

November 5, 2017

The Foundation of Our Thanksgiving

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as of a Father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

Three Questions:

1. What led the early Christian to conclude that Jesus was **the** Son of God?
2. How does their experience of Jesus relate to our experience of Thanksgiving?
3. How does your experience of the “Word” in your own life generate a deep sense of gratitude for those who have shown you God’s steadfast love?

John 1: The Prologue to John’s Gospel: In the minds of the first Christians, what convinced them that Jesus was the Son of God? (John 20:31)

1. This passage is incredibly difficult to translate; many different and equally valid interpretations based on the ambiguity of the Greek text. Very easy to read back into this text later 3rd Century doctrine about who Jesus was (e.g., pre-existence, second person of the Trinity). This may not have been intended by John when he wrote this. Important to understand how the Jews spoke about God—God was too holy to even speak God’s name, so they used metaphor to describe God (for example: rock, wind, son, father, water, judge, sovereign, potter, shepherd, shield, lion, word).
2. The main point: God is not distant. Unlike other gods, our God speaks (God is Word). Everything God does is life-giving. Always has been, always will be.
3. In the beginning (Genesis 1), there was the Word—God was revealing Himself. “God spoke, ‘Let there be light’.” This is no distant deity, but One whose Word animates everything (see Hebrews 11:3).
4. Now the Word, this fundamental revelatory aspect of God’s character, has become flesh in Jesus, God’s Son (John 1:14).
5. What does it mean to be God’s Son?
 - a. Many Sons of God in the OT & NT (Angels [Genesis 6:1-4; Job 1:6], Adam [Luke 3:38], David [2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7], Kings of Israel [Psalm 2; Psalm 89:26-27], Israel (Exodus 4:22, Deut. 1:31, Ps. 80:16]).
 - b. Concept probably comes into Judaism from Egypt prior to the Exodus, where the Pharaohs, we considered to be the Sons (or representatives) of God.
 - c. A Son is one who reveals/embodies that character of the Father. In a patriarchal society in all economic transactions, the word of the son was considered to be the word of the father.

6. In Greek, Jesus is called the “**monogenes**” Son (meaning “one [mono] of a kind [genre],” unique, authentic, never has there been a son like this). This is not about birth (see Psalm 2:7), no reason in the Greek to translate this “only begotten.”
7. Why did they think that Jesus was God’s unique Son?
 - a. Because in his “glory,” that is, in his presence, the Jews experienced what they experienced when they met God in the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle (“shekinah glory”). In Jesus, they experienced God’s “grace” (Charis) and “truth” (Aletheia); a pairing of words used 5 times by Luke in the Gospel and Acts.
 - b. These two words are Greek translations of two Hebrew works: Hesed = Charis (steadfast love) and Emunah (emet) = Aletheia (faithfulness).
 - c. These words are consistently associated with the Jews’ experience of God throughout the OT (Exodus 34:6; Lamentations 3:22-23; let’s walk through Psalms ending at Psalm 100 [Psalm 23:6, goodness and mercy; 25:10; 33:4-5; 35:5; 40:10; 86:15; 89:14; 98:3; 100:5]).

Psalm 100: The Foundation of Thanksgiving

1. God’s steadfast love and faithfulness endures forever. Our experience of God’s love generates the feeling and experience of gratitude.
2. How does God express His love and faithfulness?

God Reveals His Love and Faithfulness through God’s Children (Sons and Daughters)

1. John 1:12: “To all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives power to become the Children of God.”
2. 1 John 3:1: “See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the Children of God. And that is what we are.”
3. 1 John 3:18: “Children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”
4. 1 John 4:12. “No one has ever seen God. God lives in us. If we love one another, God’s love is revealed through us.”

God’s Love and Faithfulness in Our Lives and Through Our Lives toward Others (Stories)

1. The judge, the brain surgeon, the 8th grade teacher and the frog brain.
2. Your stories, “Whom do you want to thank?”
3. Marge McNeil
4. What now?