

02/11/18

Series: Live, Learn, Love

Sermon: God's Love is Real

Text: 1 John 1: 1-4

Quote: "You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have." - Corrie ten Boom (Author)

I. Communion

The Lord's Table - a time to fellowship, to be together over a meal. When I was a child, before I came to the table, Mom always reminded me "wash your hands". It was something that needed to be done so that I would be ready to receive what had been prepared for me. As believers, we are taught, "Anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Master irreverently is like part of the crowd that jeered and spit on him at his death. Is that the kind of "remembrance" you want to be part of? Examine your motives, test your heart, come to this meal in holy awe. If you give no thought (or worse, don't care) about the broken body of the Master when you eat and drink, you're running the risk of serious consequences." (1 Corinthians 11:27-29 MSG). Coming to the Table is an act of remembrance, it is a time of fellowship and honoring, and a testimony of what you believe and who your trust. Would you really want to come to the Table without washing your hands?

II. Remarks

As believers, we have been given something special. Today, you may hear about how foolish or ridiculous it is to be a Christian. People today are "spiritual" not "religious". Saying you are spiritual is just another way of saying I'm going to do things my way, God must meet me on my terms. Umm, let me be clear here... that's poor thinking and a rough way to face life. There are things that have happened in my life that I have needed the security and comfort of knowing that God was there, in my hour of need, to be the rock and the source of hope. I have limits in my abilities, God does not - I have an end to my strength and wisdom, God does not, my understanding only goes

so far, God's doesn't. People will tell you that God doesn't care - that He isn't interested in day to day things - that He really doesn't control anything other than the "big things" (yet they never really seem to be able to define those big things...) The very opposite is true. God loves and cares for us and He has proven it in the most supreme way possible: God has sent His Son into the world. This is the glorious testimony of John: God's Son has come into the world and His name is Jesus Christ. And because of this we can experience real love, to find a sense of meaning and belonging, and to live in peace and joy.

Your personal expression may be communicated in what you say, or as Mom said, "Actions speak louder than words." Actions and words convey your thoughts and beliefs. Allowing both your actions and words to speak to your intent is the best and most consistent way to communicate. This is exactly what God did in sending His Son, Jesus Christ. Both God's actions and words are tied into the name the Apostle John uses in describing Jesus as "The Word." In the Gospel of John, "The Word" was a direct reference to Jesus Christ (God incarnate). Here in this letter to the churches (probably starting with the church he was "pastoring" - Ephesus), the Apostle refers to the word - the message of life that Christ brought to His followers.

When Jesus Christ walked among us as "The Word," He expressed what was on God's mind, from His actions (performing miracles, healing sickness and disease, raising the dead, and His death and resurrection), to His words (what He taught of God's love, forgiveness, salvation, and God's kingdom, to His prophetic words of His death, resurrection, and eventual return). One of the great needs of man is a Word from God—a Word that tells us the truth about God and about life—who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. You will never see and understand who Christ is by just glancing at Him. If a person wants to know Christ, it takes more than a passage glance, more than a superficial relationship; there must be a deep look, a long evaluation. Each person must seek to understand if Christ really is, who (the person, God) He claimed to be, and others witnessed.

III. Text

John jumps right into the great subject he wants to cover. There is no greeting and no salutation. What he has to say is of unparalleled importance; he must get right to the

point: God's Son has come to earth. God is not living off in outer space some place like so many people think and say; God has not forgotten the earth. He cares, He is concerned, He cares, and is involved

1 John 1:1-4 (ESV) - "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

Does that sound familiar to you?

How about this? John 1:1-5 (NCV) - "In the beginning there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made by him, and nothing was made without him. In him there was life, and that life was the light of all people. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it."

John opened this letter with a prologue (as in the Gospel of John) which presents his credentials as an eyewitness of Christ and explains the reason for this letter.

And he spoke about what he knew, what he had touched, and what he had experienced

Our task - as believers is to do much the same. Let our actions and words reflect what we know - God's love, what we have experienced - God's grace, and what has touched us - God's forgiveness

In that way, we allow our "light" to shine.

IV. The Word

As I said earlier, God cares - He is involved and interested. Is there any other way to have a real relationship?

The Apostle John was part of the “inner circle”. He had a deeply intimate relationship with Jesus...

Peter, James, and John were the only disciples who were with Jesus when He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:37). On the mountain where Christ was transfigured in the presence of Moses and Elijah, none of the apostles were invited to witness this glorious event except Peter, James, and John (Mark 9:2). In the Garden of Gethsemane, not long before his arrest and eventual execution, the Lord selected only Peter, James, and John to accompany him to a solitary place for prayer (Mark 14:32-35).

We can have that same intimacy with the Lord. Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10 NASB)

God wants us to come into a full relationship with Him. One that is “abundant” (rich in love, plentiful in mercy, characterized by ample grace). One that is identified in the way we live and act.

The ‘word of life’ (vs. 1) is in God alone - Jesus came and revealed that life, purpose, and meaning come from God. Creation took place because of Him - life occurred due to His actions and breath.

Colossians 1:16-17 (CSB)

“For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.”

“Everything exists in Him, for Him, and through Him. Jesus Christ is the Sphere in which they exist, the Agent through which they came into being, and the One for whom they were made.” Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament, Volume 2.

The “word of life” is the message of the Gospel... do you know that message?

“For God so LOVED the He GAVE...” (ref. John 3:16)

It's a simple, straight-forward message. One we must stop complicating.

Jesus came, of that there is no doubt. There are historical references that indicate Jesus existed. He came to let man (you and I) know we were loved unconditionally.

Jesus stated His purpose - "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10 CSB)

Our job isn't to save - that is the task of the Messiah. Our job is to love... to reveal how God's love and Grace have impacted us, to tell our story and allow others to relate to it.

There is a really cool way to do it...

V. Fellowship (koinonia)

I've met some famous people in my day. Some athletes, some stars (I asked John Wayne for his autograph in a White Front in Costa Mesa). Some of these people can be larger than life to us "normal folk".

And while we may not hang out with them, I'm sure there aren't a lot of differences between us.

Now, the Creator of the Universe, hanging out with Him - going to His place for a BBQ (I'm not trying to be irreverent, just making a point) would be something special

John tells us that he saw Jesus day in and day out during His ministry

And he is doing this for one purpose - so that we can develop an intimate relationship with the Lord God and reside with Him for eternity.

YHWH said the same thing to King David some 2000 years earlier...

Psalm 46:10 (NASB)

"Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

"know" (Hebrew, yada) ... complete intimacy - both emotional and physical

We were not created to do life alone. We are stronger and more capable together than we are apart.

Community is important. Unity and being together bring encouragement and hope

The Disciples were part of an intimate community with the Messiah. They lived with Him and learned from Him in every type of circumstance.

Miracles took place, prophecies were fulfilled, accusations flew, and the one thing they consistently observed was God's love and compassion

Fellowship: "community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience..." Merriam-Webster.com

Koinonia - "Koinonia is being in agreement with one another, being united in purpose, and serving alongside each other. Our koinonia with each other is based on our common koinonia with Jesus Christ." (gotquestions.org)

\Next week we will go more in depth in this...

1 John 1:6-7 (CSB)

"If we say, "We have fellowship with him," and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

Fellowship is cleansing, it brings encouragement and comfort, Koinonia is an act of love.

VI. Joy

Jesus life was manifest - real, we have talked about that. He had an intimate relationship with an "interesting" (unique) cast of characters.

The message He brought is one that is transforming and brings each person freedom, wholeness, and bliss.

Simply stated - It's truly learning what love means and what love is. In that we can find joy and peace - it's the search, for some, of a lifetime

Remember the Parable of the Good Samaritan???

- A "lawyer" tested Jesus with a challenge

- Jesus told him to read what it said
- Luke 10:27 (CSB) - He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind;" and "your neighbor as yourself."
- Loving God and others brings life
- Jesus explains what love is by telling the story of a man who was beaten and robbed and who ultimately took care of him
- The lesson - love is a choice, it is an action, it is serving and giving without expectation or condition

Jesus came that we might have joy. He came to show us real love, God's love. Leaving us an example - a standard - to live by

Living authentically (God's way) is the way to have joy - no matter what

Joy does not depend on circumstances or happiness. Happiness depends upon happenings, but the joy that God implants in the believer's heart overrides all, even the matters of life and death (Psalm 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:10; 2 Cor. 7:4).

Joy is a result of faith (Rom. 15:13)

Fellowship with the Father, Son, and other believers brings joy

Joy is found in obedience (cf. John 15: 10-11), in serving, and through prayer (cf. John 16:24)

Authentic joy grabs the attention of others

VII. Last Words

The documentary *The March of the Penguins* follows the emperor penguins of Antarctica on their incredible journey through ice and snow to mating grounds up to 70 miles inland. Narrated by Morgan Freeman, this beautiful film captures the drama of these three-foot-high birds in the most inhospitable of environments. Once the males have reached the breeding grounds and have been given responsibility for the eggs, they override their competitive nature and form a team for the sake of survival. As a massive storm sets in, vicious winds pelt the penguins, which are huddled now in a

single mass. As the view alternates from close ups of ice-caked penguins to panoramic shots of the huddled throng, Freeman narrates: "As the fathers' settle into their long wait at the breeding grounds, the temperature is now 80 degrees below zero. That's without considering the wind which can blow 100 miles per hour. Though they can be aggressive during the rest of the year, at this time the males are totally docile, a united and cooperative team. They brace against the storm by merging their thousand bodies into a single mass. They will take turns, each of them getting to spend some time near the center of their huddle where it's warmer."

What a picture of the Church at her best. Build your life on sharing the fellowship of Christ.

Let's Pray...

Blessing: May God's love shine through you and touch the lives of those around you. May His grace and peace flood your path. And may your days be marked by unmistakable joy.