

**The Rock: 09-27-2020**

**Series: Abiding love**

**First reading:** John 13:31-35

**Title:** Walk as He walked

**Scripture:** 1 John 2:1-6

**Theme:**

Like a loving and caring Father to his children, John in this little section, reminds us that we can and should live a good, clean and right life. What does that look like? How much does it cost?

**Introduction:**

I think one of the greatest struggles we have, perhaps for years now, is the example of a good father and what it means to be challenged by them.

Now I know this isn't everyone, as some have grown up with a Dad who in every sense, walked, talked and taught the right things.

But for many of us, that hasn't always been the case. Coming to Christ became (and still is) at times, a difficult journey when challenged by our "Father in Heaven" because of our experiences with our earthly Dad.

We respond defensively, or fear a stern word and challenge to do what we ought, because when we've blown it in the past, the discipline of a father has far outweighed the crime.

Not ever really understanding that a true Fatherly love always disciplines for our good, only as much as is necessary to help us get back on track.

John, this elderly apostle is weaving that kind of letter together here for us all. Written, as I said to a particular people, but saved for us, he is speaking to his spiritual children.

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin."

**-1 John 2:1a ESV**

Not in a condescending and sarcastic way, but rather in a deep affection for those whom God the Father has given to him to grow and disciple and send out into the world.

John, for all practical purposes, has earned the right to be this intimate. This gentle, loving parental tone "My little children" is not a term used for everyone. As it speaks to a trusting, deep and formed relationship.

Much more than say "my friends" or, "You are all acting like little children." Both have their place and purpose, but John here is genuinely their spiritual father.

Using it in such a way that reminds them of the fact that in Christ, we are all together God's children and He loves us so much that there are things we are to do and ways we are to live.

### **The Story:**

Two weeks ago, John told us that he was writing so that their joy may be complete. By telling his readers of all that Jesus had done and that his resurrection ought to bring about a joyful life.

Last week, he gave us the great refrigerator verse:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

### **-1 John 1:9 ESV**

Remembering that in context, our goal is to have a heart after God, like David. Knowing that we are going to blow it, but that God is ready, willing, and because of Jesus, able to forgive us.

John, this week, is making that even more clear as he takes us from the joy of salvation to some of the practical out workings in our life because of our salvation.

Reason number two for why he is writing comes to us here in this little section of the letter. Not only so we will not sin, but to remind us that:

"But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

#### **-1 John 2:1b-2 ESV**

This is a theological topic and concept that we could wrestle with for a long time, and I've got the books to prove it. Trying to wrestle it out in a way that is easy to understand, for me anyway, gets me stuck in the weeds.

When I get stuck there, I go to people much smarter than I am to get me unstuck. Because in essence John is telling us here in a nutshell:

No matter how hard we try, we are broken beyond our own repair. In other words, we have no capacity to fix ourselves, even when we want to. Sin is our default mode.

Jesus came into the world to not only fix our brokenness, but the brokenness of the entire world, and all its systems. Me as an individual, and humanity as a whole.

Again, I turn to Chuck Swindoll, who has the amazing capacity to take complex theology and put it in simple clear terms:

"When we foul things up, remember you have someone who's always in your corner...Like a defense attorney, Christ always pleads our case before the heavenly court. But a couple of key differences distinguish our divine Advocate from an earthly attorney. An attorney tries to defend a client's innocence. Our Savior comes to our aid as we acknowledge our guilt. An attorney works within the law, arguing the merits of our case and trying to persuade a judge or jury. Our savior comes to our aid by being 'the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn 2:2). He paid the penalty for the sins of all humanity...the term propitiation can be defined as an offering that turns away (or satisfies) divine wrath against us. When Christ steps in for the believer who confesses their sin, the divine judge responds to our advocate who has paid the price for the sins of the world, saying, in effect, 'I'm satisfied. Case dismissed.'"

**-Living insights: Pg. 42**

Sin kills and separates -that's the story of the Bible. But John is also saying here: God is love and has made the way to forgive us. That too is the story of the Bible.

My little children, my goal for you is that you don't sin, but I've walked life's road for far too long to think you won't.

So, I want to remind you that Jesus took care of it all already and you need to stay focused in your living. That way, your life will reflect outwardly what our heavenly Father is doing inwardly.

Because, that looks a particular way:

"And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments."

**-1 John 2:3 ESV**

Well, what are His commandments. Again, this is why we all need to devote time each day to be in His word. If we want to walk like Him, we need to know about Him.

I would give to you more homework. The Gospels are the perfect place to find out what His commandments were and how he walked.

John's gospel, in particular is a beautiful place to settle. Almost half of his gospel is given to Jesus' last night here on earth and that beautiful discourse called the high priestly prayer which starts in some form in chapter 13.

He is pouring into the disciples one last time, as he knows what lies ahead. An example right away of what living the Jesus way looks like. Selflessness in the face of trial and pain.

He continues to give right until the end, and he reminds them, gives them a command:

"...Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**-John 13:31-35 ESV**

If you have love for one another. THIS is how people will know that you belong to me. I wonder too often, how we are doing in this regard. I am not looking to be negative at all, but the reality is that the outward expression of an inward love, is seen most often in action and attitude toward one another.

Do we love? Are we doing the things that display love? Love is ultimately self-sacrificial, it is costly, it is dying to self and living for the other. Why do I say that, and how do I know?

Well John is pretty clear in a very loving and fatherly way when he tells us a couple things in the last few verses of this section of his letter:

"Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

#### **-1 John 2:4-6 ESV**

Let's pause and acknowledge here that this is harsh! At least from the worldly perspective. Remember I said as we began this morning that some of us, many of us



do not have a good example of what a loving father looks and acts like.

That makes verses like this seem frightening and hurtful. Why on earth would anyone say such "mean things" After all, God is love, right.

Yes, He is, and that is precisely why John says such things and God the Father requires such things. Because He is love -perfect love.

Because of that, He will not allow His kids to live in such a way that brings harm to them, especially self-deception.

Don't say you love God when you don't follow his commandments. When nothing in you outward expression indicates that God is transforming you from within.

You do what you want, when you want, how you want. Never showing the fruit of growth and joy in Christ and that attitude of service and compassion and laying aside personal preference and desires for the sake of the other.

Whoever KEEPS His word in him truly the LOVE of God is perfected.

Now we are not perfect, but we are being conformed to the likeness of Jesus, if we keep His word and live for His glory and the benefit of each other.

A practical way to do that is given to us again in John's gospel, a bit further on in Jesus' prayer and teaching:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

**-John 15:1-5 ESV**

I leave that with you to ponder, but simply to say that Jesus is very clear that if ever we are to grow in a healthy way we must stay attached to the main "tree" and follow the teaching of that tree.

Abide in ME. We are His friends if we abide and follow His commands. Not my feelings and opinions regarding this, but His clear and concise teaching of how we are to live and walk every day.

John, in this little letter calls his readers: "My little children". They are those believers who at great cost have abided in the teaching of Jesus.

They saw and followed the example of this great Apostle and father of the faith, as he abided through trial, imprisonment, exile and suffering for their benefit and growth.

They are the fruit born out of the years of faithful ministry, sacrifice and service to King Jesus. It is not that this command is unclear and therefore hard to follow.

NO, rather, it is crystal clear, and because it is hard it is left untried and undone. Because for many it is too costly. But the attempt is always there to get by on broken promises and lip service. As though God will be satisfied with just words.

No, no. How may are here today by accident? Not one of you. I am not here by accident. It is by God's grace, the prayers of those who went before, and the effort of people like my aunt and uncle, Pastor Roland, who many a Saturday sat with me and listened to my struggles and trials.

Encouraging me in my frustrations to stay the course and disciplined me and mentored me, prayed for me and released me.

Who in your life has faithfully abided in Christ? Serving Him as part of the church community and that service and dedication (because you saw Jesus and the Father's heart in that person) grew you and grew you IN Christ.

These things don't happen by accident, nor does a community grow all by itself. No, it has a vine dresser who prunes us and directs our growth, but within that, WE MUST choose to take action.

You see, that is just what John says here in verse six:

"whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

**-1 John 2:6 ESV**

The cross-centric life or cruciformed life as N.T. Wright calls it is a life lives in the service of others -it is always about the community. For in serving, we are actually served.

In walking in the light of who Jesus is and what he has done for us, Wright says this:

"First, we find ourselves sharing that intimate God-life, not only with God Himself, but with one another. Second, we find that Jesus' blood somehow makes us clean, pure, and fresh inside."

**-NTEE Pg. 136**

This is not a superficial, check the box lifestyle. It is the transformative, self-responsible, taking action and loving because He first loved us lifestyle.

Being a disciple of Jesus COSTS! Again, the Bible is not hard to understand -it is hard to live! But God has given us THE HELPER as his little children.

He has not left us unequipped for the task, but he has also not left us incapable of personal action and responsibility.

Through John, he doesn't say that whoever abides in Him, Jesus will walk for him. NO -He says whoever abides in him OUGHT to walk in the same way.

It is hard, and sometimes if we are honest, it is hard to love as well. Why? Because as a community of believers we are here for one another in service to our king. But frankly, sometimes and in some ways some of us are just downright unlovable. Starting with myself!

We need to serve one another and that takes effort, commitment and sacrifice. Doing that shows the world outside and frankly even more importantly, it shows one another as part of this community of believers that we actually are growing in the grace and mercy of God.

Being attentive to the needs of the community, being committed to grow and follow through with our promises and putting ourselves second and sometimes last in fact in order to see others grow.

John has earned the right to call those who received this letter "My little children" because he has given his life to the cause of Christ in order that they live and walk as Jesus walked.

They knew they were his kids because they heard more than words, they saw in his actions and lifestyle that he would lay down his life for them, and they in turn would for him.

I am very prayerful in looking toward the future. What are we doing here as a Church? What is our next assignment as we look to reach the next generation of believers, as we stand on the shoulders of all those who have gone before?

It is because of what they have done that I think and pray this way. It is time to

pick up your cross, to ask God: How and where am I to serve in this community here at The Rock, in order that future generations see Jesus.

Youth group, kids church, Sunday morning service, women's ministry, men's ministry, missions (what that means and how it actually looks) helping out community here and locally.

I pray these aren't empty words, but convicting words, challenging words. Words that rattle us in a good way, that challenge us enough to ask ourselves: Am I doing what God has called me to?

If we exist to make lifelong followers of Jesus, we must BE lifelong followers of Jesus. Walking as Jesus walked, walking as John the Apostle walked, and all those who down through church history until today walked as Jesus walked.

None of us are here by accident. Someone, somewhere sacrificed themselves, their time and their efforts to ensure we have a gathering place, a worship space and the gospel preached.

Are we ready for the next phase of the journey?