

The True God

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon emphasizes the true nature of God as revealed through Jesus Christ, highlighting His love, mercy, and holiness.

Duration: 37:04

Scripture: Isaiah 7:14, Jeremiah 31:3, John 3:16, John 5:18, John 14:9, John 17:3, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3, 1 John 5:20

Topics: "Gods Nature", "Eternal Life"

Description

This sermon delves into the revelation of God through Jesus Christ, emphasizing how Jesus clarified misunderstandings about God, demonstrated God's mercy, grace, compassion, and love, and revealed the triune nature of God. It highlights the importance of knowing God personally through Jesus for eternal life and the necessity of acknowledging God's holiness. The message invites individuals to receive Christ for a personal relationship with the true and living God.

Transcript

Good morning. I was telling the folks in the first service it's kind of interesting. We were in London last weekend and we were a bit impeded by the London Marathon from getting to the church that we were ministering at last Sunday morning.

So I said to Cheryl this morning, boy they followed us all the way home with this marathon thing. So it's good to be with you this morning. We are going to be looking at the fifth chapter of First John, the 20th verse.

As Dave mentioned, Pastor Chuck will finish up this epistle this evening covering the fifth and the final chapter. We're going to look at verse 20. First John 5 20.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him who is true and we are in Him who is true even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Years ago I was talking with a young woman talking to her about the Lord, seeking to share the Lord with her.

And she said to me, I'm not interested in Jesus Christ. She said, I just believe in a God of love. I said to her, where did you get the idea that God is love? She thought about it for a while and then she answered and said, I don't know.

I said, well I'll tell you where that idea came from. It came from the Bible and more specifically it came from Jesus Himself. There's no such thing as a God of love outside of the biblical revelation and that I think is an important thing to know.

Now although men did have some knowledge of God prior to the coming of Jesus, the full revelation of God came through Jesus. This is what John tells us in the verses that we read together this morning and this is what John tells us here in our text. We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding.

Or as he said in the final verse of that prologue that we read, no man has seen God at any time but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. And so that is what we want to talk about today. We want to talk about the true God and what we now know of the true God because of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So John says in this 20th verse, he said, we know that the Son of God has come. We know that the Son of God has come. Now how do we know that Jesus is really the Son of God? After all, there are people that would dispute that.

There are people that would say, well Jesus, you know, there's nothing necessarily unique about Him. He's similar to other religious figures in history and well of course He might be the Son of God but just like other people are the Son of God. But when the Bible uses the term the Son of God, it's actually speaking, it's speaking of something unique, something extraordinary, something that there is nothing else like it.

There's a lot of misunderstanding, I think, amongst people about the the very term the Son of God. From the biblical usage, it's a term that actually refers to, it refers to equality with God. As a matter of fact, that's exactly what the Jews thought when Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of God.

In John chapter 5 verse 18, it says, the Jews sought to kill Jesus because He said God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. So you see, this term implies equality with God. So how do we know that Jesus is the Son of God in the sense that the scripture uses this term? Well, we know first of all through prophecy because the prophets declared that a son would be given.

Remember what Isaiah said, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And then the prophecy of course goes on, the government shall be upon His shoulders. He shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

But unto us a son is given. So we have prophecy. We also have the testimony of the virgin birth.

Now the virgin birth in essence tells us that that Jesus is the unique Son of God. Again, the prophet declared, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Emmanuel, which interpreted means God with us. So you see, the virgin birth is communicating to us that Jesus wasn't merely a man, but He was also God.

God is His Father. He is the Son of God. The miracles of Jesus testify to the fact that He is the Son of God.

And Jesus pointed to His miracles. He said, in essence, He said, you know, if looking at me, it's hard to believe that I'm the Son of God. Look at what I'm doing.

Look at the miracles I'm doing. Look at the works that I'm doing. I'm doing the works of the Father.

And if you can't recognize me, and of course they couldn't recognize Him because of their false expectation, but if you can't recognize me, at least recognize the works. So He pointed to the works that He did being the works of the Father, which testified to His Sonship. But then finally, we have the resurrection.

And as a matter of fact, Paul would say that it was through the resurrection that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power. So John says, and we know that the Son of God has come. How do we know that? We know it because the prophets declared He would come.

The virgin birth testifies to it. His miracles testify. And of course, the resurrection speaks to us that this is indeed the Son of God.

Now as the Son of God, Jesus is the representative of God the Father. Remember that last verse that we read, no man has seen God at any time. And to understand what John is saying, I think it would be better to take the word God and replace it with Father.

No man has seen the Father at any time, but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. So you see, Jesus is God's representative. And again, we're told this many places over in the New Testament.

I think of what Paul said in his epistle to the Colossians, chapter 1, beginning in verse 15. He said, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things are made which are in heaven and in earth.

And then he goes on to say in chapter 2, verse 9, for in Him, in Christ, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And then in Hebrews chapter 1, verse 3, speaking of Jesus, who being the brightness of His glory, the exact representation of His person. So you see, Jesus is the representative.

He's the exact representation of the Father. And then of course, Jesus would say to His disciples in John 14, 9, He that has seen me has seen the Father. So John tells us, we know that the Son of God has come and He has given us an understanding.

Now, when Jesus came into the world, there was mass confusion over just who God was and what He was like. The Gentile world, the world at large, the world apart from Israel, their understanding of God was completely darkened. They had been for so many centuries steeped in various forms of idolatry, they had completely lost the concept of the one true and living God.

And they had created a myriad of gods that were basically deifications of their own passions and desires and things like that. And as you look at ancient history, and as you look at the gods of the pagan nations, that's exactly what you find. Just deifications of human passion, emotion, desire, and those kinds of things.

So total and complete confusion in the world at large. But then with the Jews, who were the ones who had the revelation of God committed to them and were supposed to have preserved it and passed it on, sadly they had distorted the revelation. And so by the time we come to the New Testament period, even amongst the Jews, there's no real clear understanding of just what God is like in His nature.

And to a large degree by the religious elite, God is being misrepresented as just extremely rigid and highly legalistic and predominantly judgment-oriented. This is the picture at the time. But then Jesus comes and Jesus brings us perfect understanding.

And that's what John says here. We know that the Son of God has come and He has given us an understanding that we may know Him who is true. So Jesus came to clear up all of the confusion about God.

He came to bring back the true understanding of who God is. So the question is this, what did Jesus reveal to us about God that had not been previously known or understood? Now if you think hard about that, you know Jesus didn't necessarily bring to us any totally new knowledge of God. What Jesus did was He clarified many of the misunderstandings about God.

He cleared up those misunderstandings. But more than even in the area of His teaching, it was more through His life and through His deeds what He really ended up doing more than anything else is showing us what God is really like. Showing us what the scriptures were talking about when they spoke of God in certain terms.

You see after all the Old Testament told us that God is a God of mercy and grace. The Old Testament told us that God was a God of compassion. The Old Testament told us that to some extent God was a God of love, but it didn't tell us thoroughly.

And then again through the misunderstanding, even that limited message was distorted. So Jesus comes and He clears all of this up. And it's interesting the verse that we finished up our reading with there, verse 18 that I've already quoted, no man has seen the Father at any time but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom.

He has declared Him. What it really means there is that He has brought God out into the open so all can see Him. In other words, Jesus has made it clear to everybody who God is and what He's like, what He requires, and so forth.

So as we think about that, what are some of the things that Jesus brought out into the clear for us? Well first of all, and there are too many to go over here this morning, but I've just chosen a few. But first of all, the triune nature of God was brought out into the open through Jesus and then the apostles. The triune nature of God.

That God is a trinity. That His very nature is about fellowship. His very nature is about community.

His very nature is about companionship. His very nature is about love. You see in the Old Testament that was hinted at and you can build a case for the plurality within the divine nature.

You can build that case strongly from the Old Testament, but it wasn't spelled out clearly. So Jesus comes and He makes it clear that He is the Son of God, but He's equal with the Father. There is a Father and He also introduces clearly the person of the Holy Spirit.

But in this revelation of the triunity of God, or more commonly referred to God as a trinity, the same thing basically, what we're seeing again is the potential, the possibility for God really being a God of love. If God is just a strict unity and has been that for eternity, it's hard to conceive of how God could be love for eternity because how can a strict unity with no object of love be love? In order to love, you have to have

someone to love. But because God is a triunity, there is no problem because there's this love and this communion between the persons of the Godhead.

So Jesus brings this out to us. Now, of course, the trinity is a doctrine that has been opposed by the cults and the false religionists as far back as you can think. A common thread running through each one of the cults today is the denial of the trinity.

They deny that there is one God who exists in three persons. And the same is true with the other religions of the world. Islam denies the trinity.

Judaism denies the trinity. Hinduism denies the trinity. Buddhism denies the trinity.

But you see, this is what Jesus brought out into the open, the triunity of God. But Jesus also brought out God's mercy and grace toward sinners. Now, again, this was stated in the Old Testament.

I think of Psalm 103 and what a beautiful psalm that is. The Lord hasn't rewarded us according to our sins. He hasn't punished us according to our iniquities.

God is gracious. He's full of mercy and compassion and so forth. And He's removed our sins as far as the east is from the west.

As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. You see, that was stated back in the Old Testament. But again, through the process of time and misrepresentation, it becomes distorted.

So Jesus comes and He doesn't tell us anything new in the sense that nobody knew that God was merciful or gracious. But Jesus shows us just exactly what that means. He shows us the extent of it.

And it was far beyond what anybody ever imagined. The religious leaders were completely stumbled by the mercy and the grace that Jesus showed to sinners. As a matter of fact, that was one of the reasons why they rejected them.

They said the Messiah wouldn't associate with these kinds of people. They couldn't believe that God's mercy and grace would extend that far. But think with me of a few examples.

I think of the lame man. We have the record of his healing in John chapter 5. He was healed there at the pool of Bethesda. And maybe you remember the story.

There he is. He's sitting there. He's been there for 38 years.

He's wanting to get into this pool. Whenever it's stirred up, the belief is whenever it's stirred up, an angel is stirring it, the first person in is going to get healed. The man has a problem.

He has nobody to put him in the pool. And Jesus walks by and He says, do you want to be healed? And the man says, well, I don't have any man to help me get in the pool. Jesus said, rise, take up your bed and walk.

And He healed him instantaneously. But here's the interesting thing. When Jesus converses with the man further, He says to him, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.

The implication is the man was in the condition he was in because of sin. He had been involved in some sin that brought about a disease in his life that had crippled him for 38 years. So we see in that, we see

Jesus showing mercy and grace toward this man who was a sinner.

Another great example and probably the most classic of all is the example found in John chapter 8 of the woman caught in adultery. Remember the religious leaders bring her to Jesus. They sort of cast her down before Him and they say, we caught this woman in the very act of adultery.

And Moses said in the law, stone her. What do you say? And you remember the story how Jesus, how he knelt down and he began to write there with his finger in the sand. And then he stands and he says, he that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.

And you remember that they slowly but surely, each one of them began to to walk away from that scene. And then Jesus says to the woman, woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you? And she says, no man, Lord. And he said this, neither do I condemn you.

Go and sin no more. This was, this was inconceivable because the law said if a person was committed adultery, they were to be stoned. But you see Jesus is coming and he's showing that God's heart is not to punish people.

That's not what he wants to do first. Sometimes he's forced to do it. But what he wants to do is he wants to have mercy.

He wants to show grace. And how beautifully that's demonstrated with their, or think of Zacchaeus. Here's this man.

He's a tax collector. He's despised by his own people. He's ripping off his own people.

So understandably he's despised. He's a short little guy. Jesus is coming through town.

There's a big crowd. So he says, I'm going to climb up in this tree so I can get a good look at this Jesus fellow. And as Jesus comes into Jericho, he looks up in the tree and he says to Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus come down.

I'm going to have lunch with you today. And you can imagine people were saying, oh, what is Jesus doing? This man's a sinner. He's horrible.

He can't go have lunch with him. We hate him. He's wicked.

He's oppressing us. He's working for the Romans, our great enemies. But what does Jesus do? He goes into the house of Zacchaeus and then Zacchaeus says, oh Lord, if I've taken anything from anybody, I'm going to pay it back fivefold.

And oh, and Jesus says, this day salvation has come to this house. So you see he has mercy. He has grace.

And then one more example. Think of the thief on the cross, who by his own admission was worthy of death. He said, we deserve what we're getting.

He said that to the other thief, you remember? But then he turns to Jesus and he said, Lord, remember me when you enter your kingdom. And what did Jesus say? Today you will be with me in paradise. You see, Jesus brought out the mercy and the grace of God in a way that nobody ever would have imagined that he

would be that merciful, that gracious.

Think of how Jesus brought out the compassion, showed us how compassionate God is. What did Jesus do for the majority of his ministry time? We're told in the book of Acts that he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. And we have this repeated over and over again.

Remember the blind, the lame, the deaf, the diseased, all of these people come to Jesus. And we read in the Gospels where Jesus is looking at them and it says that he sees them as sheep without a shepherd. And the Greek language there says basically that Jesus was doubled over with compassion for them.

You see again, the Old Testament said God was compassionate, but now Jesus is showing the extent of that compassion. And he's taking care, he's healing all of these people. He's feeding the poor, he's comforting them with words of encouragement that theirs is the kingdom of God and so forth.

But then again, when we come to the issue of the love of God. Now, nowhere in the Old Testament does it state specifically that God is love. But it certainly states in the Old Testament that God does love.

And God expresses his love many times over to his people. And I think of that great and wonderful verse in Jeremiah. I think it's 33.

I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you. God is speaking that to his people.

But Jesus comes and he demonstrates God's love in a way that no one would have ever imagined. You know there would have been the thought or the idea perhaps, well you know that God does love us. But never to the extent that Jesus showed.

And what extent was that? For God so loved the world. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. You see people might have imagined that God had some love for his creatures.

But nobody would have ever dreamed that God loved them to the extent that he would take his most valuable possession, his son. And that he would give him as a ransom for sin. That was inconceivable.

And as Paul speaks of that gift of God, he refers to it as that indescribable gift of God. It's just incomprehensible that God would do. But you see Jesus brings this out.

God is not just loving. He doesn't just have love. He is love.

And his love is so deep. And his love is so vast that it gave his best. His one and only son.

And so these are the things that Jesus brought out. These are the things that Jesus made clear. But one more thing that we must point out.

Jesus certainly as we've said, he brought out into full view the mercy and the grace of God. He brought out the compassion of God. He brought out the love of God.

But never to the exclusion of the holiness of God. You see this is a mistake a lot of people make. They think, oh well the pastor said it.

God's love, grace, mercy, compassion. That's the whole picture. No, that's not the whole picture.

That's much of the picture. But never to the exclusion of God's holiness. And because God is holy, he abhors sin and he must punish evil.

And that was demonstrated most powerfully in the cross of Jesus Christ. You see Jesus wasn't simply dying on the cross to show people God loves them. Jesus was dying on the cross to do that, yes.

But he was doing more than that. Jesus was dying on the cross because sin has to be punished. Because a holy God will not tolerate it or accept it.

And Jesus was bearing the sin of the world. He was bearing my sin and your sin and he was being punished in our place. So you see through Jesus the full picture of God becomes clear to us.

And that's what John is talking about here. When he says that the son of God has come and he has given us an understanding that we may know him who is true. So now we know what God is like.

How many people are there in the world today that have that question in their mind? What is God like? I think there are many people. They're wondering what does God think about this? How does he feel about that? How would God respond to this? What would he, in what way would he react to that situation? Well, if a person asks you that question, of course do your best to communicate, but ultimately point them to Jesus. Say, open up the New Testament and read it.

You'll see what God is like. Because Jesus, as he said, he is that visible manifestation. He that has seen me has seen the Father.

And so John, he goes on and he says this, that we may know him that is true, that we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. This is the true God and eternal life.

John here is taking both the Father and the Son and he's saying this is the true God. The true God is a Trinity. The true God is Triune.

The Holy Spirit's not included here, but that's fine. The Holy Spirit's included in many other portions of Scripture. But the Holy Spirit's whole role is to just sort of be behind the scenes.

He's not back there saying, hey wait, you guys didn't mention me. You know, I'm part of this thing too. He doesn't care.

He's there to glorify the Father and the Son. But this is the true God. This is the true God.

And of course the implication is if there's a true God, there are false gods and there are. And any religious system that denies the Father and the Son, any religious system that teaches that you can access God or have favor with God or know God apart from Jesus Christ is a false religious system. You know, there are many people in the world today that would say, well, I believe in God.

I love God. I follow God. I serve God, but I don't need Jesus.

That person, those people are gravely mistaken. They're deluded. It is not even within the realm of possibility to know God apart from Jesus Christ.

You can't even know him. Because Jesus is the revelation of God. Jesus is the access to God.

You can't get to God in any other way. There isn't any other access to him except through the Son. This is the true God and eternal life.

God can only be known through the Son. And Jesus said in John 17:3, and this is eternal life that they might know you, speaking to his Father. He's praying.

This is eternal life that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Eternal life is to know God through Jesus Christ. The Son of God has come.

And again, I'll go back to that in closing. Remember, Jesus is not just a man. Jesus is not just, you know, a good moral teacher or a philosopher or a religious figure who had a perspective on God.

Jesus is God the Son. He is God the Son. He is the true God and eternal life.

And apart from him, we can't know God, which equals we won't have eternal life. But through him, we do. We know God.

And let me say this finally. It's not just knowing about God, but it's knowing God in an experiential sense. And this is certainly where the biblical faith differs from everything else that there is.

You know, there are a lot of people today who refer to themselves as Christians, but at the same time, if you asked them, do you know God? They say, well, no, I don't know God. But you see, if you don't know God, that's the whole purpose. That's the reason Jesus came, that we might know him who is true.

And not just know him intellectually, not just know about him, not just have information or that kind of understanding, but that we might know him personally. And again, the biblical faith is the only faith in the world that presents to you a God that you can know personally. You can't know God personally in Islam.

You can't know God personally in Buddhism, because there is no God in Buddhism. You can't know God personally in Hinduism. You can't really know God personally even in Judaism.

You know God collectively through your relationship with the nation, but you don't have that personal thing. But you see through Jesus Christ, we can know God. Intellectually, we can know him in the sense of understanding him, but even beyond that, we can know him experientially.

That is eternal life. And this morning, if you are here with us and you don't know him in that sense, if you can't say today, I know God personally, you can say tomorrow, I know God personally. And you have that confidence that you have eternal life.

Well, here's the good news. Before you leave here, you can take care of that. You can just say, Lord, I want to receive you.

And remember what we read, as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the children of God. It's all about receiving him. Have you done that today? Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for how we thank you that you haven't left us in the dark about who you are, or about how we can know you. And Lord, we thank you today that the Son of God has come and given us an understanding that we might know you, the true and the living God. Lord, thank you that you have brought us that knowledge, that understanding.

Lord, thank you that you've brought many of us into that experiential relationship with you. And Lord, we would pray if there's a single person with us today that has yet to come to know you experientially. Lord, we pray that they wouldn't leave this room without having first been introduced to you, and received you, and become a child of God.

Lord, as we go our way, may we grow more and more in our understanding of your grace and mercy, of your compassion, of your love, of your nature, of your holiness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Let's stand together. And so, if you happen to be with us today, and as I was saying there, if you don't know that you know the Lord, the pastors are up front here. They would love to take just a couple of minutes of your time and lead you in a prayer to receive Christ.

And in receiving Him, He will give you the power to become a child of God. This is not about religion. This is not about just coming to church.

This is not about a creed. This is about a living, vital, personal relationship with the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don't have that today, you're missing the whole point of why Jesus came into the world.

So don't keep doing that. Make your way up, and let these men lead you in that prayer to receive the Lord. And may God bless us this week, just that we might grow in our understanding of Him.

As Jesus has come and brought us this understanding, that we might just continue to grow more, and more, and more in that understanding. God bless. Great is our God.

Sing with me, how great is our God. And all will see how great, great is our God. For you're the name above all names.

For you're the name above all names. You are worthy of all praise. And my heart will sing, how great is our God.

How great is our God. How great is our God. Sing with me, how great is our God.

And all will see how great, how great is our God. God bless you. Have a great day.

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