

The Rock: 10-18-2020

Series: Abiding love

First reading: John 11:25-27

Title: Children of God-when He appears

Scripture: 1 John 3:1-10 (Start at 2:28)

Theme:

Because God, through Jesus, has dealt the final blow to death, we must live in the light of His promised return, while battling every day against the efforts of the enemy of our souls.

Introduction:

I have heard it said more than once when a preacher is trying to explain why Jesus of Nazareth came and died, and rose again.

"Why would anyone do such a thing for a world and a people who seem to want nothing to do with Him or His message."

I think in part, too many think it is simply that it is a good message with some good sayings and a "lifestyle" that will help you to be a better person to other people.

But the message of the Gospel, the reason Jesus Christ came and lived among us was

not to make bad people good, but rather, to make dead people live. -Ravi Zacharias

Once again, John repeats himself in this section of his letter, except this time it is a focus on what is coming for us, and in light of that, gives direction on how we are to live in the dynamic tension of that "in-between" time, we know as the last days.

The Story:

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

-1 John 3:1-4 ESV

In four short verses, the Apostle John gives us the beautiful promise of God, the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus.

Resurrection theology, the understanding that we live in the last days, the time in between His ascension and His promised return. Because he rose from the grave

the first time, we who believe know that His promise to return is true.

Mystical fantasy- Wasted hope- Foolish belief! All statements that are made, and questions that are asked when someone who does not believe in Jesus is confronted with what the Bible promises.

John says that they don't know us and what we believe because they don't know Him. This gets to the heart, at least in my mind to truth and belief.

Truth is not something that is simply in the mind of the believer, as if my believing makes something true. That is part of the struggle today, and perhaps even in John's day.

Your belief is just that, your belief. It's true for you, but not for me because I do not believe. Not only is that poor theology, it is very bad common-sense logic.

For truth is truth, whether I believe it or not. In its simplest explanation, gravity will take a heavy toll on the body that believes it can fly all by itself. If I jump off of a very tall building, confessing all the way to the ground that I can fly, that sudden stop right at the end will declare that the

immutable truth of gravity far outweighs my belief that I can fly.

The belief that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead is not just a story, a made-up fairy tale that a few crazy people believed to make themselves feel better.

No, if you remember chapter one, and John's repeating three times "We have seen". That eye witness account of these men and women having seen Jesus alive after he was most assuredly dead.

This should not have been a surprise to them. After-all it was not the first time they saw dead men live. Lazarus, Jesus friend and the brother of Mary and Martha had been dead for four days.

Angry that Jesus didn't show up on time, struggling with the feelings of unanswered prayers, and a missed opportunity on Jesus part to heal Lazarus.

Little did they know that what was to happen was far more than a healing, but a breaking in of heaven upon earth and a dead man who stinketh, walking out of the tomb after four days.

Helping Martha to understand that yes, the resurrection at the end of time is a

fact, but that in me Jesus says -all who believe will live:

"Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

-John 11:25-27 ESV

No, you see, all these years on, John is teaching the truth of the resurrection life. That while we live by faith and not by sight, John remembers what he saw! And is telling them the truth.

That because He lives, we also may live. And in that living, there is a right way to behave and show the world that the resurrection is real.

"And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him."

-1 John 2:28-29 ESV

John himself has seen dead men live on more than one occasion, and he watched Jesus ascend into heaven with the promise of the angels given to him and all who watched that he would come back in the same way He left.

But in the in-between time, the "Last days" as they are called, there is work to do, there is a life to be lived to the glory of God and the benefit of others.

Jesus's last words to his friends, and the promise from the angels is found in Acts 1:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

-Acts 1:8-11 ESV

Now, I take this kind of time on this because there is so much misunderstanding

in our world regarding the second coming, as well as the last days and how we are to live in this world in light of them both.

Much is made within the church about these things, and a lot of it surrounds signs, time lines and fancy charts. None of which frankly do the believer, or the unbeliever for that matter, any good when it comes to living rightly in the here and now, in the light of the not yet.

John, in this chapter, doesn't offer time lines and charts, but clear teaching on behavior and life style. Things that are far harder to navigate and work on than the study of fancy theories.

That's part of the reason, I believe, so much time is spent there. Because its easier to talk about dates and times, and all those bad people getting what they deserve, than it is for me to look at myself and ask why do I have what I don't deserve, and how ought I live because of that

The grace of God to me, an unlovable human being, loved by God, adopted as a son, because of Jesus.

God's grace and His love, as John says in verse one, has been given to us and we are children of God. We are not orphans

lost in this world. No, as I have said before, we are children of the King of the universe.

And the world does not get that, nor do they want to. But, because He has promised to come back and make us like Him, we ought to make every effort through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, to live in a way before the world, that honors that promise. Being conformed to His likeness. (Romans 8:29)

One of the vision pieces which I want to always have in front of us not just as elders, but as staff and ministry leaders, and you as the community here at The Rock, is discipleship.

Growing one another in Christ, and learning how to live our lives in the way which honors God and builds each other up.

I think to understand that, it is good to take a few minutes to help us get our minds around this thing called sanctification. By definition it is simply: "The act of making something or someone holy."

Well I look at the world, and I look at myself and that's not really what I see. I thought you said Jesus took care of

evil and he made me holy? I did say that, and yes, he did both.

But, much like John is saying here in these verses, is that we have work to do to make sure we keep ourselves moving in the right direction. It doesn't just happen once for all time, until it does.

What do I mean by that? Well, the sanctification of God's people is a progressive thing as much as it is an instant thing. No. I'm not confused, and I hope you won't be either.

You see, in the Christian life there is a difference between willful sin and working out our salvation. This is what John is saying in verses 3-6:

"And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him."

-1 John 3:3-6 ESV

This is how I have learned it, and find this is the easiest way to teach how we are to live in light of the fact that we will sin every day. There is a difference

between that and making it a practice to sin.

You see, we will sin everyday (miss the mark). We have to be careful not to fall into the trap of legalism and performance-based acceptance.

As though, if today I do everything right, then God will be pleased with me. That is not grace, nor is it faith. God loves us already, in spite of all we have done.

That is a guarantee because of the cross. Nothing we could ever do will make Him love us less. Jesus did not need to hang on the cross for one more minute in order to make you more lovely to Him.

Because of the cross we:

1- **Have been saved from sin's penalty.**

That is the propitiation John talks about in chapter two. You, if you are in Christ, stand before God in His righteousness. You have been judged and declared, "In the right."

2- Eventually **we will be saved from sins presence.** When He appears and we are made like him, as John says here, and that is the promise of the resurrection, we will no longer have to wrestle with that sin nature which still exists in us.

- a. This is why we sometimes get confused and angry when we blow it. Because Jesus saved me I ought to be perfect, so I will keep trying to have that perfect day and perfect life and he will somehow be happier with me.

3- Right now, **we wrestle every day against sins power** in our lives.

This is what Paul is talking about in Colossians 3, when he says:

"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

-Colossians 3:5-10 ESV

It is helpful to understand this when looking at these 10 verses in 1 John 3. Remember last week, the Bible best interprets the Bible.

Because we are children of God, we have moved from death to life, because of what Jesus has done.

That means, we fight and do so every day against these things in our lives. Some days are more successful than others, let's be honest.

Learning not only who we are as God's children, but how to live that out in the right way -takes a life time of daily commitment. That is verse three, isn't it? Because of our hope in Jesus, we purify ourselves.

Again Chuck Swindoll:

"With this one line, John's soaring, out-of-this-world theology lands in the center of the personal and the practical. Every Christian who places their confident expectation in Christ's return, yearning to see Him face-to-face, to be changed from the inside out, and to spend eternity basking in His glory, should experience an internal cleansing in the here and now."

-Living Insights: Pg. 77

Isn't that awesome? I love Swindoll for his clarity and simple help to me. I need that.

The practice of sinning is far different than our missing the mark as we work our salvation out. A good question to ask yourself is this: "Is what I am doing an act of willful disobedience?"

In other words, I know it's wrong and I shouldn't do it, but I'm going to keep doing it anyway. That is willful sin.

Given the chance to do right or wrong, do we willfully choose wrong? Do we do so because it's easier and what we prefer.

You see, that is helpful for us in recognizing the difference. We all make mistakes, every single day. If you think you don't, that's your first mistake. We sin, we come up short, and do things we shouldn't.

That is just human nature. But to KNOW yourself, and the WHY behind what you do -is as important as anything for your maturing as a follower of Jesus and a Child of God.

How we see and understand the return of Jesus, "when we see Him", should define how we live in this time in-between.

That dynamic tension of "The Last days" is so much more than watching for signs and even "the Anti-Christ."

The Gospel -the death -resurrection-ascension-promised return of Jesus of Nazareth must frame out our world view. If that is true, and it is, it ought to give us a settled peace in the middle of all this chaos.

God is sovereign over it all, and has promised a day when Jesus will return to settle it all out, and has given proof of that in the cross.

That's what John is saying, that in times of persecution of the church from without, and false teaching arising from within:

Hold the line, stay the course, live every day in a way that honors God.

Know who you are -Children of God

Let that be the driver as you live as children of the King in this world.

That in turn is far more, we are discovering together, than just reading the Bible. Checking the box of compulsory obedience and then going about your life.

No, because your life is hidden with God In CHRIST, you don't belong to yourself, any more than I do. We belong to the Father, learning to do the work of the Son, through the power of the Spirit, to

the benefit of His people here in this community.

By abiding in Him now, Swindoll says, we'll have confidence then, that we have done what He has called us to as His people.

What is your assignment in the here and now? As a disciple of Jesus, that is the question, as we look to the future and that day.

What is your assignment now?

If you are not a disciple of Jesus, and you are here just listening, know that you are not here by accident. I offer you this Jesus and challenge you to look into his claims with an open mind and heart.

Test Him and see if what he has said is true. I think you will find there not only a savior, but a friend.

Look to Him today.