

A White Christmas
John 1:1-18

Brothers and sisters, I must confess that I am dreaming of a white Christmas, but... not like the ones we used to know. Rather I am dreaming that this whole series about the 3 Colors of Christmas will come together for us this morning... and illuminate... reveal – in bright white light – a full and clear picture of who God truly is.

And in some ways, this is similar to what happens with a Bing Crosby kind of white Christmas.

We may have our favorite aspects of the Christmas season – whether its listening to Christmas music on the radio, seeing the Christmas lights twinkling in the trees, or the giving and receiving of gifts with family and friends...

But – and especially for those born and raised here in Canada – if there is no snow at Christmas time, even if you have all the other things you love about Christmas... and even in spite of the fact that you might not even like the snow or winter all

that much... if there is no snow at Christmas then something is missing that ties it all together and makes it complete.

Even those who have grown up celebrating Christmas in places where there is no snow – like Toronto - will somehow want to celebrate a white Christmas and experience how everything that is good and wonderful about Christmas all comes together with the snow.

So in a similar way, after we have spent the past three Sundays looking at a Green Christmas, a Blue Christmas and a Red Christmas and learning what each of these colors represents in terms of how God reveals who He is to us – today we want to bring it all together and get full picture of who God is.

It's just like when we used to hook up the old DVD players (did I really just say "old" DVD players???) to our TV's or to a LCD projector we would use an RGB cable – which had 3 leads on it for the Red, Green, Blue tint in the color picture.

And if you only hooked up one lead – you would get the picture coming through but it would be tinted predominantly red or green, or like what is going on with our projector right now – predominantly blue.

And connecting another lead would help – but you wouldn't get the full color picture until you hooked up all three of the leads – and it works the same way with how God has revealed Himself brothers and sisters.

As good as a Green Christmas is – on its own - its not the full picture of God, same goes for a Red Christmas and a Blue Christmas. Yes, its absolutely true God is Creator (Green)... but He is also a Saving God (Red) and a Transforming God (Blue) and He is also a God who is three persons in One – a Trinity.

And so this morning we want to hook up all three colors to Christmas so that we get a clear white Christmas picture of who God really is as a Three in One God, because in spite of the fact that you might prefer a Red Christmas – I'm sure you

would agree that we need to have a full picture of who God really is – God Himself wants that for us and to refuse to get to know God in the fullness of who He wants to be known as, and has revealed Himself as - is at best quite rude and disrespectful and at worst its sinful.

And... brothers and sisters having a one-sided view of God will also result in us having a one-sided relationship with God.

In other words we only want to relate to the person of God that is beneficial to us, is comfortable for us, or easy for us – but its really about us, it's a self-interested relationship with God – we not really into God for who God really is in Himself.

So this morning brothers and sisters as we look at how the 3 Colors come together for a White Christmas I pray that it wouldn't simply be a dream, but that it would be a reality – an answered prayer – that a White Christmas would lead us to become enthralled with God for who God really is in His full triune existence.

That we would receive a revelation of God this Christmas that would attract us, captivate us, and mesmerize us – like a little child captivated, enthralled and mesmerized by the intricate and exquisite sparkling beauty of a snow globe.

Because that is what Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ is all about – coming to apprehend the most revealing and intimate way God has made Himself known to us, so that we can know Him fully as He wants to be known.

And brothers and sisters nobody explains this meaning of Christmas and how Green, Red and Blue come together better than John does in the first 18 verses of his gospel, this is the story of THE White Christmas! and so I invite you to turn to John 1 as we take a closer look at how Christmas reveals the Triune God to us.

Now like anything that is going to truly captivate us and keep us entranced for the long run – it requires a bit of work and concentration and engagement to dig into it, so we can

actually see the depth and the intricacy and how amazing God truly is.

And our hearts need to be open and soft and expectant... so are you ready to proceed?

Now if you noticed that John's Christmas story starts off the same way as the bible does – *In the beginning* - you're picking up on the first indicator that John is starting off with a Green picture of God, God as Creator – *In the beginning* – just like Genesis story of creation.

But John broadens our understanding of God as Creator and explains how the Word was involved in the act of Creation as God – *“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.”*

And then John develops this further and speaks about how there was light and life in the Word and how this was for the

benefit of humanity *“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”*

So, if we pick up on John’s Genesis comparison we know from the creation account that God breathed life into humanity through His Spirit, so this tells us that John’s reference to Life here is actually a reference to the Spirit.

And from the way John talks about the Word and God and Life we can see the beginning of describing the Trinity. They are all intertwined together and while these are all separate and distinct terms, John connects them together in a very intimate way - IN the Word was Life, the Word WAS God.

So, brothers and sisters – even if you prefer to focus on God as Creator and relate to Him only in that capacity – John is revealing here that even in the act of Creation there is more to God than what we may have realized – the Word and the Spirit are also involved in Creation as God.

Maybe we didn’t notice them or pay much attention to them before in their supporting roles in the Genesis account – but John brings it to our attention here, and in doing so implies that their involvement indicates that God never intended to limit His self-revelation to just a Creator... and even if our own sinfulness wants to limit God to just a Creator – the good news, as John describes it in vs. 5 is that *“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

So in spite of human sinfulness and the darkness of either denying God exists or limiting God to being only a Creator - God’s revelation of Himself through His creation still shines through – our sinfulness can’t stop it.

As we learned in a Green Christmas, Psalm 19:1 proclaims *“the Heavens declare the Glory of God!”* and we saw how God used that revelation to draw the Babylonian astrologers to come and worship Jesus – born as the King of the Jews.

Now brothers and sisters please note that while the darkness has not overcome the light...

– neither has the light vanquished the darkness!

In fact, as we read further we discover that it was necessary for God to send a witness to the Light. Now isn't that a bit ironic that someone needs to point out a source of light to people who are in the darkness? That should be self-evident... but it's not.

As Romans 1:18 tells us, the godlessness and wickedness of humans causes us to suppress the truth that the creation so plainly reveals to us about God.

So that - as Romans 1:21 says *“although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened”* thus, a witness to the Light is needed.

So now John moves to a Red picture of God - God revealing himself as a saving God who sends a witness to point to the light to save humanity from the darkness.

But notice this man named John is not identified as John “the Baptist” - and even though we automatically think of John the Baptist in this reference, and that is correct, by leaving off that identifier John the Evangelist opens up the potential for this name to refer to himself as well, and to the gospel that he is writing – as it also points to the Light.

And we can expand on this and go further back as well – remember how we learned last week in our Red Christmas message that God had chosen and created Israel to be a royal priesthood and “light to the nations” around them (Isaiah 62) That is also a human witness to the Light – the man named John can represent Israel.

And to facilitate Israel becoming a royal priesthood and a light to the nations God gave Israel His Law – which King David says in Psalm 119:105 *“Your word is a light unto his path”* and God also sent the Prophets who spoke “The Word” of the Lord. So the man named John can represent the entire tradition of the Law and all the Prophets.

And this brings us full circle back to “John the Baptist” because he represents that entire tradition of the Law and the Prophets and most importantly how they point to the coming Messiah – the Light of the world, and we have all of this recorded and written down for us in the Holy Scriptures – which Paul states are able to make us wise for Salvation in Jesus Christ (2Tim 3:15)

So all of this is represented in that statement – “*there was a man sent from God, named John*” this is the summary of God as a saving God.

Now the history and the Scriptural record of God’s saving actions is amazing and wonderous brothers and sisters – but it is its only a witness to the light, it is not the light itself – as John clarifies for us in vs. 8.

So - as we learned last week in Luke’s genealogy all of God’s Covenants lead up to and are fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ - as John succinctly states here in vs. 9 that this Red

picture of God culminates in the occurrence of “*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*”

Now you would think that since the light that shines in the darkness was **not** self-evident to people, that with a witness and the arrival of the true Light coming into the world – humanity would finally see the Light and turn to the Light and have Life! They would see and know God for who He really reveals Himself to be!

But no... as John sadly states, in spite of the fact that everything was made through Him and this has been evident all along “*the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*”

This rejection and eventual crucifixion of the Messiah was certainly foreshadowed in how the Gentile nations persecuted and oppressed Israel – but even more disturbingly it was predicted by how the nation of Israel themselves persecuted and executed the prophets God had already sent them.

However – in spite of the initial rejection and the subsequent crucifixion that occurred something else happened.

John writes “*Yet... yet... to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...*” So how do those who reject the Light become children of God?

In his explanation of this brothers and sisters - John transitions into giving us a Blue picture of God – God as a transformer.

Now even if you are willing to accept that God starts out revealing Himself as Creator, and then further reveals Himself as Savior and that’s where you want to stop and stay... that’s not where God is going to let us stop. There is more to God wants to reveal about Himself to us.

There is further work that needs to be done in order for the salvation that God has provided to become effective. God is going to reveal Himself to be a God who can take those who had rejected the Light, persecuted the Light and crucified the

Light and transform them into people who received the Light and believe in His name!

And John invokes what we learned about the Holy Spirit’s role in Jesus’ conception from the gospel of Luke in our Blue Christmas message to show how this occurs. People do not become children of God because of their lineage or who their relatives were, or through their own decision-making capacities, or from any biological capacity...

They become children of God through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the same way that Jesus was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit. As John says they are “*children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*”

It’s almost as if John the Evangelist was thinking about and anticipating how in just 2 chapters, he was going to write about Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisee Nicodemus who expressed surprise at Jesus’ statement that to enter the Kingdom of God one had to be born again.

You can almost hear Nicodemus sputter *“How can someone be born when they are old? Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” (John 3:4)*

You see Nicodemus understands and accepts a Green picture of God and a Red picture of God – but he’s reluctant to accept or understand a Blue picture of God

But Jesus insists that *“one must be born of the Spirit (vs.8) and then He rebukes Nicodemus saying “you are Israel’s teacher! And you do not know these things??”*

Brothers and Sisters - Green and Red pictures of God are not the full picture, in fact these pictures themselves indicate there is still more to come, we still need a Blue picture of God.

And the truth is that for all the wonderful miracles and teaching that Jesus did in His earthly ministry, firstly they were not done by His own power, they were done by the Power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus – and secondly the church did not grow and the gospel was not proclaimed effectively to

produce converts and new believers until – Jesus sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost!

Now – just in case all the people who prefer a Blue picture of God are tempted to start giving each other high-fives because they are thinking they have the correct picture of God - John immediately moves on – because a Blue picture on its own is not the full picture of God either, nor is a Blue picture of God somehow better or more spiritual than a Red or Green picture.

Rather Green, Red and Blue pictures of God combine together to give us the full revelation of the Triune God and so in vs. 14 John finally brings it all together and gives us THE essential description of a white Christmas!

This is John’s Christmas eve story - *“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.”* Merry Christmas brothers and sisters! This is where it all comes together!

When we behold the baby laying in the manger at Christmas John wants to illuminate this scene with bright white Trinitarian light to disperse the shadows of cute and cuddly and dispel the darkness of emotional sentimentality so that our eyes, our minds, our spirits will gasp in amazement and wonder as we apprehend Who is actually laying before us.

In the same way that shining a UV light on something will reveal hidden markings or features or cause certain colors to glow - the white Trinitarian light reveals this baby Jesus is intimately connected to the fullness of who God really is.

This is the Word of God who flung galaxies into place, this is the Word that spoke the Law of Moses, the Word spoken by the Prophets, in this Word is Life itself – the source of all biological and spiritual vitality!

This is God himself laying there before us.

Brothers and sisters – open your hearts and receive this revelation so that we may also join in with John’s amazement and incredulity and declare *“We have SEEN HIS GLORY!”*

I don’t think I describe His glory any better than how the Holy Spirit has already described it in scripture. *“On many past occasions and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature, upholding all things by His powerful word.”* (Heb 1:2)
Amen!

This baby in the manger – Jesus Christ - encompasses and fulfills everything that God reveals Himself to be as Creator God, as a Saving God, and as a Transforming God, as a God who is all this as three distinct and separate persons – and yet who is one God in all that He is and does.

Brothers and sisters – it is fashionable today to display a false modesty when it comes to God and say that “God is so far beyond us, who can truly understand Him or How can something so limited as human language and writing adequately and fully describe God?!”

But that is just a polite and well-mannered way of ignoring God and refusing to honor Him as God and suppressing the truth about God.

Yes it is true that God is so far beyond us – but it is possible to fully know God and who He is! But not because of our own capacity – but because God reveals Himself to us.

As John writes in conclusion of this Christmas Story – *“No one has ever seen God... however - the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made God known!”* We CAN know God!

And that’s where this ends brothers and sisters, with us KNOWING God. The Three in One – One in Three God who is

the beginning and the end of all things. It is our final purpose and destination in life to know this God and to enjoy Him simply for Who He is – forever.

Bask in His glory, fall in wonder at His feet, delight yourself in Him - resist the temptation to make knowing God about anything else other than Him – leave the self-interest behind!

God has already revealed Himself as Creator... as Savior... as Transformer – and in this He deals with all our pragmatic needs, our situations and circumstances... but it is all meant to come together so that we can know Him as God in His fullness and lose ourselves in the wonder and amazement of fully knowing such an amazing God – and it does just that in Jesus. If we know the one Jesus – we know the Three because God is three in One – One in Three, it’s not a dream brothers and sisters... He is our ultimate reality and our destination.

May we KNOW God and enjoy Him forever. May all your Christmases be White. Amen.