

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, 1/4/2026

What's your prologue for 2026?

Our Gospel for today from John 1 is perfect for the start of a new year. As many of us hope for new beginnings, make New Year's Resolutions, or long for a better 2026 than 2025, this is a word for you.

John 1 is known as the Prologue of John's Gospel... the word before the word. It is the epitome or summary of what is to come in the rest of the Gospel. It sets the tone. It lays out the purpose of the Gospel. It uses specific vocabulary like the words light and life to describe God's action upon the world. You could write a prologue of what you want 2026 to look like for you and those around you.

This is also John's version of the Christmas story... but without the manger, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and the Baby Jesus. Verse 14 simply says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This is the doctrine of the incarnation... "God with meat". The Word of God put on a human body and came to live on earth. If you truly want to know God, get to know Jesus. The goal was to bring grace and truth to God's people and to win them over with God's love so that they may come to believe. This belief or faith in Jesus will bring light and abundant life to believers in a way that the world could never give and a life that no darkness can overcome.

The Gospel starts off with the same phrase we see in Genesis 1. In the beginning. It is arche in the Greek. This is where God spoke creation into existence with a Word and the Holy Spirit. The spirit moved over the watery chaos and God spoke a word, "Let there be light... and there was light." God brought order out of chaos and it was good. This is good news for us today. God continues to create and bring order to the chaos in our lives and in our world. We can't always see it, but God is working through people like you and me, through the Word and Sacraments, and the church to keep this trajectory of love and justice moving forward. It may seem impossible, but the scriptures say, nothing is impossible for God.

John's Gospel is about God giving a fresh start to the human race.

One scholar wrote, “To preach John is to utter a creative word to the faithful poor, or to those who have suffered a grievous loss and who yet believe, or those who have been sorely tried and who cling to faith, or those who are patient endurers of life’s injustices... that are those in whom the Word becomes flesh in Jesus Christ.”

The Word becoming flesh means to me that God has taken on our complicated relationships, our losses, our hardships, our pain, our joy and our laughter. Jesus, 100% human and 100% divine, completely gets us and walks with us through everything.

John also writes in the prologue “Through his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.” This to me says we live in a new era... an era of Grace. Of God’s unconditional love for us... a love that Nothing can ever separate us from... neither angels or demons, principalities and powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation. No longer do we have to earn God’s favor or live perfect lives according to the law for God to love us and accept us. Yes, we can try to live our best and most ethical life possible, but as humans, we will always fall short. Romans 3, for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.

John sums it up this way, “The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” The prologue alerts us of a big change in how we are to experience God. God is not out there just waiting for us to screw up. God knows we are going to screw up. And when we become aware of it, have a broken heart over it, God’s gracious arms are open and waiting for us to enter them again and again. We no longer live under the shackles of the law to receive God’s favor. It comes through Christ’s action on the cross and in the resurrection through no merit of our own.

John’s Gospel is filled with all kinds of signs and wonders that cause people to believe. But to me, it’s the story of the Woman at the Well in John 4. Jesus meets this woman and her life is changed forever. She got a fresh start as a gift. She was left out of community... alone at the well on the hottest part of the day, she apparently had 5 husbands, and she was a gentile. And Jesus accepted her and treated her like a real human being despite their differences. Jesus offered

her living water that gushes up to eternal life. She's like, yeah, I'll take it. She went back to her village and told everyone about Jesus, how he knew everything about her, and still accepted her as is.

This is our God in human flesh. God's grace covers our 2025 for sure and our past. God's grace is ours now. Amen.