

## **“The end of gods” John 1:10-18**

**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. 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. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, “He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.”” For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

We could say that today's reading is a stumbling block and foolishness to the world. John tells about something that totally doesn't make sense. What is it? It is this Biblical picture of God.

You know that we can talk with people about God. Not everyone, of course, but most people from time to time actually like to have some god-talk, it makes them feel spiritual, to feel good about themselves.

And when they have these god-talks, they can easily admit that there is something higher, or even someone higher. And it would be difficult to deny; for this sense, this knowledge is literary built into us by our Creator.

Thus most people would admit quite happily that there is something else. People are happy to chat about this something, about God is general, or we could even say - about the abstract idea of God. Why are people comfortable with that?

It's quite simple. On the one hand, you can't get rid of this knowledge that there is God. So you have to address this issue at least somehow. On the other hand, if you deal only with an abstract idea of God, then you can create from this idea a god after your own image and likeness.

Thus we can determine what this abstract god will be like. We ourselves can be creators and this god – our creation, the work of our imagination. Isn't this so cool? Then we can shape this idea of God as we wish.

Then it is not surprising to find that this god thinks like us, he has the same values as we, he definitely supports our decisions and choices, and expects from us only what we ourselves expect from us.

Isn't it wonderful! And we are still in control. Tragically, but many who have this kind of God, would consider themselves Christians, and many Christians would have this kind of idea about God.

The point is, that as long as we talk about some abstract god, people are quite comfortable. For then they can create gods which suit their taste. But there is a problem. A huge problem. And His name is Jesus Christ.

True God is not an abstract idea. He is a person. He is a real person. He doesn't exist in our minds, He really exists. And if He is a real person, then we can't shape Him according to our ideas.

We can't assume or choose what He is like, we can only learn what He is like. Exactly as we do with everyone else. How do we get to know someone? We listen to them, we look at what they have done, and learn what kind of persons they are.

The same is true about God. He is not something we can create in our imagination. He is a real person. He has revealed Himself in a very particular way, in Jesus Christ. This is what John emphasized in today's Gospel reading.

And this is what people don't like. They don't like that by His revelation in Jesus Christ, God has become very concrete, very particular. For as soon as the true God reveals Himself, He takes away our power to create Him in our own image.

There is no more room for speculations. He comes to us from outside of us, in reality, not in our imagination. He is not some kind of god in my heart, He is real, historical person. He comes in real time, in real place as the man Jesus from Nazareth. This is what true God is like. God is flesh. God among us.

**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.**

The world was made through Him. We can't comprehend what it means. The act of creation will remain a mystery for us. The fact remains, that the same God who created the world, the same One came into this world.

The true God didn't want to be an abstract idea in people's minds, He wanted us to know Him as He is. He came to His own. He came to the people to whom He had spoken so many times. To the people whom He called His own. They had His promises written down, they read them all the time, but they didn't receive Him.

They also had their own ideas about what God is supposed be like, and what He was supposed to do. When the true God came to them, they didn't receive Him. This is a very serious issue for us as well.

We all are guilty, some more, some less, of creating God after our own image. This is what hinders us to receive Him as He comes to us today. He speaks to us and we don't listen. He is clear, and we pretend that we can't understand. He commands and we disobey. He invites and we don't come. And we excuse ourselves by

saying that 'I have my faith'. What is this if not the rejection of the true God and making of an idol instead.

**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.**

But to all who do receive Him... to all of you who receive Him, this is what He gives. He makes you a child of God. You become a member of the Divine Family. You become heirs of God's eternal Kingdom. This is the most important identity of yours. This is your identity that will remain forever.

These are only words for us, for now. We can't picture the reality they describe, yet. It is too wonderful, too majestic, too great for us to comprehend it. But one day you will experience it.

One day this reality, which for now is hidden, will become yours, fully revealed, when you will see your God Jesus Christ face to face, praising His name together with countless multitudes of those who have received Him.

Important question is, how do we receive Him? Believing in His name. What does this mean? It means believing in the name of Jesus Christ. Believing that this is how the true God comes to us.

Believing that this man Jesus Christ is the same God who created the heavens and the earth and who will come to renew the whole creation and who will reign forever. This is what it means to believe in His name.

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

This verse gives us the whole message of the Bible in one sentence. It brings together everything that God has done. In the beginning God dwelled together with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. We can read that at the end, when Christ returns and restores His creation, our God will again dwell together with us.

Meanwhile we are separated from Him and He from us by our sin. However, He doesn't want this separation, He doesn't want to wait until the end to be together with you, and this is why He has established the Divine Service.

He promised that He will dwell with His people. We can read how this promise was fulfilled and how God dwelled among the Israelites in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, where His glory filled the Temple.

When John writes that the Word became flesh and dwelled among us, he actually uses the same word, which is used in the Old Testament to describe God's indwelling in the Temple.

Jesus Christ was God's very presence among us. The Word became flesh. The holy God became flesh. The Creator of everything became creature. The divinity joined to the humanity and the humanity was joined to the divinity. The greatest mystery of all times and the greatest news of all times.

It is not up to us to decide how God comes to us, and how He reveals Himself. He came as Jesus of Nazareth, and now He comes to us in His Holy Meal. For our God, the creation is good, even very good.

He affirmed this goodness by becoming flesh. And He still affirms its goodness using simple elements of His creation to be with us. Water, bread and wine. Through and in these created elements He comes to us and shares with us His holiness, His life and forgiveness.

**For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

This is how our God operates. Grace upon grace. As waves that keep coming and coming, the same way God's grace are poured over His children. John mentions the law, grace and truth as God's gifts.

This is what they truly are. God revealed Himself as gracious and loving God to the Israel redeeming them from Egypt. Through Moses God revealed to them His wisdom, and His future plans for our salvation.

In Jesus He revealed Himself fully. In Jesus we see the truth about God. In Jesus we see His grace in full. We see God's attitude towards us. He became one of us. He came to show the ultimate love, to love us till the end, to love us more than His own life.

He is not a distant and imaginary god. He is God with us. He knows what it means to be a human and to live in this world. He knows all the struggles that we experience. He knows all our failures, our rebellion against Him, and ignorance and unwillingness to be with Him and to serve Him.

He knows that we are lazy to listen to Him, but keen to believe we know everything. He knows that we are slow to serve others, but fast to point to their shortcoming. He knows everything about you, and He comes to you to forgive you.

And His forgiveness gives you eternal life. We often grow weary to listen to our God and to respond to His invitation, but He never grows weary to invite us and to forgive us. He is here for you as soon as you need. He never gives up on you.

**No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

No one has ever seen God, this is why people fool around with their own ideas about God. But now, the only God, the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ has made Him known.

God came into the world. He became as one of us, so that He could speak to us and we could hear His voice. There are no more excuses to make up our own gods. Because we know who the true God is.

He appeared, we saw Him, we heard Him, we touched Him, He lived among us. He still lives among us, we still hear Him as He speaks through His Word, we still see Him and can touch Him as He comes to us in the Lord's Supper.

Sure, His divine glory is hidden from our eyes. Two millennia ago He was hiding in flesh and now He is hiding in bread and wine, but He is here, to grant you His forgiveness and eternal life.

God the Creator has revealed Himself. You can know exactly who He is. Jesus Christ. True God and true man. And you can know where He is. God who created everything, who dwelled in the Temple, who dwelled among us as Jesus, now comes to you in His Word right now. The same God. God who wants to be your God.

As we know the truth about God Jesus Christ and as we receive from Him grace upon grace, let's not keep it for ourselves, but go and tell everyone that the true God, Jesus Christ is here, waiting for them to receive His gifts.

Amen.