

KNOWING CHRIST FOR WHO HE IS
Isaiah 1:1-20; John 1:1-13

(Read John 1:1-13)

Intro: On Wednesday night we had a good group of people who went out to sing Christmas carols – 19 of us actually. We made 7 stops across a pretty good swath of this part of the county.

Three of us in that group of carolers are named Keith, and as we were leaving and walking out the sidewalk Keith Dohner asked Keith Crone a question and I thought he was asking me a question because he included the name Keith. You really have to be specific when you are calling out the name Keith here at ABC.

Now that I think about it, you have to specify when you call out the name Ron since we have a Graves, a Linn, and a Sprunger that answer to that. And Karen Dohner and Karen Weaver, and Lori Lewis and Lori Lower, and Gary Courtright and Gary Lower. Which one are you referring too? We might have the same name as someone else, but we are decidedly different and unique and gifted by God in the way he wants us to be. That's the beauty of his creation.

We each have a unique view of what Jesus is supposed to be.

If you would stop people on the street and ask them who Jesus is you might get a few blank stares but you will get some answers:

To some he's still a baby in a manger

To some he's just a man.

To some he was a great prophet who somehow knew Buddhist and Confucian thought.

To other he's a guy with great hair.

And for others he's an angry avenger who's going to come back and zap everyone who has been ignoring his Dad.

A number of people have rendered a version of a modern Christmas Carol entitled *SOME CHILDREN SEE HIM*, from Frank Sinatra to Andy Williams to James Taylor. Here are the words:

Some children see Him lily white,

The baby Jesus born this night.

Some children see Him lily white,

With tresses soft and fair.

Some children see Him bronzed and brown,

The Lord of heav'n to earth come down.

Some children see Him bronzed and brown,

With dark and heavy hair.

Some children see Him almond-eyed,

This Savior whom we kneel beside.

Some children see Him almond-eyed,

With skin of yellow hue.

Some children see Him dark as they,

Sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray.

Some children see him dark as they,

And, ah! they love Him, too!

The children in each different place

Will see the baby Jesus' face

Like theirs, but bright with heavenly grace,

And filled with holy light.

O lay aside each earthly thing

And with thy heart as offering,

Come worship now the infant King.

'Tis love that's born tonight!

It is a sweet song and full of truth. In fact in all that sentimental poetry I can't argue with a thing. Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, and all the big people too.

One commentator referring to the song makes a good point when he writes, *“When considering the text of ‘Some Children See Him,’ it is important to remember how few descriptions of the appearance of Jesus we have in the Scriptures. He is a famous rabbi and prophet across the land, and the soldiers need someone to point out who he is. They cannot trust a description to pick him out of a crowd in the Garden of Gethsemane. During the transfiguration, Matthew describes that ‘his face shone like the sun’ (Matthew 17:2, CEB), but otherwise, he goes without description. We know who his parents were and the rough complexion of Jews in Roman Palestine, but not much more. The most prominent description of the Messiah comes from the prophet Isaiah, ‘He possessed no splendid form for us to see, no desirable appearance’ (Isaiah 53:2b, CEB).*

So, how do we see Jesus? It’s not surprising that the physical appearance of Jesus naturally follows what culture we are in. And as long as his essential nature doesn’t change that’s not a problem because Jesus came for all nations. In fact he told us that he went to the Cross to *draw all men to himself* (John 12:32).

Another good point that I don’t want to miss is from the same person I quoted a little bit ago, and that is the child-like faith we need to have to receive Jesus as our Savior. Listen, *“Some Children See Him” is not a hymn of history and should not be read or sung as one. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says, “I assure you that whoever doesn’t welcome God’s kingdom like a child will never enter it” (Mark 10:15, CEB). The hymn takes this verse seriously and tries to imagine how children view and understand Jesus. In this way, it does not take a leap of imagination to say, “Some children see him lily white,” or “bronzed and brown,” or “almond-eyed,” or “dark as they.” One way of accepting God’s kingdom as a child is to look with the openness of a child, where difference is not primary, but where baby Jesus is just like our own self.*

We make it so difficult and it doesn’t have to be.

But we need to see Jesus Christ as he really is. And that means that he isn’t just a nice guy with perfect hair, he is God the Son. Our text which I read last week, and then again as I began this talk, and I will again next week, gives us a picture of who Jesus is and helps us to see him as he really is.

Even though I read all 13 verses, who Christ is, is plainly seen in the first five verses.

We need to see him as the Word: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1*

- Jesus is the very WORD of God. Last week I quoted F. B. Meyer who explained the Word and it helps to hear it again. *“As speech reveals hidden thoughts of men, so does our Lord utter the unseen God. God spake and it was done. His words preceded the act of creation, but Christ was the Word or utterance of God. He who created time preceded time, and that which is before time is eternal and divine. Christ is the organ or medium by which God goes forth in creation, providence, and redemption. The life of God was stored in the human nature of Jesus, when the word became flesh, that it might more readily pass into us.”* In other words, Jesus is the explainer of God’s plan and the example of how it is to be lived. Jesus puts it all into words.
- Romans 1:20 says that just looking at Creation makes humanity without excuse when it comes to recognizing God’s perfect nature, but, truthfully, just seeing Jesus for who he is makes us all without excuse. When we see him, we see . . .

He is God: . . . and the Word was God. John 1:1c

- When we see Jesus as he really is, we must see he is God. No matter how humanity has tried drain him of deity Jesus is God. The Jehovah’s Witnesses cult tried to demote Christ by simply and falsely translating John 1:1. Their heretical version reads *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god,”* (John 1:1, NWT). They simply added the indefinite article “a” to make it indefinite who that god (small “g”) is. The sad thing is, if they do not see Jesus for who he really is in this life, they will definitely find too late who he *really* is. He is God.
- We also see . . .

He is Eternal: *He was in the beginning with God. John 1:2*

- If he is, he is eternal. He is God the Son. From the very beginning when *The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters* Genesis 1:2. God in his Trinitarian form was evident, and it’s more so when he refers to himself in the plural with *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.* Genesis 1:26. So if

you ever thought Jesus was an afterthought or God's secret weapon who came at Christmas – think again – he's always been and he's always been God.

- And speaking of being there at the beginning,

He is Creator: *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

John 1:3

- Once again, there isn't very much I can add to this. I mean, really, all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made.
- He created . . . well, EVERYTHING. Charles Wesley might have written the children's hymn, "*Gentle Jesus, meek and mild...*" and Jesus can be that. But he is also Creator of heaven and earth.
- And, as Creator, he is not only the author of life . . .

He is life: *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* John 1:4

- Real life. Abundant life. Life worth living now and eternal life forever. (John 3:16). At Christmas it's good to remember an Easter song that goes,

Because he lives I can face tomorrow

Because he lives all fear is gone

Because I know, I know he holds the future

And life is worth the living just because he lives.

Why? Because he lives, we live and have life.

- And finally, as that last verse hinted and as we learned last week, to know Christ for who he really is, we know . . .

He is light: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* John 1:5

- The world might be dark, but Jesus came to illumine it. And he makes his people light. Jason and Lydia led us in the words, *Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes, let me see.* Seeing Christ for who he really is, means **SEEING!** Our way is brilliant before us. And remember, we are to be that light too.

Conclusion: Jesus is so much more than our finite minds can conjure up. But looking at him through child-like eyes is a good thing. It's ironic but true. And we need to take him to the world.

Perhaps you were wondering when I was going to refer to our Saint for today. As you saw in the insert, he is Saint Ignatius – who is celebrated tomorrow on December 20. Please read it if you haven't – it's inspiring. His nickname was Theophorus, meaning "God-Bearer", because of his fervent love for God and the Church. In other words, to see Saint Ignatius was to see Jesus. In this day, when we face false religions and false depictions of who Jesus is, we are experiencing nothing new – Ignatius had the same. But he remained faithful and was a God Bearer to the end. He was a light in a dark world.

We need to be so too. You see, when I tell you to "Go and be Jesus!", I'm not just saying something trite or cute, or just blowing smoke. I mean it. And, in truth, I'm giving you a tall order because you may be the only Jesus that people see. So it's important that you know who Jesus really is so that you can be Jesus to a world who desperately needs him. Show them Christ for who he really is. Go and be Jesus. Amen.