* **Apostles Creed**
* **CMO** (above your regular giving)
* **Weekender Intros**
* **Series Slide**
* The Philosopher Heraclitus lived between 540 - 470 BC. As one of the earliest Greek philosophers, he lived not only 500 years before Christ, but before Socrates, Aristotle and Plato.
* Heraclitus believed that the world was in a constant state of change. He was famous for saying that a person can never step into the same river twice, because a river is constantly moving and changing. So even though it appears to be the same river, its different because its never the exact same water that you are touching when you stand in it.
* Heraclitus observed that we are born, we live, grow, change and die. The only thing that stays the same is that nothing ever stays the same. 5 minutes from now, you will be an older version of the person you are now…so you won’t be the same.
* And since humanity and the world are always changing…it means nothing is reliable. Nothing is really stable. Therefore, human beings are called to sort of anchor themselves in something that was constant. There had to be a sort reasoning or meaning outside of this unstable world.
* Additionally, Heraclitus believed that there was a hidden connection between all things in such a way that things that seemed separate or opposite, were actually being brought together. There was something holding everything together…and for Heraclitus…that thing was FIRE.
* (Don’t ask me to explain that).
* He called the rationale behind life “The LOGOS”. The LOGOS was the thing that explained everything. And if humans were going to understand the world, we needed to listen to the LOGOS to find order in the midst of the chaos of all the change.
* Heraclitus was historically called “The Weeping Philosopher” because the things he wrote were filled with criticism for people who weren’t listening to the LOGOS. He was sad for the state of the world and the fact that no one seemed to care about the LOGOS. So the world would always just be chaotic.
* For what we know, he spent the last years of his life living alone outside of the city…bitter and sad.
* At the same time in History, there was another theory about what held the ever-changing, ever-disappointing, ever-chaotice world together.
* The Hebrew people worshipped a God who identified himself as “YHWH” or , in English “I AM”. He often represented himself as fire. It was through a bush **on fire** in middle of a desert that he introduced himself as “I AM”.
* It was on top of a smoke filled mountain that he delivered his law or TORAH to Moses…and he guided the Hebrew people through the desert with a column of FIRE from heaven.
* This God “I AM” created and maintained the universe through his WORD. He spoke the world into existence with his word and he communicated with his people through words written down on stone tablets and delivered through Moses words of his prophets.
* But like the LOGOS, no one could see this God…they could only listen to his WORD.
* A hundred or so years before Heraclitus was known as “The Weeping Philosopher”, Jeremiah was known as the “Weeping Prophet” because he had to deliver a word from YHWH to his people to repent from their sin…and they wouldn’t listen to the word.
* A weeping Philosopher, begging people to listen to the LOGOS.
* And a weeping Prophet, begging people to listen to the WORD.
* In the first century, after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, these worlds….the worlds of the Greeks and the Hebrews would collide in a way they never had before. Greeks and Hebrews would live side by side…honestly, in a lot of tension and strife. A lot of fighting and oppression. Chaos.
* The people of the LOGOS…and the people of the WORD…
* Looking for answers.
* But for both the Greeks and the Hebrews…they underestimated the LOGOS. They underestimated the WORD of I AM.
* They underestimated the FIRE.
* Because nobody thought….nobody really believed… that the WORD would move into the neighborhood.
* Nobody predicted that I AM whose WORD created the world would have to his diaper changed, or be taught to walk, in an out of the way backwoods town.
* Nobody believed that the LOGOS that made sense of the universe…would show up to a wedding reception…or have a drink with an outcast woman…or make best friends with a bunch of fisherman.
* Because everybody knows…you can’t hug FIRE.
* Everybody knows… The TRUTH…its just a concept…it doesn’t have a face, or feelings. The TRUTH hurts…but can the truth feel pain?
* **Title Slide- “Hugging Fire: How the Meaning of Life Finds You”- John 1:1-18**
* That’s why Jesus was so unbelievable to people.
* And that’s why John wrote his gospel.
* For the next few months, we are going to work our way in these Sunday gatherings through the book of John.
* And our world, in many ways, is not that different from that first century collision weeping philosophers and prophets.
* We’re a people filled with anxiety and fear. We’re lonely and apathetic…hoping to numb ourselves to the chaos of life…usually with some electronic distraction.
* We’ve developed a philosophy of life to sort of look away from the big picture…don’t try to figure out the LOGOS or understand the WORD…just sort of buy things and enjoy them until they break….and then buy something else.
* There are 2 words that come up over an over and over in John’s gospel.
* LIGHT & LIFE.
* Light…the anti-darkness. What is necessary to see things as they are and deal with them in a real way.
* …and Life. And when John uses the word Life he doesn’t mean MOSTLY the 70 or so years that your heart goes on beating…he means a LIFE WORTH LIVING. A quality of life. That in face of death and chaos…cannot be put out.
* Kind of like the flame of an everlasting fire.
* And he boils this all down to one person- Jesus Christ.
* **John 20:31**
* In fact, when John gets to the end of this gospel, he tells us why he wrote it.
* So that you will believer that Jesus is the Son of God…and that by believing that…you will have LIFE in his name.
* That’s why I’m preaching this book of John for the next 5 months.
* That’s why we planted this church 8 years ago.
* That’s what the people of this church are committed to…
* Breathing life into this City in the name of Jesus.
* Maybe today, you’ve wandered in here… looking for life. For a reason to live in the chaos. Maybe today…you’ve come back to church for the first time in years. Maybe today, you’ll hear from God. The LOGOS. The WORD. THE FIRE. “I AM”.
* Maybe, as we open our ears to the Scripture, you’ll believe Jesus is the Son of God.
* **John 1:1-18**
* **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**
* **2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.**
* **6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.**
* **10 He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, 13 who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.**
* **14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ ”) 16 Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, 17 for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side —he has revealed him**.
* Transition: Here’s the first thing I want you to see here
* **1) Life has meaning…and it comes from outside of you.**
  + Human beings need purpose. Meaning.
  + We aren’t like the rest of the animal kingdom.
  + Kangaroos don’t wake up in the morning and think “I hate this dead end job of hopping around all the time and propagating my species. I’d like to use my natural pocket to hold something besides my little Joey. Perhaps I could an Olympic high jumper…or take up boxing!”
  + Right? Because animals live on instinct. They don’t think about what their lives MEAN.
  + But humans are driven by meaning. We’re moved and understand our lives through story. Beginning, middle, end.
  + So, even folks who are atheists will tell you “Well, the world doesn’t MEAN anything…but to get by, we’ve got to decide to make our lives mean something.”
  + But, no matter who you are, or what you believe, GREEK OR HEBREW… atheist, agnostic, Muslim, Hindu or “spiritual not religious”, or Christian…
  + We all have a picture of the good life…of the way the world should look…but its broken…and chaotic. It doesn’t live up to what we hope.
  + We have a picture of ideal world that for nearly everyone includes some common definition of “GOOD and EVIL” and agrees that starving children is a bad thing…murder is a bad thing….suicide is a bad thing…that order is better than chaos…light is better than darkness….kindness is better meanness…and flourishing is better than dying.
  + And there’s a reason for that. There’s a LOGOS for it.
  + Its because there IS a meaning outside of us.
  + Its because as human beings…we are all created by the same God...and he made us to crave meaning….and we can’t possibly find it in anything other than Him.
  + **1:1-4**
  + When John says “In the Beginning was the WORD”…He uses the Greek word “Logos” there that is translated as “WORD” in English.
  + He also uses the phrase “In the beginning”, which are the very first words of the Hebrew TORAH….the Old Testament.
  + You see what he’s doing? He’s telling both the Greeks and Hebrews that they are searching for the same God.
  + The LOGOS that Heraclitus wanted the people to listen to, is the SAME WORD that Jeremiah wanted people to listen to. The REASON behind the world IS the word of this God who identitfied himself as “I AM”.
  + The fire that Heraclitus thought held the world together…IS the fire that led the Hebrews through the desert and desended in front of the tabernacle.
  + In one half of a Sentence, John has brilliantly said to these two seemingly opposite groups of people, “What I’m about to tell you is FOR EVERYONE. It is the hope and meaning of EVERY HUMAN BEING.”
  + He says the LOGOS is with God…and the LOGOS IS GOD.
  + And all things all created through HIM. He is saying, “Greeks, Hebrews…you don’t live in 2 separate worlds…there is ONE GOD that created all of this.”
  + And if you are going to find life…you are going to have to find him. You won’t find the answers to the chaos and brokenness of life…unless you go to the source of life…and that is THIS WORD, this LOGOS…this GOD.
  + He says, that is the LIGHT…by which humans see everything rightly. If I don’t have this WORD…I can’t ever find the quality of life…I can’t ever find the ideal way the world should work…unbroken, ordered…full of delight and joy and beauty.
  + **1:5**
  + Then he says, the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not overcome it.
  + That word overcome is interesting. Because, in the Greek language, it's a very ambiguous word. It can mean to overcome…like dominate something….but it also can mean “to understand”.
  + I think John, purposely used this ambiguous word.
  + Because both meanings are true.
  + On one hand, when light shines in dark…light always wins. Where light and dark are both present…light overcomes dark.
  + But, its also true that we don’t understand the LIGHT of God. God’s word…the meaning of life, the LOGOS…has been misunderstood for as long as the world has been spinning.
  + Think about the Weeping Philosopher and the Weeping Prophet. They both wept because they both knew there was something to undertstand…something to comprehend about a MEANING and truth outside of us…bigger than us…but no one was listening. Everyone was just doing their own thing…even if it was destroying them.
* **Back to 1)**
  + Doesn’t this make sense.
  + If there is a God…and he created us…then it just makes sense that there is a way that a creator intended us to be.
  + And if we are anything other than that, then life starts to feel broken… or like we aren’t really living up to our potential.
  + Its like if you go buy a brand new laptop…you spend $1500 on something top of the line…and you bring it home, leave it in the box… and decide it would be really useful to use as a TV tray.
  + After all, you’re always tipping your plate over when you sit on the couch…and that laptop has a nice even surface.
  + …but after a while…you’d start thinking… “As nice as this laptop is as a tray table…I can’t figure out why it costs $1500. There has to be more to this.”
  + Likewise, when you define meaning for yourself…like “I’ll live for pleasure.” “I’ll live to help other people.” Or “I’ll live make a difference in my community.” Or “I’ll live to raise a family and give them nice things” or “I’ll live to be successful and make a lot of money”…whatever the LOGOS is that you decide for yourself…
  + …because you created for something more…eventually…whether you fail or succeed at whatever meaning you’re pursuing…you are going to look in the mirror and say, “As good as this ride has been…Life just seems to be worth more than this. There has to be something more.”
  + One day, you’ll look in the mirror and see Heraclitus & Jeremiah weeping…begging you to pay attention to the WORD, the LOGOS, Begging you to see the light and understand it.
* **Transition:** And that is what John’s aim is for you in his gospel. Which is why he doesn’t just leave the WORD as an abstract idea…. See one of the things about meaning & truth that comes from outside of you…is that it can tend to sort of rock your world. Because its this hard immovable thing. It doesn’t bend. Its absolute.
* Think about that old movie from 20 years ago- the Matrix.
* You know, the one where people have become batteries for machines…but the machines figured out a way to trick our minds so we THINK that we’re actually living our lives…meanwhile we’re just sort of floating in some ambiotic fluid while machines suck the life out of us.
* Well, Neo, is woken up to this truth…a truth he did not understand. And it rocks his world. Because whatever he wants to believe…once he’s exposed to it…he can’t go back. He has to live in that truth…as ugly as it is.
* The Truth is hard. It doesn’t bend. It isn’t flexible.
* But what if the truth had feelings. Emotions. What if the TRUTH…the meaning of life…the LOGOS…what if the WORD, could also care about you…hug you…empathize with you. What if the TRUTH cared enough to make a way to live in the truth that's a little less like a hammer hitting a nail…and a little more like a Father hugging his Son.
* **2) The Meaning of Life is a person that cares about you.**
  + To the Greeks, the LOGOS was a concept. An unbending truth.
  + To the Hebrews, the WORD was from a GOD they couldn’t see…a God that was separate…one who was represented by fire…a God that if they got to close…would kill them with his glory…his otherness and better-ness.
  + Notice, though, that John personalizes the LOGOS.
  + **1:1-2**
  + He says the WORD was GOD…and he then calls the word with a personal pronoun- HE.
  + It doesn’t say “IT”…it says “HE”
  + **1:9**
  + John the Baptist…the prophet… testified that the light…that HE was coming into the world.
  + **1:14**
  + He says the LOGOS became FLESH…and dwelt among us.
  + And…watch this…John says “We observed his glory as the one and only son of the FATHER…full of grace and truth.”
  + Now, that’s a big deal to the Hebrews.
  + Because you didn’t just OBSERVE God’s glory.
  + Glory means “weight”. Heaviness.
  + **1:17-18**
  + Notice that John brings up Moses at the end of this passage and says that no one has ever seen God.
  + For his Hebrew audience, this is a very familiar story.
  + In the book of Exodus…Moses asks to see God’s glory. But God tells him, “You can’t look at me, but I’ll hide you in a rock…and when I pass by…you can look at sort of like at the ambient light that comes from my backside”
  + To see God was to die.
  + **1:14**
  + But now, John says, that GOD…the LOGOS, the WORD has put on flesh…and dwelt among us.
  + That word “Dwelt” is a word that means “tabernacled”
  + Loosely, in modern English you could define it as “chilled” or “hung out”.
  + The word became flesh…and chilled with us.
  + Of course, in the OT, as Moses led Israel through the desert…they would construct this tent everytime they stopped for a rest…called a tabernacle. It was the place where God dwelt. Or hung out
  + But only Moses and the priests could ever approach the tabernacle…and even when they did…they could never really go all the way in. There were always barriers.
  + But here, John is saying its that FIRE of a God…in Jesus Christ…who put on flesh and sat in people’s living rooms with them. Its that same God who was hidden away in a tabernacle…that now tabernacled in human flesh. He had a physical address. In Nazareth.
  + And ALL of the GLORY of the FATHER is right there…inside this man who not only taught the word of GOD…but was the living embodiment of it. And he ate dinner with sinners, and prostitutes. He hung out with the rejected and marginalized. He welcomed Hebrews and Greeks, Jews and Gentiles, into the love of God the truth of God…without being whacked over the head.
  + That’s why John describes Jesus as “Full of Grace and Truth”.
  + Because Jesus is FULLY GOD…he is completely the unchanging meaning of life. He is totally uncompromised beauty and justice….
  + Yet…he came in grace.
  + Grace…means getting something you don't deserve.
* **Back to 2)**
  + We were created to know God.
  + To love God.
  + To worship God in every part of our lives.
  + But, we chose to define meaning for ourselves.
  + To forget the truth.
  + That’s where chaos and brokenness come from.
  + When we choose to serve ourselves rather than love God, we broke the world.
  + Poverty exists because of selfishness.
  + Abuse exists because of selfishness.
  + Hate and revenge exist…because instead of living in the truth we were created for…we made up other meanings of life.
  + And when everyone individually decides to live for themselves…when we all just sort of look out for our own interests…we hurt others that we don't care about.
  + And God says, “When you rebel against your creator….you die”.
  + If you have to have food and water to live…and you decide for yourself that food and water isn’t necessary…you die.
  + Same with the LOGOS. With God.
  + When you decide that you don’t need God…or to know God….or love God…or obey God….you have cut yourself off from him…and there is only darkness and death there.
  + **John 1:17-18**
  + God’s law…the law of the creator…says that you’ll die
  + The law delivered to Moses.
  + But Jesus came….in the flesh…the TRUTH you can hug…
  + …but not just TRUTH…GRACE. FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.
  + He’s different than the law delivered to Moses or the LOGOS that Heraclitus wrote about.
  + He is the TRUTH that doesn’t bend…but still lets you into the fire.
  + He is the FIRE, that doesn’t burn you, but lets you enjoy the light.
  + Jesus is GOD, that…chills with us.
  + He gives us GOD himself…that we don't deserve…without killing us…even though we lived outside of the truth.
* **Back to 2)**
  + See, the truth isn’t an abstract concept.
  + He is a person. Who cares enough about you, to make a way for you to know him, personally.
  + See, if the truth is abstract…we can know it like we know 1+1=2.
  + BUT…if the truth is a person….we can know it like a Father knows a son.
  + The truth can love us…and we can love the truth.
* **Transition**: And that’s the beauty of what the Truth did when he died on a cross.
* **3) We don’t earn the right to be God’s child, we receive it by grace through faith.**
  + For the Greeks and Hebrews, the way they looked at the LOGOS and the WORD of GOD…was there was a standard to live up to.
  + The Greeks had all these gods who were constantly asking humans to do something for them. They were very manipulative and threatening.
  + The Hebrews had this God, “I AM” or YHWH…who, throughout history they were always letting down. They could never make it very long living according to his law.
  + In the 1st century, the upper Hebrew religious class had basically turned observing the law into a contest. And whoever could do it the best was closer to God and more loved by God.
  + So, for both Greeks and Hebrews…there was a constant effort to try to please God…and not let him down. To do something for him that would result in your blessing…instead of a curse.
  + **1:11-13**
  + But John tells them that when the LOGOS became flesh in Jesus Christ…he was rejected by humanity.
  + And he was…in the most humiliating and spectacularly gruesome fashion. He was crucified naked on a the cross of a criminal.
  + Even though he is the very definition of perfect…GOD HIMSELF…ABSOLUTE TRUTH…IMMOVABLE RIGHTEOUSNESS.
  + Yet, he died the death of a sinner ….at the hands of sinners.
  + What gives?
  + Well, John says that there were people, after his death…that recognized who he actually is. The Son of God.
  + And for all those who believe…Jesus gave the RIGHT to be children of God.
  + That's adoption.
  + When I adopted 2 of my 3 sons, it was a legal process. My wife and I had to do what was necessary to give them the right to have the last name “ATWOOD”.
  + Well, that is the grace of the Jesus Christ.
  + Though he is the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD….
  + On the cross, he took the penalty, the pain, the brokenness that we deserve for our sin, so that we could have his status…his RIGHT as a child of God.
  + The truth traded places with the liars. The ones who were deceived. The light traded places with the darkness that did not understand it.
  + We didn’t deserve it, but he cried out from the cross, “MY GOD WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME” …so we could pray “OUR FATHER WHO ARE IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME”
  + For anyoe who believes that Jesus is the WORD made FLESH…he gives the RIGHT to be God’s child.
  + You didn’t earn it….It doesn’t come from the will of the flesh. It doesn’t come because you have impressed God with your good deeds or your successful life.
  + You can’t earn this…that’s why its called grace.
  + It's a gift. You just have to receive it, by believing that Jesus is the Son of God who died in your place…so that you can have…life.
  + **1:18**
  + This introduction to John’s gospel ends by telling us that no one has seen God, but that Jesus…in his life, death and resurrection…has revealed God. Another act of grace.
  + No matter how hard you search…you can’t find God…unless in an act of GRACE…he reveals himself to us.
  + He did this in Jesus Christ. He’s done this to you today through his word.
  + And John ends with one last beautiful picture of the meaning of life. The LOGOS.
  + He says the Son is at the Father’s side.
  + That word side is the word for bosom, which, admittedly…kind of makes me feel funny to say.
  + But here’s the picture.
  + Most mornings, I get up before anyone else in my house and I go into the living room to read. I light a candle, turn on the fireplace, put a blanket on and read.
  + And my reading