead, I feel like I'm moving in darkness.

Advent re-orient us to being light. How will I do this? It also gives us a great sense of honor. Jesus came in grace and truth. I need to be a person of grace and truth as I follow in the way of Jesus. What does this mean?

Grace means Jesus gave me something I don't deserve: a relationship with the Father. To be grace to you is to offer the same kind of mercy to you: the hope of the

resurrection. Also, Jesus was TRUTH. ***When it's kindly spoken inside of relationships with vulnerable people, it's very powerful.*** Throughout this gospel, you watch Jesus offer grace and truth over and over: I don't condemn you but offer you life.