

The Night Before Christmas Patrick Miller | John 1:1-5 Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To understand how the coming of Jesus shaped and continues to shape our moral values and intuitions.

Icebreaker: We live in a time of heightened polarization and disunity. Describe a time when you were able to work together and hold productive conversations with someone who held very different beliefs from yours. As you share about that experience, highlight how your shared values brought you together despite differences.

Discussion:

Introduction: If we were to use a time travel machine and arrive the night before Jesus came into the world, the culture—regarding moral values and intuitions—would have been unrecognizable to us. The moral waters in which we swim today, would not have existed 2000 years ago. If we showed up talking about compassion, equality, freedom, and consent, those present would have looked at us as if we were aliens from a different planet. The reason we hold these common moral values today is because Jesus came and began a complete overhaul of the world's moral framework. He is the King who humbled himself by living a lowly life and dying a lowly death. He is the one who elevated those considered on the lowest rungs of society. And he calls us to carry these values with us wherever we go and in whatever we do.

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1. Read John 1:1-5 out loud together as a group.

[John 1:1–5](#)

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 anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Patrick mentioned that John doesn't have a typical "Christmas" passage in his gospel but instead these first few verses serve as part of his way of introducing us to Jesus himself. List off what that we learn about who Jesus is and why he came into the world.

2. John describes Jesus as the light that shines in the darkness. What struck you specifically regarding the moral darkness that was present during the time when Jesus came into the world?
3. The four main values highlighted in today's sermon were: Equality, Compassion, Consent and Freedom. Though Jesus brought clarity and emphasis to the law of God, we also see these moral values present in God's Old Testament law. Read this passage from Exodus 20 where God highlights some of the moral values that he wanted his people to live out.

Read: [Exodus 20:1–17](#)

And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

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"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work,

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

In reading the Ten Commandments, where do you see Equality, Compassion, Consent and Freedom present?

4. Whereas we might like to believe we're autonomous, Patrick proposed that Jesus' teachings have influenced the cultural waters in which we swim, even for our atheist and agnostic friends. Do you think the non-Christians in your life would say that some of their views on morality have been shaped by Jesus? Why or why not?
5. Historian and philosopher Yuval Harari attributes the idea of equality to Christianity: "... [it] argues that every person has a divinely created soul, and that all souls are equal before God. However, if we do not believe in the Christian myths about God, creation, and souls, what does it mean that all people are 'equal'?" He goes on to say, "Take a human being, cut him open, look inside; you will find the heart, the kidneys, neurons, hormones, DNA. But you won't find any rights. The only place you find rights is in the stories that we have invented and spread... over the last few centuries."

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Many human rights activists today consider themselves an atheist or agnostic. What do you suppose they consider the basis for their view on equality? In what ways are they borrowing from the Christian worldview to support their views?

6. Early philosophy taught: "For that some should rule, and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule" (Aristotle, Politics).

How do you see these views regarding human value and social order playing out today in our workplaces, families, neighborhoods, and churches?

7. In stark contrast to this teaching, Paul offers that Jesus came as a slave, which was itself a teaching on human equality.

Read: [Philippians 2:5–8](#)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Can you think of other Biblical passages which flip upside down the way we view others? How do you desire for passages like these to influence the way you see and interact with those in your workplace, family, neighborhood, and church?

Sharing and Prayer:

Share about your experience of the Thanksgiving Holiday. If there were hard interactions or situations with family and friends, spend time praying for each other and those relationships.