

Opening Summary

Pastor Daren Mehl's sermon moves from the repeated spiritual failures seen at the end of Nehemiah to the glorious answer revealed at the beginning of John: Jesus Christ. Human beings need more than repaired circumstances, renewed commitments, or outward religious reform because sin continually pulls the heart away from God. John introduces us to Jesus as the eternal Word, fully God, Creator, Life, and the One who became flesh to rescue sinners and bring them into fellowship with God. Determined discipleship therefore begins by knowing the true Christ, receiving His truth with hungry, humble, and teachable hearts, and allowing that truth to reshape how we love, serve, correct, encourage, and bear witness in relationship with others.

Doctrine

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son and personal Word of God, fully divine and personally distinct from the Father, through whom all things were made. The eternal Son became truly human without ceasing to be God, so that sinners who cannot save or reform themselves might be reconciled to God through Him. We believe that the Holy Spirit works through God's truth to convict, illuminate, regenerate, sanctify, and equip believers so that they increasingly know Christ, obey Christ, love one another, and faithfully bear witness to Christ.

Doctrinal anchors: John 1:1–4, 14; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:1–3; John 20:30–31.

Opening Prayer

Father, direct our hearts toward Your truth. We confess that we are easily distracted, easily satisfied with outward change, and often tempted to trust our own understanding rather than humbly receiving what You have revealed. Make us hungry to know You, humble enough to be corrected, and teachable before Your Word.

Lord Jesus Christ, eternal Son and Word made flesh, give us grace to see You rightly. Keep us from reducing You to an idea, moral example, religious symbol, or merely useful helper. By the power of Your gospel, deepen our faith, strengthen our obedience, sanctify our relationships, and teach us to love as You have loved us.

Holy Spirit, convict us of sin and illuminate the written Word You inspired. Expose false ideas, proud assumptions, harsh zeal, unbelief, and fear. Form Christ in us so that our thinking, speaking, serving, correcting, encouraging, and witnessing increasingly display His truth and love.

Triune God, make us determined disciples through relationship with Christ and with one another. Amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one truth about Jesus that you learned early in your Christian life but have come to appreciate more deeply as you have grown?

Keep the discussion light. The goal is simply to recognize that disciples continue growing in their knowledge of Christ.

Topic

1. T1: Outward Reform Cannot Cure the Sinful Heart

Narrative Summary

Pastor Mehl began by connecting the conclusion of Nehemiah with the opening of John. Nehemiah had witnessed extraordinary works of God. Jerusalem's wall had been rebuilt, worship had been restored, covenant commitments had been renewed, and the people had publicly committed themselves to obedience. Yet by Nehemiah 13, disorder and disobedience had returned. Tithes were neglected, Sabbath practices had deteriorated, covenant faithfulness was compromised, and even Tobiah had gained access to space connected with the temple.

The sermon emphasized the recurring problem beneath these events. Human beings drift. External order can restrain sin, and godly leadership can call people back to obedience, but neither can create a new heart. Nehemiah could cleanse rooms, restore practices, confront sin, and call people back to covenant obligations, but he could not regenerate the human heart.

Pastor Mehl therefore moved from Nehemiah's repeated reforms toward John's presentation of Jesus. Humanity needs reconciliation, a cleansed conscience, forgiveness, and genuine fellowship with God. The answer is not the rejection of God's Law. A small doctrinal clarification is important here: Scripture calls the Law holy, righteous, and good. The failure is not in God's Law but in sinful humanity. The Old Testament itself promises God's gracious work of inward renewal in the new covenant. Romans 7:12; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:25–27.

This gives the group a deeply relational application. We can try to manage one another through rules, pressure, shame, or appearances. But determined discipleship through relationship seeks something deeper. We speak truth, encourage obedience, confront sin when necessary, and continually point one another to Christ because only God can transform the heart.

Scriptures Used

Nehemiah 13; John 1:1–4, 14; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Romans 7:12.

Direct Quotes from Pastor Daren Mehl

- “People drift away from God.”
- “What truth defeats that law, fulfills that law rather? It’s Jesus.”
- “The answer is that Jesus Christ became flesh.”
- “God is faithful in Jesus Christ even when we’re not.”

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** What did the repeated problems in Nehemiah 13 reveal about the limits of outward reform?
2. **Heart-level conviction:** Where are you most tempted to manage outward behavior while ignoring the deeper attitudes, desires, fears, or sins of your heart?
3. **Relational application:** How can we help someone pursue genuine heart change without becoming controlling, condemning, or satisfied with appearances?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** What would it look like to be hungry for real transformation, humble enough to admit where you are drifting, and teachable when Scripture or another believer corrects you?
5. **Obedience step:** What specific area of your life needs to move from repeated self-repair toward repentance, faith in Christ, and Spirit-enabled obedience?

2. T2: Jesus Sanctifies Zeal Into Truthful Love and Service

Narrative Summary

Pastor Mehl introduced John not merely as an author but as a disciple whose life had been shaped through relationship with Jesus. John and his brother James were known as Sons of Thunder. Their intensity was evident when they wanted judgment to fall upon a Samaritan village that rejected Jesus. Their ambition also appeared when they sought places of prominence in Christ’s kingdom.

Jesus did not affirm immature zeal simply because it was passionate. He corrected it. Pastor Mehl connected John’s early intensity with his later reputation as an apostle who preached truth and love. The implication is significant for sanctification. Christ does not necessarily erase personality, strength, courage, conviction, or intensity. He brings those qualities under His lordship.

Boldness can become holy courage. Strength can become sacrificial service. Conviction can become patient faithfulness. Ambition can be redirected toward glorifying Christ rather than elevating self. The question is not simply whether we are passionate, but whether our passion has been disciplined by the character and purposes of Jesus.

This is central to determined discipleship through relationship. Sanctification ordinarily happens as believers walk with Christ and with His people. We receive correction. We learn to listen. We confess when zeal becomes harshness or pride. We encourage one another to retain courage while growing in gentleness, patience, self-control, and biblical love.

Scriptures Used

Mark 3:17; Luke 9:51–56; Mark 10:35–45; John 13:34–35; John 20:30–31.

Direct Quotes from Pastor Daren Mehl

- “And then he went from the son of thunder to growing into being the apostle of love because he preached the truth.”
- “He was submitted to Jesus.”
- “he saw the zeal wasn’t tied with that wisdom and knowing who Jesus is.”
- “Jesus came to save.”

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** What was wrong with John and James’s zeal when they wanted judgment against those who rejected Jesus?
2. **Heart-level conviction:** What strength in your personality can become sinful when it is controlled by pride, fear, anger, or self-interest?
3. **Relational application:** How can another Christian help you recognize when a genuine strength is being used in an un-Christlike way?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** Are you humble enough to let Jesus correct not merely your actions but the way you use your personality, gifts, influence, and convictions?
5. **Obedience step:** Identify one strength God has given you and one concrete way you can intentionally use it this week for service, truth, patience, or love.

3. T3: Sound Doctrine Gives Us the True Christ

Narrative Summary

Pastor Mehl emphasized that John’s Gospel moves deeply into theology and doctrine. He described these truths as substantial nourishment and as pillars that sustain faith. That emphasis is important because Christianity is not merely having positive feelings about someone named Jesus. Scripture identifies who Jesus actually is.

John writes so that people will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name. Paul likewise warns of another Jesus and a different gospel. Therefore doctrine serves relationship with Christ rather than competing with it. We cannot meaningfully claim to know someone while rejecting the truth about who that person is.

Sound doctrine should not produce arrogance. A person can know theological vocabulary and remain proud, impatient, or unloving. The goal is to know the true Christ so that we trust Him, worship Him, obey Him, and increasingly become like Him.

A small doctrinal distinction is also useful. Scripture can rightly be called the Word of God because it is God-breathed written revelation. Jesus, however, is the eternal personal Word of John 1. Jesus is not a book, and the Bible is not the second Person of the Trinity. Rather, the inspired written Word authoritatively reveals the eternal incarnate Word. John 1:1–3, 14; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 1:1–3. Scripture is sufficient and final written rule of faith while confessing the Son as the eternal Word.

Scriptures Used

John 1:1–4; John 20:30–31; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6–9; 1 John 2:22–23.

Direct Quotes from Pastor Daren Mehl

- “he is going deep into theology, deep into doctrine and pulling out some stakes”
- “This is the meat of the truth.”
- “These are the pillars of truth.”
- “The pillars that hold up the house that you live in are the pillars of his truth.”

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** Why does doctrine about Jesus matter if Christianity is also a personal relationship with Him?
2. **Heart-level conviction:** Are there beliefs about Jesus that you have accepted mainly from culture, tradition, preference, or experience rather than carefully testing them by Scripture?
3. **Relational application:** How can we correct false teaching about Jesus without becoming argumentative, proud, or dismissive toward the person holding the error?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** What doctrine about Christ do you need to study more carefully rather than assuming you already understand it?
5. **Obedience step:** Practice explaining in two or three sentences who Jesus is according to John 1, then share that explanation with another believer.

4. T4: Jesus Christ Is the Eternal Word Who Became Flesh

Narrative Summary

The theological center of the sermon is John’s extraordinary presentation of Jesus Christ. John does not begin at Bethlehem. He reaches back beyond Abraham, beyond creation, and beyond the beginning of the created order. When the beginning happened, the Word already was.

John 1:1 teaches several truths simultaneously. The Word existed eternally. The Word was with God, showing personal distinction. The Word was God, affirming full deity. Verse 3

then places Christ firmly on the Creator side of the Creator-creature distinction. Everything that came into existence came through Him. Therefore the Son Himself is not a created being.

John also says that life is in Him. Jesus is not merely one religious teacher pointing toward life. Life is found in Him because He is its divine source. This prepares the reader for John's repeated emphasis upon eternal life through faith in Christ.

The statement that the Word became flesh reveals the incarnation. The eternal Son did not cease being divine, nor did He merely appear to be human. The historic Christian confession is that Jesus Christ is one Person with two true natures, divine and human. He is fully God and fully man.

This also helps explain the Trinity. Scripture teaches one God, yet the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are personally distinct and fully divine. The Son being with God does not make Him a second God. The Son being God does not mean He is the Father. There is one divine Being eternally existing as three distinct Persons.

This doctrine is not abstract speculation. Humanity needed more than another moral instructor. We needed the Savior. The eternal Son entered His creation, took true humanity, obeyed, suffered, died, and rose so that sinners could be reconciled to God and receive life in His name.

Scriptures Used

John 1:1–4, 14; Deuteronomy 6:4; John 17:5; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:1–3; Philippians 2:5–8; Hebrews 2:14–17.

Direct Quotes from Pastor Daren Mehl

- “John’s gonna answer that question for us, all those questions in Jesus.”
- “The answer is that Jesus Christ became flesh.”
- “This is the stuff that will sustain you, that will be pillars of your faith as he is the rock of your foundation.”

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** What does John 1:1–4 teach about Christ's eternity, deity, relationship to the Father, and role in creation?
2. **Heart-level conviction:** How does seeing Jesus as eternal Creator challenge any tendency to treat Him casually, selectively, or merely as an advisor?
3. **Relational application:** If the eternal Son humbled Himself and entered our condition to save us, how should His incarnation shape the way we serve difficult, weak, or needy people?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** Which truth about the Trinity or incarnation stretches your understanding and calls you to humble trust rather than careless speculation?

5. **Obedience step:** Spend intentional time worshiping Christ specifically for who John 1 says He is, then let one truth about Him shape a concrete act of obedience.

5. T5: The Spirit Illuminates the Word and Sends the Church to Witness

Narrative Summary

Pastor Mehl opened the sermon by describing the Holy Spirit's ministry of speaking, revealing, convicting, and encouraging in truth. He also described publicly reading John and then bringing that Word back into the gathered life of the church. The sermon therefore connects Scripture, the Spirit, proclamation, and Christian community.

A small doctrinal clarification helps preserve what is biblically valuable in this emphasis. The Holy Spirit truly illuminates Scripture, convicts through truth, brings Christ's teaching to remembrance, applies God's Word, guides believers providentially, and sanctifies the church. Yet illumination should be distinguished from new inspired revelation. The Spirit who inspired Scripture does not contradict Scripture or add another authoritative Word alongside it. Scripture remains the sufficient and final written authority for Christian faith and obedience. 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21; John 16:13–14.

Likewise, publicly reading Scripture and proclaiming the gospel are biblical acts of witness. Faith comes by hearing, and the Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. Yet Scripture should not be treated as an incantation that mechanically changes spiritual territory merely because certain words are spoken aloud. Jesus already possesses all authority in heaven and earth. Believers therefore proclaim truth in faith, pray, resist evil, obey Christ, and trust God with the results.

The relational dimension is essential. Pastor Mehl moved from an individual act of public reading toward the church hearing and receiving the Word together. Determined discipleship is not isolated spirituality. Hungry, humble, teachable believers listen together, test teaching by Scripture, encourage one another, pray for courage, and carry the gospel into relationships with truth and love.

Scriptures Used

2 Timothy 3:15–17; John 16:13–14; Romans 10:17; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:10–18; Matthew 28:18–20.

Direct Quotes from Pastor Daren Mehl

- “We believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to us. He reveals the Word. He convicts us of sin, and He encourages us in truth.”
- “I just felt the power of the Holy Spirit as I spoke those words into War Road, that this is something that we want to bring people to hear it.”
- “We’ve spoken it spiritually.”
- “And now we get to do it together as a community, as a body of Christ.”

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** What is the difference between the Holy Spirit illuminating Scripture and giving new inspired revelation equal to Scripture?
2. **Heart-level conviction:** What most often keeps you from receiving God's written Word attentively: distraction, pride, fear, familiarity, unbelief, or unwillingness to obey?
3. **Relational application:** How can your group become a community where Scripture is spoken courageously and received humbly rather than used to control or embarrass people?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** What would change if you came to Scripture hungry to hear truth, humble enough to be corrected, and teachable enough to change your conduct?
5. **Obedience step:** Prayerfully identify one person with whom you can share a truth about Christ from John 1 with clarity, humility, courage, and genuine love.

Group Prayer

Begin by praising the Father for revealing His saving purpose in the Son. Thank Jesus Christ for becoming flesh and accomplishing what outward reform and human effort could never accomplish. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate Scripture, convict the heart, renew the mind, and produce obedience.

Pray specifically for transformation from the old patterns of life into the new life of Christ. Ask God to expose places where people are maintaining appearances without pursuing heart holiness. Pray for renewed minds, mortified sin, stronger faith, gentler speech, sacrificial love, perseverance, and the fruit of the Spirit.

The leader may compassionately ask:

- Where do you need prayer because you feel yourself drifting spiritually?
- Is there an area where you have been trying to manage behavior rather than bringing your heart honestly before Christ?
- Is there a strength, conviction, or passion that needs to become more Christlike in the way it is expressed?
- Is there a truth about Jesus that you want the group to help you understand more clearly?
- Who has God placed in your life whom you want courage and love to encourage with the truth of Christ?

Pray for one another without forcing disclosure. Ask the Spirit to use the written Word to replace lies with truth, pride with humility, fear with faith, harshness with gentleness, self-protection with love, and passive Christianity with obedient discipleship.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for revealing Your glory and saving purpose through Your Son. Keep us from settling for appearances when You call us to transformation of heart and life.

Jesus Christ, eternal Word made flesh, we confess You as Lord, Creator, Savior, Life, and Light. Give us grace to trust You rather than ourselves. Sanctify our courage, our relationships, our words, and our desires so that we increasingly resemble You.

Holy Spirit, continue to illuminate the Scriptures, convict us where we resist truth, strengthen us where we are weak, and produce Your fruit in us. Make us hungry for truth, humble under correction, and teachable in every stage of discipleship.

Make us determined disciples who faithfully walk with Christ and with one another, speaking the truth in love and helping one another endure in faith and holiness. Amen.

Challenge

Read John 1:1–18 slowly each day and identify one truth about who Jesus is. Ask what that truth corrects in your thinking, what obedience it requires, and how it should change the way you treat another person. Before the week is complete, share one truth about Christ with someone else in a way that is courageous, humble, and loving.

Daily Devotionals

Day 1: More Than Outward Reform

Narrative: Nehemiah could restore practices, correct abuses, and call people back to obedience, but the repeated failures of the people reveal the deeper problem of the human heart. Christ did not come merely to make our external lives more orderly. He came to save sinners and make them new.

Scripture focus: Jeremiah 31:31–34; Nehemiah 13.

Practical challenge: Identify one area where you have been concentrating primarily on appearances. Confess the deeper heart issue to God and ask for genuine repentance and renewal.

Prayer prompt: Father, do in my heart what I cannot accomplish through outward effort alone.

Day 2: Zeal Made Holy

Narrative: John's intensity needed the correction of Jesus. Sanctification does not necessarily remove our strength. It submits our strength to Christ so that courage becomes service and conviction operates through love.

Scripture focus: Luke 9:51–56; Mark 10:35–45.

Practical challenge: Identify one strong quality in your personality. Ask someone you trust how that strength blesses others and how it might become harmful when pride controls it.

Prayer prompt: Jesus, teach me to use every strength for Your glory and the good of others.

Day 3: Pillars of Truth

Narrative: Doctrine is not a distraction from knowing Jesus. Sound doctrine teaches us who Jesus truly is. The deeper our knowledge of the biblical Christ, the more reason we have to trust, worship, obey, and love Him.

Scripture focus: John 20:30–31; 2 Corinthians 11:4.

Practical challenge: Write a short explanation of who Jesus is without using vague religious language. Base every statement on Scripture.

Prayer prompt: Holy Spirit, protect me from false ideas and teach me to know the true Christ revealed in Scripture.

Day 4: The Eternal Word Became Flesh

Narrative: Before creation existed, the Son already was. He was with God and was God. The Creator then entered His creation and became truly human for our salvation.

Scripture focus: John 1:1–4, 14.

Practical challenge: Spend several minutes worshipping Christ specifically as eternal God, Creator, Life, Light, and incarnate Savior. Then choose one act of humble service that reflects His self-giving love.

Prayer prompt: Lord Jesus, deepen my wonder at who You are and conform my life to Your humility.

Day 5: Truth Spoken in Love

Narrative: God uses His Word as believers hear, believe, obey, and proclaim it. Christian witness is neither timid silence nor aggressive domination. We speak because Christ is Lord, His gospel is true, and people need to hear.

Scripture focus: Romans 10:17; Ephesians 6:10–18.

Practical challenge: Share one truth from John 1 with someone. Do not force a debate. Listen well, speak clearly, and leave the result with God.

Prayer prompt: Spirit of God, give me courage without pride, conviction without harshness, and love without compromise.

Additional Study for New Believers (60 minutes total)

Part 1: Read and Meditate On, About 15 Minutes

Read and meditate on:

John 1:1–18; John 20:30–31; Colossians 1:15–17; Philippians 2:5–11; Hebrews 1:1–3; Jeremiah 31:31–34.

Write Short Reflections: 1. Write five things these passages teach about who Jesus is. 2. Write one way your understanding of Jesus should affect your everyday obedience.

Part 2: Study of Christian Thought, About 15 Minutes

Recommended provided resource: *Warroad Community Church Statement of Faith*, especially sections 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10. These sections introduce Scripture, the Trinity, Christ, the Holy Spirit, humanity’s sinful condition, salvation, and Christian obedience in concise statement-of-faith form.

Writing assignment: In one paragraph, explain why a Christian needs both a correct understanding of who Jesus is and a personal response of repentance, faith, and obedience.

Part 3: Theological Reflection on the Person of Christ, About 15 Minutes

Recommended provided resource: *EFCA Statement of Faith*, especially the sections God, Bible, Human Condition, Jesus Christ, Work of Christ, and Holy Spirit. It clearly confesses Jesus as God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures.

Writing assignment: Finish this sentence in approximately 150 words: “It matters that Jesus is fully God and fully man because...”

Part 4: Prayer and Declaration Practice, About 15 Minutes

Pray through three movements: praise Christ for who He is, confess false or shallow thoughts about Him, and ask the Spirit for help obeying Him.

Write this declaration in your own handwriting:

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, fully God and truly man, my only Savior and Lord. I will receive God's written Word humbly, depend upon the Holy Spirit for understanding and obedience, and follow Christ in truth and love.

Read Psalm 27 and pray for courage to seek the Lord and remain faithful.

Additional Study for Mature Believers (60 minutes total)

Part 1: Read and Meditate On, About 15 Minutes

Read and compare:

John 1:1–18; John 17:1–5; Colossians 1:15–20; Hebrews 1:1–4; Hebrews 2:14–18; 2 Corinthians 11:1–4.

Write Short Reflections: 1. Explain how John 1 simultaneously establishes the Son's personal distinction from the Father and His full deity. 2. Explain why orthodox Christology is necessary for gospel fidelity, worship, and discipleship.

Part 2: Study of Christian Thought, About 15 Minutes

Recommended provided resource: *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith*, chapters 1, 2, 8, 10, and 13.

Chapter 1 addresses Scripture as the sufficient and final rule. Chapter 2 confesses one God in three subsistences, Father, Word or Son, and Holy Spirit. Chapters 10 and 13 connect God's Word and Spirit with effectual calling and sanctification.

Writing assignment: Explain how Christology, Scripture, effectual calling, and sanctification belong together in Christian discipleship.

Teaching application: Prepare a three-minute explanation for another believer showing why doctrine about Christ should produce worship and holiness rather than theological pride.

Part 3: Theological Reflection on the Eternal Word and the External Word, About 15 Minutes

Recommended provided resource: *Lutheran Book of Concord*, especially Augsburg Confession Articles I, III, V, and VI and Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration II.50–56.

The Lutheran confession distinguishes Christ the eternal Word from the external preached and heard Word through which the Holy Spirit works. It explicitly says that the preaching and hearing of God's Word are instruments through which the Holy Spirit works in people.

Writing assignment: Explain the difference between Jesus Christ as the eternal personal Word and Scripture or gospel preaching as the external Word through which Christ is proclaimed.

Teaching application: Explain this distinction to another Christian without diminishing either the deity of Christ or the authority and necessity of Scripture.

Part 4: Prayer and Declaration Practice, About 15 Minutes

Pray specifically for theological humility, doctrinal discernment, holiness, endurance, and courage in witness. Ask the Spirit to make your study of doctrine produce love, patience, self-control, worship, and service rather than superiority.

Write this declaration:

The eternal Son has made the Father known. The inspired Scriptures faithfully reveal Christ. By the Spirit's grace I will submit my mind to God's Word, pursue holiness, receive correction, teach truth carefully, and proclaim Christ with courage and love.

Read Psalm 119:33–40 and pray that knowledge of Scripture would result in obedient delight.

Key Verses

John 1:1

NASB95:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Life Group Leader Note: This verse supplies the theological foundation of the sermon. It establishes the eternal existence of the Word, His personal distinction from the Father, and His full deity.

John 1:2

NASB95:

“He was in the beginning with God.”

Life Group Leader Note: John reinforces that the relationship between the Father and the Son did not begin at Bethlehem. The Son eternally existed in personal fellowship with the Father.

John 1:3

NASB95:

“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

Life Group Leader Note: The sermon's doctrine of Christ places Jesus on the Creator side of the Creator-creature distinction. He cannot be part of the created order because everything that came into existence came through Him.

John 1:4

NASB95:

"In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."

Life Group Leader Note: Jesus does not merely point toward life as one teacher among many. Life is in Him, preparing the group to understand why salvation depends upon receiving the true Christ.

John 1:14

NASB95:

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Life Group Leader Note: This is the incarnation at the center of the sermon. The eternal divine Word truly became human without ceasing to be God, bringing the saving grace and truth humanity could never produce through outward reform.

Supporting Verses

- **Nehemiah 13:** Shows the recurrence of sin even after extensive outward reform.
- **Jeremiah 31:31–34:** Promises the new covenant, forgiveness, and God's law written upon the heart.
- **Romans 7:12:** Guards against blaming God's Law for human failure by affirming that the Law is holy and good.
- **Mark 3:17:** Identifies James and John as Sons of Thunder.
- **Luke 9:51–56:** Shows John and James displaying zeal that required Christ's correction.
- **Mark 10:35–45:** Contrasts self-exalting ambition with Christlike service.
- **John 13:34–35:** Shows love as a defining mark of Jesus' disciples.
- **John 17:5:** Supports the Son's preexistent glory with the Father.
- **John 20:30–31:** States John's purpose that readers believe Jesus is the Christ and Son of God.
- **Romans 1:16:** Calls believers to unashamed confidence in the gospel.
- **Romans 10:17:** Connects faith with hearing the word of Christ.
- **2 Corinthians 11:4:** Warns that people may proclaim another Jesus.
- **Galatians 1:6–9:** Warns against receiving a different gospel.

- **Ephesians 6:10–18:** Describes Christian spiritual warfare through truth, faith, righteousness, Scripture, and prayer.
- **Philippians 2:5–8:** Displays the humility of the incarnate Son.
- **Colossians 1:15–17:** Affirms Christ's supremacy, creative work, and sustaining power.
- **Hebrews 1:1–3:** Presents the Son as God's climactic revelation, Creator, and exact representation of God's nature.
- **Hebrews 2:14–17:** Shows why the Son genuinely shared in human nature for His saving work.
- **1 John 2:22–23:** Connects fidelity to God with a true confession of the Father and the Son.

Doctrine Review / Topic Review and Confessional Comparison

A. Sermon Topic Review

T1: Outward Reform Cannot Cure the Sinful Heart

Human beings are corrupted by sin and cannot reconcile themselves to God through outward religious reform; God must forgive, renew, and save through Christ. Jeremiah 31:31–34; John 1:14.

T2: Jesus Sanctifies Zeal Into Truthful Love and Service

Christ sanctifies His disciples so that natural strengths, convictions, and abilities increasingly operate under His lordship in holiness, humility, service, and biblical love. Luke 9:51–56; John 13:34–35.

T3: Sound Doctrine Gives Us the True Christ

Saving faith must rest upon the true Christ revealed in Scripture, and therefore sound doctrine is necessary for faithful worship, gospel proclamation, obedience, and discipleship. John 20:30–31; 2 Corinthians 11:4.

T4: Jesus Christ Is the Eternal Word Who Became Flesh

Jesus Christ is the eternal divine Son, personally distinct from the Father, fully God, Creator of all things, who assumed true human nature without ceasing to be God. John 1:1–4, 14.

T5: The Spirit Illuminates the Word and Sends the Church to Witness

The Holy Spirit works through and in accordance with God's truth to bring conviction, understanding, faith, sanctification, and courageous gospel witness through Christ's people. John 16:13–14; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 6:17–18.

B. Confessional Alignment Table

Confessional Document	Closest statement(s) in that document	Sermon topics	Strength of Match (0–5)	Match Notes
WCC Statement of Faith	Sections 1–2 affirm Scripture as the supreme, sufficient, final authority and one God in three Persons. Section 4 confesses Jesus as true God and true man, eternally preexistent with Father and Spirit. Sections 5, 7–8, and 10 address the Spirit, human sin, salvation, regeneration, obedience, sanctification, and maturity in Christ.	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	5	Very strong alignment. The sermon closely reflects MFM's stated doctrines of Scripture, Trinity, Christ, sin, salvation, sanctification, and discipleship.
EFCA Statement of Faith	God is one and eternally exists in three equally divine Persons. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Humanity is sinful and can only be rescued through God's saving work in Christ. The Holy Spirit regenerates, illuminates, guides, and empowers	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	5	Excellent alignment with the sermon's central Christology and discipleship application. EFCA language is especially close to T4 and T5.

Confessional Document	Closest statement(s) in that document	Sermon topics	Strength of Match (0–5)	Match Notes
	Christlike life; Christian Living joins sanctifying grace, Word, Spirit, prayer, discipleship, and witness.			
Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths	Articles 1–3 confess inspired Scripture, the one true triune God, and Jesus as the eternal Son of God. Articles 4–5 address the fall and salvation by Christ through repentance, faith, regeneration, and grace. Article 9 teaches sanctification and holiness by the Spirit.	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	5	Strong agreement with the sermon's deity of Christ, Trinity, sin, salvation, holiness, and Spirit-empowered discipleship. Distinctive Pentecostal teachings concerning subsequent Spirit baptism and initial evidence are present elsewhere in the document but are not central to this sermon.
Lutheran Confessions, Book of Concord	Augsburg Confession I confesses one divine essence and three coeternal Persons. Article III says the Word, the Son of God, assumed human nature so that Christ is true God and true man. Article V teaches that through the external Word and Sacraments the Holy Spirit works faith. Formula of Concord SD II describes the preached and heard Word as an instrument of the	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	5	The central Christology is exceptionally close. The Lutheran doctrine of the external Word resonates strongly with T5, though Lutheran sacramental means-of-grace theology differs from Baptist understandings in important respects beyond the sermon's primary focus.

Confessional Document	Closest statement(s) in that document	Sermon topics	Strength of Match (0–5)	Match Notes
	Spirit.			
Westminster Confession of Faith	Chapter II.3 confesses three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity. Chapter VIII.2 teaches that the eternal Son, equal with the Father, took human nature so that two distinct natures are united in one Person. Chapter X describes effectual calling by Word and Spirit, and Chapter XIII teaches sanctification through Christ's work, Word, and Spirit.	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	5	Very strong Reformed alignment, especially concerning the Trinity, incarnation, inability of fallen humanity, Word and Spirit, and progressive sanctification.
1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith	Chapter 1 identifies Scripture as the sufficient, certain, and infallible rule and final judge in matters of faith. Chapter 2.3 confesses Father, Word or Son, and Holy Spirit as one undivided divine essence. Chapter 10 describes sinners being effectually called by Word and Spirit and given new hearts. Chapter 13 teaches real and progressive sanctification by Christ's virtue, Word,	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	5	Excellent alignment with the sermon when its statements about revelation and spiritual warfare are understood with the clarifications above. It gives especially strong support to the distinction between completed revelation and present illumination.

Confessional Document	Closest statement(s) in that document	Sermon topics	Strength of Match (0–5)	Match Notes
	and Spirit.			
Catechism of the Catholic Church	CCC 253–255 confesses one God in three really distinct Persons. CCC 454 identifies the Son as eternally related to the Father and God Himself. CCC 456–461 teaches that the Word became flesh for salvation and defines the Incarnation as the Son assuming human nature. CCC 1998–2001 discusses grace and sanctification.	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	4	There is very strong agreement on Nicene Trinitarianism, Christ's deity, incarnation, and the need for grace and holiness. Significant differences remain between the sermon's Protestant/Baptist framework and Catholic teaching concerning Scripture and Tradition, ecclesial authority, sacramental grace, baptism, and the formulation of justification. CCC 1266, for example, explicitly connects baptism with sanctifying grace and justification.

Overall Doctrine Review

The sermon's theological center is strongly orthodox and broadly shared across the historic Christian confessions examined here: Jesus Christ is the eternal divine Son, the Word who was with God and was God, Creator of all things, and the One who became truly human for our salvation.

The main places requiring careful qualification are not the sermon's central Christology but several expressions surrounding revelation and spiritual warfare. The Holy Spirit genuinely illuminates, convicts, guides, and applies Scripture, but this should not be confused with new inspired revelation that supplements the completed Scriptures. Likewise, public proclamation of Scripture is faithful Christian witness and a genuine part of spiritual warfare, but Scripture should not be treated as an incantation through which believers mechanically establish Christ's authority over a place. Christ already possesses all authority.

The sermon is at its strongest when its doctrinal depth leads where John intended: toward faith in the true Christ, humble worship, holiness, love, perseverance, courageous witness, and disciples who help one another follow Jesus in relationship.