

And God Said...

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[0 : 0 0] well tonight um well we're actually going to do something a little bit different tonight because normally in an evening service well in any of our services we'll focus on one uh passage of scripture like in our morning services just now we've been working our way through uh the book of esther um tonight though we we read from john one and we're going to be referring back to it several times but we're also going to be looking at lots of different other parts of scripture as well and so as we start off i want to just read um uh three little sections of scripture that are on the screen from genesis 1 genesis 3 and john 14 so genesis 1 3 and god said let there be light and there was light then genesis 3 14 to 15 the lord god said to the serpent because you've done this cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field on your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life i will put enmity between you and the woman between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel and then john 1 14 which we read from earlier and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we've seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth our title tonight is and god said and we're going to use that as a framework to help us think a little bit more about the word of god now we're at we are a reformed church and part of what that means is that the word of god is central to everything that we do as a church so when we come together each week we arrive through the word of god as we said we're responding to god's call to come and worship him we sing the word of god both in the psalms and in the hymns that capture the beautiful truths revealed in scripture we say the word as we pray to god in accordance to how jesus has taught us we read the word as we open our bibles we preach the word in the sermon we see the word in the sacraments baptism we see in the physical water the truth revealed in scripture that jesus has come to wash away our sins and we see in the physical bread and wine the truth revealed in scripture that his body was broken and his blood was shed for us and we leave with the word we go out both with the good word of the benediction over us and we also have god's word been pressed into our hearts as we move into a new week and we seek for that to shape our lives so we arrive with the word we sing the word we say the word we read the word we preach the word we see the word we leave with the word the word of god is central and fundamental to everything that we do and at one level that's quite simple and it's really important and really good but at another level at another level it's maybe a wee bit complicated because as we use that phrase the word of god the question arises what do we actually mean and we might immediately think well the bible and that's of course true but it's not the whole truth because the bible itself reveals that the word of god is more than just what's written on the pages of scripture and that's what i want us to think about a little bit more tonight and i hope it'll help us to see more about how amazing the bible is and about how amazing jesus is so we're going to go through six things together and we're going to think about the eternal word the creative word the redemptive word the incarnate word the inscripturated word and the preached word so if you thought you were in for a relaxing sunday night

no we're going to roll up our sleeves and we're going to blast through this uh together so i want us to think first of all about the eternal word john's gospel opens with the astonishing words in the beginning was the word and the word was with god and the word was god he was in the beginning with god now one of the amazing things about those two sentences is that there's no complicated words in there at all and with the exception of the word beginning none of the words in there are longer than four letters long and yet these words contain such profound theological truth and there's loads that we could say about these opening verses in john's gospel what i want to highlight is that john is using that term word to describe something that goes way way further back than the bible and it's interesting genesis 1 takes us to the beginning of the universe john 1 takes us right into eternity and as he does that he's leading us deeper and deeper into the nature of god himself and he uses this term word to describe one who is both with god and was god that word john then tells us a few verses later is the son sent from the father and all of this is pointing us to what the rest of scripture helps us to see that the god revealed in the bible is the triune god father son and holy spirit and john is telling us that this term word is central to who god is and to who god has been from all eternity now that's one of these things where you're like okay that sounds quite simple and then you're also like what on earth does that even mean what's this saying well i think there's two two aspects that are helpful for us to think about one is that that term word is actually revealing the personalness of god so that's an important concept for us to think about the personalness of god so this is a crucial thing about the god of the bible god the god of the bible is not some kind of impersonal force like fate or the force as it is in star wars or whatever it might be um it's not the god of the bible god's not this kind of abstract other that's just there but unknowable god is none of those things god is personal in fact god is three persons in one god god the father god the son god the holy spirit and as a personal being word this concept of word becomes so so important because if you think about it when we're talking about some about personalness or personality it's through speech through interaction through communication that personalness is known and shared and enjoyed and we experience this ourselves this is what it's all we we are all full of different personalities in this room the reason that we know that we're different is because of the way we interact with each other and so our personalities are not based on the fact that we look differently our personalities are based on the fact that we communicate and interact and interact and speak differently and that's where our distinctiveness comes through our personality is revealed through our speech our communication our interaction so my word reveals who i am and through my word you know me i know you and we can be in a relationship of

knowledge all human relationships depend on that and what we experience in ourselves is a glimpse of the nature of god that's been revealed here in john's gospel the father the son and the holy spirit all divine persons and within that glorious trinity there's an eternal speaking and listening there's an eternal knowing and being known there's an eternal sharing and receiving of divine delight so word is connected to this personalness of god but the second thing that we need to think about is that in relation to this concept of the word john is giving a particular emphasis to the second person of the trinity god the son so within our god there's three persons each person has unique characteristics distinguishing one from the other so only the father is the father only the son is the son only the spirit is the spirit together father son and spirit are one god and the beautiful thing about that is the individuality always involves an eternal interdependence so in other words there's never any selfishness in god that's that's one of the most beautiful things that the christian doctrine of the trinity reveals that there is never any selfishness in god there's always this eternal interdependence so the father what i mean by that is the father the father is father eternally but the father can only be father because of the son because he has a son and the son can only be son because he has a father and the spirit can only be the spirit because he proceeds from father son and son and he reaches father and son and so there's this beautiful distinctiveness interdependence interdependence oh it's like unity and complexity amazing the simplicity complexity it's all beautiful john's teaching us that in relation to god the son there's also a distinct wordness attached to his person now that's probably a confusing thing for me to say so i'm going to say it again that you know when we think about we think about father we think about son we think about spirit but john is saying that that that the son alongside his sonship there's also this wordness if we like and so let me just write that down so it becomes a wee bit clearer because i'm worried that i'm being very confusing so there's sonship in the second version of the trinity absolutely but there is also what we could call wordness now don't worry i know that that's a made-up word but i'm just trying to say that there's a there's this wordness emphasis with the son so we'll say a little bit more about that as we go on but the thing i wanted to highlight about that is that that special emphasis on the wordness of the son is is is especially important in terms of the way in which god is going to interact with anything that's distinct from him so this is i'm going to do the impossible which is i'm going to try and illustrate god and illustrate the trinity just now which is impossible but we'll do it a wee bit anyway so if you imagine that god was electricity the sun word is the bulb okay so you can't see electricity but you can see the bulb so it's like your access point to know that there's electricity there or if god was a house the sun the word is the door or the window the access point the connecting point if god is a tank of water the sun the word is the tap now all of those images are totally inadequate don't ever quote me on any of them don't say that god is a tank of water that's

but i'm just trying to capture that as god goes as god moves to create and interact with anything that's distinct from him he does it through the word and that takes us to our second heading the creative word so genesis 1 tells us two crucial things it tells us that god created the heavens and the earth and it tells us that he did it by his word and god said god speaks and it was so and the rest of scripture reveals to us that that creative word is spoken by the son by the word john tells us that all things were made through him through the word without him was not anything made that was made in him was life and the life was the light of men same truth emphasized in colossians 1 16 by him all things were created same truth highlighted in 2nd timothy 3 5 everything was formed by the word of god and god said is the creative word by which all other things come into existence and that word is spoken by god the son he is the one through whom all things are made so if we're thinking father son spirit and we're thinking the son has this wordness connected to his sonship and the creative action of god comes through him and so that which is then becomes external to god the creation the interaction with the creation comes through the son he's the one who speaks the creative word so the son is the channel if you like through which the life of god flows out to others so the eternal word speaks the creative word and the heavens and the earth and all that is within them come into being in fact it's that word that's also the means by which the universe is upheld you see that in hebrews uh one uh one to three um that through the son he created the world and it's also through him that the whole universe is upheld by the word of his power so again you're seeing this connection between sonship and wordness if you like and that's the means through which everything else is created and that creative word was spoken the heavens and the earth came into being and it was very good but it did not remain very good sin came into the world and that also happened because of the word because satan questioned what god had spoken adam and eve disobeyed what god had commanded and sin came into an experience and because of that there now needs to be a redemptive word which is the third thing that we're going to look at so what i want you to see here so you're doing very well there's lots of here i know that i'm there's a lot here i know but keep up we're doing well we're going to get there and what i want you to see here is that in the creative word in genesis 1 we see this phrase and god said then in genesis 3 as god responds you see the same phrase the lord god said so in genesis 1 3 the process of creation that brought order out of chaos is initiated by the words and god said then in genesis 3 14 when god responds to the fall and initiates his

plan of salvation you see exactly the same thing the lord god said and then the pattern continues throughout the rest of the old testament as god's redemptive plan gradually unfolds god comes to noah and he speaks and god said god comes to abraham and he speaks now the lord god said god comes to moses in exodus 4 later in exodus 20 and god speaks to israel to moses and the people of israel and then god later comes to abraham not to abraham to david sending his prophet saying go and tell my servant david thus says the lord all of it is initiated by god speaking it's all god's word and all of this in the old testament is in the context of god's covenant word his promise that he'll be our god we shall be his people those covenant promises that he makes throughout the old testament are accompanied by the prophetic word men and women sent by god to speak warnings to god's people as they were unfaithful to god's covenant but also to give promises of god's mercy and salvation those old testament words of promise and prophecy are all a shadow pointing towards the full uh towards the complete fulfillment of god's plan of salvation the ultimate act of redemption the fact that god himself is going to come to save his people and that takes us to our fourth heading the incarnate word that takes us back to john 1 14 the word became flesh and dwelt among us that's what we mean by the incarnation god the son becoming a human one of us and here everything goes to a magnificent and incredible new level so the eternal word the second person of the trinity the one in whom sonship and wordness go hand in hand the one who speaks the creative word the one who brings all things into being the one who upholds the universe by the word of his power the one who spoke the redemptive word to fallen humanity the one by whose spirit all the prophets of the old testament spoke he becomes one of us in fact he becomes a baby in a manger a boy who grows up a carpenter who works a sufferer who experiences all the sorrows and struggles and temptations that you and i face in our lives and that incarnation is part of the mission involved in fulfilling the redemptive plan that god initiated what jesus comes to do is fulfilling that redemptive word that was spoken at the very start going back to genesis 3 15 this is god's response to the fall he is going to he is going to crush the head of the serpent defeating the one who has caused all the damage but in the process his heel is going to be bruised he is going to suffer and all of this of course is pointing forward to the cross because it's at the cross that that bruising takes place and it's at the cross that that crushing of the head of the serpent is accomplished and so there at the cross there the one who is the eternal word who spoke the creative word who declared the redemptive word and who inspired the prophetic word is now condemned by false words because as the chief priests gathered a trial around jesus

[20:17] they were seeking testimony to put him to death but they found none for many bore false witness against him but their testimony did not agree so the eternal word who spoke the prophetic the redemptive word inspired the prophetic word and became the incarnate word is now condemned through false words and in that moment of being condemned the eternal incarnate word spoke no words as soon as it was morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes over the whole council they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate and Pilate asked him are you the king of the Jews and he answered him you've said so and the chief priests accused him of many things and Pilate again asked him have you no answer to make see how many charges they bring against you but Jesus made no further answer so that Pilate was amazed and as we go on we see that the one who said let there be light now faces the darkness of the cross that when the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour and the one who from all eternity was with God and was God now cries out my God my God why have you forsaken me and he did it all so that you can be saved and that's because the eternal word who became the incarnate word is full of grace and truth his word is a word of truth confronting the reality of sin addressing all the implications of our guilt accepting the punishment that we deserve and his word is a word of grace pouring out love and mercy and goodness over over those who've done nothing to deserve it and the truth of that word is confirmed in the resurrection everything he promised was fulfilled in that he rose from the dead and conquered the grave and the grace of that word is seen in the resurrection because he's calling us to be his own and he ever lives to intercede for us as our great high priest at the right hand of the Father everything that the incarnate word has accomplished is everything that we need and that means that we need to know about this and that's why we need the inscripturated word the incarnate word who came died and rose again in power has now ascended back into heavenly glory but he's not left us without his word as he said in John 16 he's going to send his spirit who's going to reveal more to the apostles when the spirit of truth comes he'll guide you into all the truth for he will not speak of his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he'll declare to you the things that are to come he'll glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you all that the Father has is mine therefore I said that he'll take what is mine and declare it to you these are words of describing the process that's going to follow as the apostles are called to write the words of the New Testament scriptures that we now have inscripturated we have the word in the Bible so the eternal word who spoke the creative word and declared the redemptive word has come as the incarnate word and now he has risen and left us the inscripturated word and that word is still his word and that's why it's powerful and that's why it's living and active and that's why it's sharper than any two-edged sword and that's why the whole life

of the church is centered on this word and that's why the focal point of our weekly worship is the preached word the message that Jesus left which tells us all that he's accomplished is the message that needs to be proclaimed that message is powerful Paul said Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel and not with words of eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God that word brings light just like it did in Genesis for we proclaim not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord with ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shone into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus and just as it did in Genesis that word brings life that's why Peter can say in 1 Peter chapter 1 that you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God for all flesh is like grass and all of its glory like a flower fades and all its glory like the flower of grass the grass withers and the flower falls but the word of the Lord remains forever this word is the good news that was preached to you the word that reveals divine life and that spoke creative life is the word that now brings new life to us and it's teaching us that everything depends on the word of God from created humanity to fallen humanity to forgiven humanity from creation to the cross to the church everything depends on the word of God we are completely powerless on our own but with the word of God being proclaimed amazing things can happen because the life giving God is proclaiming his life giving word that's why it's no wonder that Peter said to Jesus

Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life now I know that I've kind of bombarded you with information and taken you from eternity all the way through the Bible up until our service today but I hope that you can see that all that we've said is connected the eternal word the creative word the redemptive word the incarnate word the preached the inscripturated word the preached word this explains why the Bible is so important and we all need to recognize its authority its uniqueness its power this explains why preaching is primary that's something that we always want to recognize and maintain there's loads of wonderful activities that the church gets involved in but preaching is primary because it's in the word that the power lies that's why we can be confident and optimistic and we need to recognize the power of God's word it is living and active it's sharper than any two-edged sword and all of this explains why the Bible will speak to you in a way that nothing else will and that's why that as the Holy Spirit hovers when the word of God preached reaches what the word of God created when the life-giving word reaches the life-needing sinner when you sit and hear the amazing truth of everything that God has done for you and wants for you in and through his son Jesus it is in those moments that you will feel at your most alive and as we close

I want you to do two things I want you to marvel at the word of God and I feel like I've left so much unexplained and part of that's because I can't explain it all but I want you to marvel at the word of God at Jesus the incarnate word who reveals the eternal word who's left us his inscripturated word I want you just to marvel at how what an amazing privilege we have to have these words open in front of us so the first thing I want you to do is I want you to marvel at the word of God and the second thing I want you to do is I want you to realize that all of this is because he loves you he is ensuring heard this that his word is preached to you.

Because he wants his inscripturated word to be heard by you. Because you need to know that he became incarnate for you.

[29 : 46] And he did that in order to redeem you because you are created by him and for him. And he does not want to lose you.

He wants to spend eternity knowing you and loving you and speaking to you of his grace and truth.

And so as we think about all these great theological topics, and I know this has been an unusually heavily theological sermon, the amazing thing about all the vast theology that the Bible reveals is that it all takes you back, it all takes you back to the fact that God loves you.

that he's preaching to you and he's left his scriptures for you because he became incarnate to die for you, because he had made a redemptive promise for you, because you are his and you can spend eternity with him.

And so you start the Bible and you read that phrase, and God said, and the universe came into being. You go to Genesis chapter 3, and God said, and his redemptive plan is initiated.

[31 : 13] You go through the rest of the Old Testament, you hear God speaking again and again and again, all culminating in the word himself, becoming flesh, and dwelling among us. accomplishing his mission, fulfilling his promises, leaving his word for us, that word that we now go out and preach from beginning to end, we keep coming back to this magnificent phrase, and God said.

And God said, let there be light in the beginning. And God said, I will crush the head of the serpent.

And God said, and God said, and God said, and God came, and Jesus died, and he rose, and he left his word, and he has left his promises, and God said, and God said, and God said, and God said, and now God is saying, one more thing to you.

He is saying, I love you, and I want you to follow me. Amen.