

The Story of Hope

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by Rev. Jeremiah Montgomery

Some of the most profound words ever written were penned by a peasant. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John’s Gospel, chapter 1, verses 1-4).

These words began a revolution that changed the world forever. In the first century, both Greeks and Jews had a pre-existing concept of “the Word” (*Logos*). Both believed it was the power behind the universe – the energy that created, controls, and organizes everything. For Greeks, this *Logos* was an impersonal, rational principle. For the Jews, the *Logos* was the creative word of YHWH. Neither culture, however, would have understood “the Word” *as a person*.

Yet John insisted it is so. “*He* was in the beginning with God. All things were made through *him*, and without *him* was not anything made that was made. In *him* was life...” Why does this matter?

If the power behind the universe is personal, then reality itself becomes purposeful and relational. John was explaining something we all know intuitively. Purpose and relationship are part of life’s deep music. Even non-religious people value these things. Why? John tells us the answer. We crave purpose and relationships because our Creator is personal.

What if all of life could be lived in purposeful relationship with God? What if the universe was organized to draw us into this deep music? What if even the darkness could highlight this hope?

John explains the origin of our darkness. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,” (verse 5). Darkness is the absence of light. This is the sad reality of the human race. God is light, but we turned away from him – and in so doing, plunged ourselves and our world into darkness. We were made to be mirrors of God. But the mirrors have decided to worship themselves.

What is the result? “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him,” (verses 9-11). Here we see the whole story of humanity: God comes to us; but sin has blinded us; and so we slam the door in God’s face.

And yet it’s precisely here that John’s message becomes a story of hope. How does God respond when we slam the door? Instead of quitting, he pulls the door open! “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God,” (verses 12-13).

Imagine that these words could be true for you. What would it be like to be fully and finally cleansed of all your inner darkness – to live in a world of love, a world without goodbyes, with God and the angels and other renewed people – forever? If you could be sure of this hope for tomorrow, is there any challenge or hardship you couldn’t face today?

This hope is the gift of God. It cannot be bought, but John assures us that it can be ‘received’ if we “believe on his name” – the name of the Word. In the ancient world, a person’s ‘name’ was far more than an identifier. It represented the person himself and all he stood for – all he promised. And so to “believe on his name” meant to believe that the person would keep his promise to you personally.

This is how the story of hope can enter your story. Take the promise of Jesus as a gift. Believe he will keep it to you. “Be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you.”

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