

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 5 December 2021
Services: Across the diocese
Series: Who is Jesus?
Passage: John 1:18
Title: God making himself known

- You're sitting in a Scripture class - mid-way through high school.
- Some smarty asks the teacher – “how do you know?”
- “You're telling us all this stuff about God – how do you know?”
- “have you ever seen God”?
- And the scripture teacher says ‘no’
- “Has God ever spoken to you?”
- And the teacher says – ‘no’ – ‘not directly...’
- ...so the smarty says – ‘then be quiet’ (though not as politely) – ‘you're wasting our time...’
- “...you're talking to us about God who you've never seen, you've never spoken to – not heard from - you're wasting our time....” //
- Well - that actually raises a very important question – how can any one actually know **anything** about God?
- We **haven't** seen him... and most of the people who say they **hear** his **voice** are in need of all sorts of **help**..
- So how does anyone **seriously** know **anything** about **God**?
- For every **opinion** that you might have about God – there are millions of **other** intelligent humans who strongly **disagree** with you.
- **No one as ever seen God**, says the Bible – in our reading – John 1:18...
- But everyone seems to have an **opinion** on God...!
- **And everyone's opinion** is worth the same **amount** – which is **nothing**.
- So we have **opinions** but we're **unqualified** because no one has ever **seen God**. ///
- it is important to distinguish between having **opinions** and something that is **true**.
- ...a difference between a **theory** that is based on **NO solid evidence**, and something that is based on **GOOD solid fact**.

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- A difference between ideas and things that can be proven. //
- Woody Allen – “all of my humour is a response to the **silence** of **God**.”
- He’s a fairly **depressed** bloke because he considers that all the **big** questions of life have no **answer** because God has been **silent**.
- Jean-Paul **Sartre** – “That God is **silent** – it is impossible for me to **deny**. That my whole body cries **out** to **him** – is impossible for me to **forget**.”
- Socrates said – we have to wait until a **god** comes from the **gods** or until they send a human being who can **tell us of the gods**...
- Jesus **himself** said – John 6:46 no one has **seen** the **Father**... ///
- **EXCEPT... EXCEPT** the ONE who is from God – only **he** has seen the Father.
- **No one** is **qualified** // **except** the one who has come from the Father.
- That is a **very large claim** that Jesus makes – but reading through John’s gospel – it’s the most common claim he makes for himself : that he is the **one** who has **come** from the **Father**.
- **He** is the **exception** : the one who has **seen God**.
- Back to John 1:18 – *the one and only Son – who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father – has **made him known***.
- because God **cares** about us – because he **respects** the mind he has given us; he sends us someone **qualified to speak**. //
- we are spending Advent asking and hopefully answering the question – well – Who is Jesus?
- ...and this is what Christmas is about... Jesus truly comes **FROM God TO earth** and lives **among us as one of us**...
- He comes from his **Father**, **uniquely qualified** and he will tell us of his **Father** – he will reveal the Father to us - not as if he’s just one person with an **interesting** and **beautiful** set of **opinions**, but as one who is **qualified to speak**... because he’s come from the Father...
- Bono – U2 – said this in an interview a few years back... “the secular response to the Christ story always goes like this – he was a great **prophet**, he was a very **interesting** guy....
- ...But actually Christ doesn’t **allow** you to do that – he doesn’t let you off that hook – Christ says no – I’m not just saying I’m a **teacher**, don’t just call me a **teacher**, I’m not saying I’m a **prophet**, I’m saying I’m the **Messiah**, I’m saying I’m **God** in the **flesh**...
- Let’s have a look...
- And so plenty of people say – please just be a **prophet** - a prophet I can take.... Or a teacher... but don’t mention the M word – the Messiah word – because we’re going to have to **crucify** you if you do

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that..."

- But he goes 'no' – actually **I am the Messiah!**
- ...at this point everyone just keeps staring at their shoes and saying 'O my goodness, he's going to keep saying this'... so you're left with either that Christ **was** who he said he was – the **Messiah** – or else he's completely (**as Bono said**) – **totally nuts.... very seriously deluded.... //**
- ... So the question is... in the end – what do **WE** make of this man?
- **No one** in history makes claims like **him**.
- **He's not just another prophet.**
- **John 14** – Philip says – if we can just see the Father we'll be **satisfied**. Its been a great three years Jesus - **terrific miracles** – great **fun** – but if we could just **see God**.
- And do you remember what Jesus says back to him? – its **extraordinary** – what he says...
- **John 14:9** – *Philip have I been with you so long and yet you **still** don't know who I am? If you have seen **me**, you've seen the **Father**.*
- Now – no one would say that – no one would **think** to say that.
- there's no way in a thousand light years that **Mohammed** would ever say that to his followers... if you want to see what **Allah** is like – look at **me**...
- Its an **extraordinary** thing that Jesus – a **flesh and blood human being** at that time says – if you want to know **God** is like – **look at me. ///**
- Its not **MY opinion** verses **YOUR** opinion as if they're **all** worth the **same**.
- Its **OUR** opinion verses **HIS opinion**.
- The **opinion** of the qualified one.
- Will I be **convinced**? Will I **look** at it?
- Because here at **last** is the answer to **Socrates' longing** and John **Paul Sartre's sadness** and **Woody Allen's depression**... they are simply **mistaken** on their first statement **///** its just not **true** that God has **not spoken**.
- God has spoken very **clearly. ///**
- **A Few Good Men** – is that **clear? Crystal clear!**
- Continuing to quote that classic movie...
- I want the **truth** – I have a **right** to the **truth**, I **demand** to know the **truth**.

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- You want to know the **truth**? you can't **handle** the **truth**.
- And friends I don't mean to be **rude** – but that's a bit true for **many of us today**... the Bible is saying – you want the **truth... really**?
- Well I wonder whether you can **handle** the truth.
- I wonder if you're willing to say to **God** – God – if its **true** – **show me**, and if its **true**, I'll go wherever the truth **leads** me... no matter how humbling that may be after years of arguing **against** it... //
- I wonder if you can pray that prayer? – you mightn't even be sure there's a God there – but God – if **you're there**... and you'll show me the things that are **real** and **true**, I'll **go** with it...
- Or whether in the end there are many of us who like to **talk** to the **talk** and have **arguments**, but in the end, we can't **handle** the **truth**.
- We actually prefer **ignorance** – because its far less **demanding**... ////
- “No one has ever seen God, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”
- What are we going to do with this guy who makes this **enormous claim**?
- Are we going to **look** at it, have the courage to **look** at it? // Or **ignore** it...? //
- Ok – let me draw things to a close
- If Jesus is God making himself known... what sort of God did he reveal him to be?
- When you see Jesus look with **love** on someone he's about to heal... you see God's love
- When you see Jesus look with love on a paralysed man needing forgiveness, you see **God's love**
- When you see Jesus' **patience** with his disciples who were slow to learn, you see **God's patience**
- When you see Jesus' **care** for those who had been listening to him but had nothing to eat, you see **God's care**
- When you see Jesus' **compassion** for the lost who had no shepherd, you see **God's compassion for the lost**
- When you see Jesus' **authority** over evil **spirits**, over **people**, as a **teacher**, authority over **illness** and **creation** – and even over **death** – you see **God's authority**
- When you see Jesus humbly going to the cross you see God's commitment to **reconcile us to himself** through the **death of his Son**...
- When you see Jesus' **forgiveness** at the cross for those who drove in the nails, you see God's **forgiveness**

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- And when you see Jesus after his resurrection **sending** his disciples into all the world to **make disciples**, you see the **mission heart** of **God...! ///**
- Who is **Jesus...?**
- He came to **show** us the **Father**.
- He is **God**, making **himself known**.
- The question is **// do we really want to know? //**

Prayer in response to the message

We thank you heavenly Father that if we choose, we need no longer live in the dark about you, because you sent your Son Jesus to reveal yourself to us. We thank you that Jesus is: YOU: making yourself known. We thank you when we see Jesus' love and tender heart and compassion and forgiveness, we see YOUR love and tender heart and compassion and forgiveness. So help us to pour over the Gospels, and as we see Jesus, to see you. Help us to be open to wherever the truth might lead us. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

WHO IS JESUS?		
ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2021		
NOV 28	God in skin	Luke 1:26-38
DEC 5	God making himself known	John 1:18
DEC 12	God with us	Matthew 1:23
DEC 19	God dealing with our sin	Matthew 1:21
DEC 25	Saviour of the world	Luke 2:1-14

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