

The Logic of God

by Stewart Ruch

The sermon explains that Jesus is the logic of God, the clarity and fullness of God's love and life, and that receiving him gives us access to life, growth, and purpose.

Duration: 30:24

Topics: "Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of losing the narrative of one's life and how it can lead to despair and even suicide. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the story of God and Jesus as a way to find meaning and purpose in life. The speaker highlights two key verses from the Bible, John 1:1 and John 1:14, which capture the essence of the incarnation of Jesus as both fully God and fully human. The sermon also addresses the reality of darkness and the importance of recognizing it, but also emphasizes that the light of God always overcomes darkness.

Transcript

This is Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, Illinois. This week's sermon is by Bishop Stuart Ruck and is part one of our Advent 2017 series. If you've lived in Chicagoland for a while, you may remember one of the great blizzards that's punctuated a life that's lived in Chicagoland.

This blizzard was in 2011. It started on February 1st. I remember the day very, very well because that was the same day that my wife Catherine, pregnant with our last child, whose name is Beckett, was in the hospital laboring.

And while she was laboring there in the hospital room, I kept looking out the window and I watched the visibility go from sort of, you know, 20 feet away to all of a sudden more snow 10 feet away to as the light began to diminish and the day was coming to a close and Catherine was still laboring. It was as if you could only see a foot or so outside the window. There was so much snow, so much wind.

It was a full blizzard. You couldn't see anything. The blizzard outside felt like the blizzard moved inside.

Catherine's not going well. I could see growing concerned looks on the nurse that was working closely with us. And it was there in the middle of the night, now February 2nd, in the peak of the blizzard, that our very calm nurse midwife became extremely concerned and said, We've got to move her into emergency C-section.

There's no surgeon available. The only one in the hospital tonight is already doing a C-section. We're sending out an emergency four-wheel drive vehicle to find a surgeon who can operate on Catherine as soon as possible.

And it was like that blizzard outside just took me over, right? A blizzard of feelings, a blizzard of fear, a blizzard of anxiety. It was like it was all swirling around. And I felt that way until about an hour later when that nurse came to me and said, Stuart, Catherine's fine.

The surgery went well. Let me take you to your baby. We walked in the nursery and she leaned over and she picked up Beckett, 10 pounds, already with red hair.

She put it in my hands and it was all clear, right? It was clear. It was life. He was here.

It could have been any clearer that Beckett was here. I was holding him. I could put him up against my cheek and I could feel him.

I could have him up against my chest and I could hear and sense his breathing. There was no question that Beckett was here. There was a clarity, a beautiful, reassuring, empowering, life-giving clarity that here was Beckett.

The Bible wants to give us that kind of clarity about God. The Bible tells us the very true story that God has done like that nurse did for me in giving us a baby, if you will, for us as we read the Scriptures and believe them to hold. That the blizzard of sin in our own lives and compulsion, the blizzard of unbelievable, unspeakable wickedness that happens around us every day and throughout this world, that all that blizzard gets very, very clear that it's actually true that Jesus has come.

He is fully God. He is fully man. He is as clear as a baby is clear.

And you can hold Him when you engage Him in the Word. You can hold Him when you open your heart in worship. As Beckett was clear, so is the Lord Jesus clear.

The Bible's handing you a baby amidst the darkness and obfuscating powers of this world. He's handing you a baby. That's what the Bible does in giving us Jesus.

That's what God the Father has done in giving us His Son, born of Mary. John chapter 1. Turn there in your Bibles. Turn there in your John chapter 1 is going to lay out for us two of the most important truths about God.

And to lay it out very clearly and sequentially, John is a master writer for us to understand who God is, for us to understand who Jesus is. The first key verse is in the first verse. The Word was God.

If you're an underliner, a note taker, there it is. The Word was God. Then verse 14, which is not in your bulletin, but we'll study next week, and the Word became flesh.

Okay, those two verses, verse 1, verse 14, capture who God is and capture the truth of what we call the incarnation. Christians talk about the incarnation because we talk about carnate, carnate its body. So the embodiment, the enfleshing of God in Jesus.

And the incarnation has two critical realities. One is Jesus is fully God, completely God, utterly eternal God. Not half God, half man.

He didn't take on God likeness. He wasn't an extraordinarily impressive human being. He's fully God.

Jesus is fully human. Verses 1, verse 14. Well, what does that mean? I mean, why is that so important to living what the Bible describes as a Jesus life? Why does it matter? Here's why it matters.

Because Jesus is fully God. That means that if you are in Jesus, and I will explain much more about that if you don't understand what I mean when I say that. If you are in Jesus, that means you are never without access to life.

You are never without access to life. I hope that phrase just bothered you a little bit. I hope you went, really? Really? I hope you did that, because that's an extremely bold claim.

It's the boldness of a claim that must be commensurate with another bold claim, which is that Jesus is fully God and fully man. So now we're in the world of boldness, right? We're in the world of outlandish, disturbing, disconcerting, if you believe it you will never be the same again claims. That because Jesus is fully God, that means that we are never in him without access to life.

Next week, we will study that because he is fully human, because Jesus is fully man, you are never without actual love, ever. That is not a sentimental statement. That is, if you will, a muscular statement.

That's a strenuous statement. You're never without actual love. We'll do that next week, John 1 14.

But this week, let's look at what it means that we're never without access to life. Because if this is true, that if you're in Jesus, you're never without access to life, then this means that all of a sudden, if you live that way, how you go about your Saturday projects will be different. How you commute to work in the life of Jesus will be different.

How you change a diaper. How you feel when all of a sudden you're in the emergency room or you're taking someone you love to the emergency room. Your death will be different if you believe that you always have access to life, even in death, especially in death.

For Jesus died, literally died on the cross. That's why this symbol is so central. And yet, death could not hold him, and he overcame the darkness in life.

This means that those you're close to who are facing death, facing chronic illness, this means that that death, that chronic illness, it's changed. It means there can be life there, even there. I know it's bold.

It's even kind of hard to say it as a pastor, because there's so many deep illnesses that people are facing here. There's so many darknesses that many of you are facing here. If it's not true, this is utter malpractice to say that to you.

But if it's true, and it is, it's true, then that means you never are without access to the fullness of life. That means you are never without the ability to receive the life of Jesus in your head, in your heart, in all of your body. Let's look at this, you guys.

Let's look at John chapter one, first five verses. Let's first of all explore what it means that you're never without access to life, and then we'll look at how do we get that life? How do we gain this life that we're talking about? But first, let's look at the statement, you're never without access to life. In the beginning was the word.

Okay, that word, word, is a very important word, as you can imagine. The original word is the word logos, l-o-g-o-s. Logos is not a word that we interact much in American English, but it is a word that those who would have heard this teaching, particularly those who had a Greek background or a Hebrew background, they would have captured logos.

They would have understood something about what that word meant. And that word is actually used in the scriptures. The word, word, is very important.

As a matter of fact, God speaks, we read Genesis chapter one, about the first beginning. This is, by the way, about the beginning of all the beginnings. We'll get into that in a moment.

But here we have a word spoken, God speaks light. We read the word of the Lord in Genesis chapter 15. The word, Lord, is personified in parts of the Bible.

The word lights on people. There's a kind of metaphorical personification. The word is made more concrete.

The word is actually used throughout the scriptures. And at the heart of what the word does, is the word is a kind of logic. The logic of God.

Because when there's a logic, there is what? A kind of reasoning sequential clarity to what something really is. And it leads you through a process whereby you can come to what? To clarity. Jesus, in being the word of God, is the logic of God.

He is completely who God is. He completely expresses everything about God the Father. There is no hidden side to God the Father.

There is no way in which you go, well, that's Jesus, but that isn't God the Father. That's completely confused. If you're thinking that, or you're there, that's not what the Bible teaches at all.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the logic of God. He's the clarity of God. He's the fullness of God.

He's the Son of God who completely ministers to you, communicates to you, like a word communicates to you, who God is. Jesus is full of life, so God is full of life. Jesus is full of kindness, so God is full of kindness.

Jesus is full of strength, so God is full of strength. He's the logic of God. He's the word of God.

Dr. John Clark, who's giving a seminar later this afternoon, he's done great work in his theological writings on the incarnation of God. Dr. John Clark says this, the word, quote, makes intelligible who God is. Okay, another example.

So over Thanksgiving we had family time together, and we decided to play a game of charades whereby you're not using words, but you're trying to get folks to guess what it is that you're acting out. So my nephew, Josiah, was given a particular word, and it was on a piece of paper, and he had that word. He read that word, but he couldn't say the word, but he had to get us to guess it, right? So we're all looking forward to when he comes into the middle of the living room, and he does this.

He's looking at us like, come on, this is obvious. Come on. And I'm like, candle, candle, candle.

No, no, no, no, no. Hand grenade, hand grenade. No, no, no, no.

He starts doing it. He's pointing even harder, like, obviously. This is about pointing this index finger, making it very clear to you what I am.

I'm like sphere with something sticking out of it. No. Finally, in full exasperation, he yells, pumpkin.

Pumpkin. Right. He had to say it.

Then it was obvious. God said it. God said it.

God said it. Word. God said it, and now it's clear, absolutely clear who God is.

The word is life. There's an important construction, you all, in the first verse. In the beginning was the word.

The word was with God, and the word was God. So you need to kind of capture each of those phrases to kind of work through them to understand more about who God is. And what we see is that the repeating verb is what we would call a verb of being or a verb of existence.

The word was. So what we have is that God is existence. God is life.

The first word is existence. In the beginning was the word. The word has always existed.

There was never, ever, ever a time when God was not. I know it's a mind-bending, exploding reality. We're not expected to fully understand it, but we are expected to believe it.

In the beginning, God. In the beginning, life. In the beginning, light.

Uncreated light. He created light here on the earth, but in the beginning, light. In the beginning, love.

In the very beginning, love. Light. Life.

The three most important words in the book of John. You'll see them over and over again. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God.

That'd be very important for next week's study. With is a technical preposition. It's a preposition that is specifically used to speak of relationship.

So it's really important you understand God. You understand that God is, and I don't want to even say it this way, because if I say God is relational, we go, it's so sweet that God's relational. I'm relational.

One level is true. Okay, so one level is good. I mean, we are relational.

That's true. There's so much more. Communion is probably the best word that I can get to.

From the very beginning, communion. From the very beginning, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, in communion, in deep, profound relationship with one another. In the beginning, the word was with God.

The word was never alone. God is never alone, and God's creatures that he has created are never, ever meant to be alone. Ever.

I know you live that way. I know you often feel that way. I know that you think that way, but it is absolutely contrary to who God is and who God wants you to be.

We'll do that next week. In the beginning, the word was God. In the beginning was the word.

The word was with God, and then the word was God. So we go from the existence of the word, the relationship of the word. So to know the word, you have to know the word in relationship with God the Father.

That's knowing the word. That's knowing God. And then was God.

Just clear definition. The word was God. What does that mean? Okay, now new words introduced.

Light. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. There's a lot you could do with that, but at one level, keep it simple.

Things don't grow in the dark. Things grow with light. That to access life is to access growth.

Growth in love. Growth in strength. Growth in who you are in God.

That means that you always have access to growth. You always have access to creativity. You always have access in Jesus to life.

So look at verse 5. Isn't that interesting? You guys look at verse 5. Darkness is introduced. It's almost as if John in his Masterful writing knows at this point we're going, this is too good. This is too sweet.

This is too wonderful. He must have had the only life in the world that didn't have darkness, but that's not my life. And John goes, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

The story of the life of God is a story where darkness has entered in. It's the darkness of sin. The darkness of rebellion.

It's the darkness that comes over things, and all of a sudden growth and life and creativity are squelched. Freedom, purpose, joy, squelched. Darkness comes in.

The darkness has moved, and it feels like when there's darkness, it's overcome everything. And John says, there's darkness. We will tell the truth about the darkness in the Christian way.

The Bible will tell the truth about the reality of your own internal darkness and the external darkness around you, but the light of the Bible will also say that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The light was first. The uncreated light of God was first, and it has the position of great priority.

The darkness never overcomes the light of God. One of the ways darkness is playing itself out in our current American culture is through what can only be described as a kind of epidemic. It's technically been used by those who study suicide in America.

It won't be one suicide in a high school, right? It'll be five or six in a year in some high schools. Sociologists who study this are now saying the second leading cause of death for an adolescent is suicide. Is there any greater sort of reality that captures non-life, the taking of one's own life? And of course, there's a complex of factors.

There can often be a psychological disorder, a deep bipolar, a swing, deep depression, life trauma. There's so many reasons behind it. Scholars have wondered, why is it that overall life expectancy as an American has actually going down for the first time purely because of suicide among youth and adults? And it doesn't matter whether you're very rich or very poor.

The very rich and very poor both commit suicide at the same rates, actually taking their own life. One sociologist said, I can only describe it as this. Those who have committed suicide, as we try to understand their real story, those who love them, and the story that we can put together is that they've, quote, lost the narrative of their lives.

They've lost the narrative, the story of their lives. They have no story. They have no beginning.

They have no creative tension. They have no opportunity for resolution. That which makes a great story, that which is the great story of God himself, of God who is light, of God who is life, of the darkness that cannot overcome the light, that great story is lost in millions of peoples of lives.

And in the loss of that great story, there's a darkness that encroaches and darkness that comes. And suicide is, if you will, the logic of non-existence. As Jesus is the logic of God, who is and always will be.

So suicide and its attendant parts, depression, despondency, despair, anxiety, so it is the logic of non-existence. As a matter of fact, Athanasius, early church thinker, said if you want to understand sin, you want to understand sinful nature, you want to understand the choices that you make that are against the way of God, understand that God who is all being, and that darkness, sin, is non-being. If it is God alone who exists, Athanasius says, evil is non-being.

Now it is very possible that as I teach on this, there are some of you who are struggling with suicidal thoughts. Very, very possible. I know that.

I don't bring this up in a haphazard way. I was praying with a group of people last night for this morning's sermon in our worship time together, committing the day to the Lord here. And sometimes God can give an impression of something.

I had a very distinct impression that there may be someone among us, and my sense was that it might be a woman, although it could be a man, I'm not clear, who is here and you are struggling with significant suicidal thinking. You need the help of Jesus and his church, and we will help you. Come to a prayer minister, grab one of us, we will help you.

We will bring you to the life of Jesus who cannot be overcome ever by the darkness. You have other lost narratives though, perhaps, not just that, and maybe another lost narrative. You're not clear of the story, you're living any longer.

How do we get life? Look now, let's go from verses 1 through 5 to verses 12 to 13. But to all who did receive him, who believed, gave themselves over, is really what that means, who gave themselves over to his name, he gave the right. The word right there is a little confusing.

It isn't so much an entitlement, as we might interpret it, it's the word power. He gave the power to become children of God who were born out of the blood, or the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God. Okay, to get to the second birth, the new birth, the rebirth, we have to understand first births first, which John talks about poetically.

They're a little hard to understand. The first is born of blood. To be born of blood is really quite simple.

It has to do with your family background, which would include your ethnic, your racial background. This is a kind of first birth. That when we're born into a family, we're born into a first birth.

We have no decision about our ethnic background, nothing but our family background. And what John is saying about Jesus and the birth of God, is that there is nothing in your family that can get you saved if it was lovely, and there's nothing in your family that can prevent you from being saved if it was a misery. That every family background, every family background, falls short of you receiving the life of God.

Stop envying people with an awesome family background, because the fact of the matter is, everybody must be born of God and God alone. There's another first birth. It's the first birth of the flesh, the will of the flesh.

Sometimes flesh, this is confusing sometimes in the Bible, sometimes flesh means sinful nature, sometimes flesh means sort of natural reality. You've got to work your context to figure out what it means. In this case, I would argue it's natural reality.

In other words, just born naturally. The fact of the matter is, there is a birth. It's a natural birth, and we have a natural life, and we live our lives.

But that's not enough. We may even live our lives with a focus on self-improvement. That's not enough.

Your diet is not enough. This will not save you. This will not bring you the life that you're so hungry for.

You can never, ever on your own break out of this. There must be a life from outside of you given to you, a kind of foreign life, if you will, a kind of great and holy life, if you will, a kind of life that's never ever known anything but life itself that can give you that life. And then there's other decisions, the will of man.

For so many of us, so much of our sense of our story, we feel determined by others' decisions, from decisions our parents made, to decisions our bosses are making, decisions our spouses are making, that somehow that is utterly and completely determinative of our ability to live life. It's not, it's not, I say it emphatically, oh, it has influence, and oh, it is part of your story, but it is not utterly determinative of your life in Jesus and God. And there's some of you who've gotten stuck in a kind of unneeded victim mentality.

Oh, you've been traumatized, and that's real, and you have suffered, and that's real. But the victim mentality says that you can never overcome that. You can never get great, you can never move out of that place.

And this is making clear, oh, but you can be reborn. You can be reborn by the will of God, who is deciding to bring you into Jesus. He says that all would come to salvation.

We read later in the New Testament. So what John is saying is that there was a second birth. It's the birth in and through and from God Himself.

It's that dramatic. It's that necessary. He uses birth, which could be conversion.

And by that, I mean that you haven't converted to Jesus. You're here, and you've not converted to Jesus. You've not had a second birth.

You have not come into His life. You're only living your natural life. You're living a life determined by those decisions.

You're living a life determined by your family background. And what's being said here very, very clearly is, no, no, this is a second life. This is the second birth.

You have to be reborn to walk in Jesus, which requires giving your life, converting, confessing your sin. For those of you who have converted, you then enter into a life formed and shaped strategically and wisely designed, so that you are giving your life the best opportunity to fully access the life of Jesus as constantly and consistently as you can. Again, early church thinker Athanasius calls it constant contemplation.

By contemplation, though, he means a kind of leaning in, constant decision-making to be in the Lord's presence, constant decision-making to say, I've got to rework my work life so that I have more energy to pray. I'm going to change my work week so I can pray more. Or I can't do that.

I don't have that freedom, so I'm going to change my weekends so I can pray more. I'm going to actually think about how it is that I could actually start to memorize the first chapter of John so I can be in constant apprehending, constant life in Jesus, constant contemplation. That's why you're here on Sunday.

It's constant contemplation. It's so you can worship, you can receive holy communion, holy relationship with God. Why does it matter so much that Jesus is fully God? It matters because if you're in Him, you have constant access to life.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Thanks for listening.

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