

Christmas Day

JESUS IS FULL OF GRACE

John 1:1-14

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Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

DIAGNOSIS: YOU'RE FULL OF IT

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Full of the Status Quo*

We cannot know the far past, and we do not remember the cost of things forty years ago. So we live in the present as if the present is what should be, how it has always been, and is the status quo to be maintained-sort of our own way of creating a kind of eternal life. We are told not to rock the boat, don't make changes, and that we like the way things are now. On our own we remain trapped in the present, but a witness testifies to us that from the very beginning there was an intent to give us life, even if in the meantime we are subject to death-and death we think has always been present. Not only are we subject to death in the meantime, but we, without knowing (stuck as we are in the status quo), were created by the One who intends to give us life. We, in the status quo, think we are only part of nature, children of our parents and nothing more (v. 13a).

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *We're So Full of Ourselves*

But in this status quo there is a demand that we prove our worth. Also, death demands that we live a good life, because death, as an end, requires that judgment be made on what has ended. Always, when something ends, is completed, as when the day is done, we must judge it. "How was your day?" "Did you like the movie?" "Thank you, this supper was delicious." "That was a job well done." The result of the demand that we prove our worth and the result of having to judge all that is completed, is that everyone tries to make themselves look good. People brag about what they did. And everyone else says to each other, "He is so full of himself." Who can blame those who are so full of themselves? It is demanded that they be so. The result is that we all believe in the demand, we all believe in judging what ends, and we all believe in ourselves. Or worse, knowing the

demand and judgment, we despair of who we are, and do not think much of ourselves. Addiction is an outlet. We do drugs and drink as a distraction. Because it is so hard to be a human being. Anything to numb the pain. That's what we do. Perhaps it is best we do not remember much of the past, lest we really despair of who we are and how we are so often not loved, which is only to fail at being worthy of love.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Full of Nothing and Death*

We are in the world, and the world is our enemy. The world demands our worth. The world judges all. The world makes us focus on the present. The world wants no change to its demands and judgments. The world wants no change to the fact of death, our death. And if all things came into being through the Word, then even the world and death and demands and judgments are the Word's creation (v. 3). Indeed there is very much darkness. That darkness of death, of being unable to trust God, of being nothing-a judgment in itself-is what we really want to overcome and what we fear. All our attempts to meet demands and to be judged as worth something are all made so that we do not become nothing. But death makes us so-despite of the status quo that declares without basis that there is automatically life after death.

PROGNOSIS: LET ME FILL YOU UP

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *He Became Flesh, Full of Grace and Truth*

In the dark the Word became flesh, a child born of Mary, whom she named Jesus, and laid him in a manger. The status quo would say that the child is just another child subject to demands and judgment and death. Yet the witness testifies that the Word made flesh-is, oh, so wondrous and awe-ful, full of grace and truth! The status quo is changed! Jesus is not full of himself, but

full of grace and truth! He comes with grace, not demands. He comes with mercy, not judgment. He is the life of all people- eternal life. The eternal life he brings is the light for people to see. The witness so far only testifies that Jesus is the life, but later tells us that Jesus, because he became flesh, also became subject to death. In his death is his glory, a glory that the witness has seen, seen in Jesus on a cross. Then by his death, Jesus gives us his life. Of this we are certain because God raised Jesus from the dead! The status quo is again changed. Jesus now has the power to make any person, all people, the children of God, not just another part of creation.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) : *We Are Filled Full of Grace and Truth*

Jesus is full of grace, meaning he gives us the power to believe in him, to believe in his promise of grace, in his promise of eternal life, and his promise to make us children of God, children who remain in God the Father's house forever (8:35-36). Jesus is now our truth, that is, when judgment happens to us, Jesus is the truth about us. In him we have died and are raised. In him each of us is God's child. In him our worth is Jesus. Jesus abides in us and we in him. Our life is hidden in Jesus. So no longer do we need to believe in demands and judgment and death and the need to be full of ourselves.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Living by Grace and Truth*

As children of God, we are empowered (v. 12) to live, doing what Jesus did-giving grace. We now give grace instead of judgment. We now give grace instead of making demands. We now testify to Jesus as the life of all, instead of wealth, success, sports, or family as our life. We give each other Jesus' love, instead of love having to be earned, or instead of love depending on how others still in the status quo treat us. We become testifiers to the light, the light that is the eternal life of all.