In the beginning . . .
What a great way to start a book. Of course that is how the book of Genesis begins but it is also how John the Apostle begins his Gospel.

Genesis: In the beginning, God.

What a better way to start a book! In fact, read Genesis 1-2 and you will see that is the primary message, In the beginning, God created, which god? Jehovah God . .

John: *In the beginning was the Word, And the Word was with God and the Word was God.*

Certain passages are so rich that they should be easy to preach and yet can be difficult due to failure to do justice to the passage. John chapter one is such a passage. A passage with poetic flow. A passage with deep theology in each phrase. A passage that speaks to the preexistence of Jesus with God, the full divinity of our Savior, and his work as agent of creation.

And yet that is only the introduction of the passage. The apostle John, just as eloquently, declares that Christ’s purpose – that all who receive him, he gave power to become the children of God. Adopted not by their actions but by God’s.

Let’s read the passage again to let God’s Word speak for itself.
John 1:1-17  (NASB)

1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
2 *He was in the beginning with God;*
3 *all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*
4 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
5 *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*
6 *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*
7 *He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him.*
8 *He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.*
9 *The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.*
10 *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.*
11 *He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.*
12 *But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God;*
13 *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*
14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.*
15 *(John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'")*
16 And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.  
17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

In the brief time I have, I want to begin to unpack this passage but also to encourage you to study it on your own. Today we will look at four points from this passage – yes I know Baptists are supposed to have three points. The first two, we’ll look at briefly and camp out on the last two.

- THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST COMING  
- THE IMPACT OF CHRIST COMING  
- THE INTENT OF CHRIST COMING  
- THE RESPONSE TO CHRIST’S COMING

First, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST COMING
The Word became Flesh and dwelt among men. God reached down to man, And his name shall be called, Immanuel, God with us.

Philippians 2:6-7, another beautiful passage of poetry, Paul states that Jesus “though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: The significance of Christ’s coming.

THE IMPACT OF CHRIST COMING
The light shined in the darkness and the darkness could not comprehend it. We recently celebrated Christmas Eve with a candle light service. What a perfect illustration of the power of light over darkness. The smallest flame can over power the darkness. Light is energy. Darkness is the absence of it. Christ entered the world and darkness was overpowered – it couldn’t comprehend it – Christ was not a dim flame but light of the universe.

The death and resurrection of Jesus find no mention in John’s prologue and yet it stands as the presupposition for every phrase. The incarnation of the Word was for the fulfillment of God’s purpose. The ultimate overpowering of darkness occurred when Jesus willingly gave his life on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for us. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.

THE INTENT OF CHRIST COMING
The intent of Christ’s coming was to provide us grace.  
John 1:16-17 For of His fullness we have received grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth through Jesus Christ.
John 1 looks forward in a way that is unique from the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke. John was not condemning the law. The law was given by God as a revelation of God’s will for his people. The Word – Jesus Christ, is the full revelation of God and the fulfilment of the intent of the law, to save the people.

GRACE UPON GRACE!

One of our passages from the liturgy today reinforces this thought. Ephesians 1:7-8a “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.”

I love both of those phrases. John “Grace upon Grace” Paul chose, “according to the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.” I admit that I never camped out on that word “lavish” as I read that verse in the past. In 2013 on deployment I filled my phone with sermons from Louie Giglio and Passion Church and I would listen to them during PT to help survive a sweltering cardio room known as the gerbil gym. Louie described in vivid detail this word, lavish.

I admit that I am bit utilitarian. I enjoy elegance but it is not natural to this country boy.

Lavish: adj: “sumptuously rich, elaborate, or luxurious.”
Verb: to bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities upon.

God gave us grace in generous and extravagant quantities. He gave us grace upon grace!

Where would we be without God’s grace?

Where would we be without God’s initiative when he intervened in this world?

I confess today that I need God’s grace. We live in a world that either denies the sinful nature and professes that all is good and acceptable or resorts to “try harder” like an old Avis commercial. I’ve tried harder. I need grace! I need to draw near to God and let him work in my life.

What about you?

John 3:16 is perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible but 3:17 speaks just as profound a theological truth.
John 3:17 But God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.
The intent of the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us to provide grace and salvation. Further, to those who receive his grace, he offers heirship with him.

John 1:11-12, “He came to His own, and those who were his own did not receive him. But as For as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name.”

However, these two verses speak not only to the intent of Christ’s coming to earth as man, but to our individual response, our fourth point today.

THE RESPONSE TO CHRIST’S COMING
“For as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe.”

One of my favorite versus regarding Christ is Galatians 4:4-5
“In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman born under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

One of the things about adoption is the parents always make a choice to bring the child into their family and that child has all of the rights of child who was born into that family. The Father offers us the right to become his children through his Son, whom he sent to earth – fully God, fully man.

The question is what is our response?
John 1:11, “He came to His own, but his own did not receive him.”

We know that sadly today many still choose not to receive him.

Imagine that as you take down your Christmas tree today if you have not yet done so, that you find a gift tucked in a corner behind the tree. It is still unopened. The wrapping is still fresh. But it hasn’t fulfilled its purpose. Imagine again and this time the gift was opened, but the gift inside was seen, it was touched, it was inspected, and it was left on the floor forgotten, an afterthought to the one who received it and now found by the one taking down the tree. But that gift wasn’t forgotten by the one who gave it. The one who gave it spend time choosing just for the recipient. For the one who saw the look of disappointment and noticed that the gift was laid aside for other seemingly more shiny options.

Not all gifts are well received.
Now we know that not all gifts are well chosen – some for lack of thought, some because we don’t know the recipient well enough to make a personal choice, and some because the recipient is just picky and we give up!

But God gave great thought into his gift to us. His gift is life. His gift is light. His gift is grace. His gift is adoption into his family. All through his Son.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Will you receive God’s gift of grace today?