

The Rock: 11-22-2020

Series: Abiding love

First reading: John 20:19-23, 30-31

Title: We know, because we have seen

Scripture: 1 John 5:6-21

Theme:

This enduring, endearing letter to "his children" closes with John focusing on Jesus, God's love for us and our love for one another.

Introduction:

This has been quite a journey these past two and a half months with John. I feel it only fitting that I end by starting with a quote from Swindoll.

He is a master story teller and illustrator and I just can't say it better and it was very helpful for me as I study over my books:

"I know two young men who grew up in the Northwest. Whenever they reach critical moments in their lives, they read letters written by their mother -letters in her familiar handwriting, sent to encourage and exhort her boys as they grow from childhood to manhood. Letters written for

birthdays, for Christmas, for graduation from high school. To these boys, those letters from Mom are expressions of her endearing and enduring love. They are frameable.

Why do these sons hold these letters from Mom so dear? Because their mother died of cancer years earlier, when they were young. The disease was taking its toll on her day after day, but instead of lying there wasting away, she spent her time writing letters to her two boys to be delivered at specific times in their lives. And on these occasions, the boy's father would deliver the letters. They would hear from their mother in her own words, words of endearing and enduring love.

Similarly, the apostle John has left all of God's spiritual children a frameable letter—a letter of endearing and enduring love. A letter of encouragement and exhortation. A letter of warning and instruction. A letter of absolute assurance. This letter, 1 John, has been preserved for us through the centuries. It a simple, straightforward, but profound and practical, letter of love.”

-Living Insights Pg. 129

The Story:

After spending so much time here, I feel much the same way. Having started out with John telling us that he was writing so that we would know.

Here at the end of his letter, we see much the same thing as he reminds us:

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

-1 John 5:13 ESV

The end of his letter looks much like the end of his gospel. Our first reading brings things together really, doesn't it?

"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

-John 20:19-21 ESV

As if that was enough to assure us, he closes with this statement:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

-John 20:30-31 ESV

All these decades later, John is remembering, and having been a sent one himself, reminds them that I am writing to you. Why? Because that is what he had been called to as a follower of Jesus, empowered by God's Holy Spirit and sent out to teach people about Jesus.

Our eyes have seen, and I am sure he remembered as well in his mind, Jesus telling them that if they had seen him, they have seen the Father.

I wonder sometimes if we too, realize that we can say if we ever dare to, whoever has seen me has seen Jesus. Afterall isn't that how its supposed to be? We sure have learned that over these weeks.

And I'm sure John felt this. I write these things to you..

This man had been with Jesus and has been left with the assurance which defined life itself for him. And he wished

nothing more than for his children to know Jesus.

"...And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth."

-1 John 5:6b ESV

It's the spirit who testified through John. A lesson for us to learn here, for sure. It is only by and through the Holy Spirit that anyone can come or understand that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

No one can come unless the Spirit draws them. It's why we ought to relieve ourselves of the self-imposed duty to "get people saved".

We are just servants of Jesus, testifying to the truth, doing just what we have been called to.

Offering to all who would listen, reconciliation with their God through Jesus. The Apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians:

"For the love of Christ controls (compels) us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for

their sake died and was raised."
(skipping to verse 18)

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

-2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 18-20 ESV

This is, and has been John's life calling. It is ours as well at whatever level he calls us. But we must remember that it is The Holy Spirit who makes heart tender and the mind open.

Yet, it seems clear to me that He does that most often through the faithful obedience of His people. John the Apostle being one. You and I all these centuries on, are also to be faithfully obedient.

We need to remember as well, that because it is the Spirit's doing, once it's done, it's done! That's our assurance. That is why he can write verse 13 so confidently.

There is no division, disunity, or confusion regarding that matter. Our

salvation is secured in Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

As John has been saying throughout the letter -The Holy Godhead, the trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

While unique in and of themselves are in fact, ONE and come as a package deal. This is completely counter to the gnostic teaching and theology which John knows has infected the church.

John is saying that it is impossible to deny one and still have any part at all of the others. That teaching is a lie and false.

Your belief in the Son's testimony confirms GOD as true, that's God's testimony -Jesus is my Son is true. John not only saw, but heard as well.

"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was

still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

-Matthew 17:1-5 ESV

We have assurance not only of our salvation, but of the absolute truth of John's testimony. He saw, he heard, and he believed. Because of his faithfulness we have all we need to believe.

Everything he has written is for that purpose. That's why he writes with such confidence in verses 14-15:

"And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him."

-1 John 5:14-15 ESV

The key in these verses is "in accordance with his will." These verses are packed with confident assurance that our God, the God of the Bible has our best interest at heart.

Why? Because we are His creation, image-bearers whom He loves. Of course, as any father would be, he is disappointed with

our sin, disobedience, and just open defiance.

This is why John has taught all he has. Because there is a right way, and there is a wrong way. There is a heaven and there is a hell.

That means a choice must be made! A decision regarding just who this Jesus is. That has to be made by those who have been confronted with and by Him.

Have you? I'm talking to the non-believer, or you, the church goer, who has listened to the truth of the gospel for years, and actually acknowledge that it is true but have never acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus in your life.

That tug on your heart, that thought of, "I need to understand more", is no random thing. That is the Holy Spirit working in you.

Do not harden your heart to the voice of God by continually ignoring it, going about life as if you can keep doing it all your way.

Peter, our friend and encourager, here much later in life shares God's heart and desire:

"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as

a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

-2 Peter 3:8-9 ESV

This is so important! You see, a God who is holy must bring judgement -otherwise he is neither holy nor is he God. Pure holiness HAS to deal with sin.

Thankfully, God is not just holy. He is loving as well. Holiness tempered or combined with love, gives us GRACE.

He doesn't want any to perish, that is God's divine will. Yet many do. Why? Because they reject the free gift of grace given by God through Jesus, and as a result suffer judgement.

That is willful sin and rebellion, and John in these next verses here, states this:

"If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. We know that

everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."

-1 John 5:16-18 ESV

John here is tackling sin which does lead to death and sin which doesn't. Brilliant Pastor, we can see that. But what does it mean?

A bit confusing actually and I wrestled with it. Because one out of one dies, none of us get out of life alive.

So, just what does he mean here? The sin that leads to death, as near as I can figure here, given what he has been tackling in this letter, is the denial of Jesus as the son of God.

Some, like Hendrickson says he is referring to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and perhaps he is right, or as Swindoll says a persistent sin which ultimately leads to death.

Any of those, including the denying of Jesus as Lord leads to judgement and hell. I am settled with any of these, but I leave it with you to wrestle out for yourselves.

But sin that does not lead to death (16a), "his brother or sister", means

that they have acknowledged Jesus as Lord.

So, it would be good to remember our sanctification here -from week 6 when we looked at 3:1-10 -Titled: "Children of God-when He appears.

We have been saved from sins **penalty**

We will be saved from sins **presence**

BUT right now, we are wrestling with sins **power**

The Westminster divines tell us that as Christians we are in an irreconcilable war with sin. We have to fight it every day, putting it to death. It is never a one and done thing!

Until I step into glory, I will be fighting against sins power -which shows itself in the blackness of my heart and the brokenness of who I am.

We all deal with this. Verse 18 again:

"We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."

-1 John 5:18 ESV

THIS IS THE FIGHT. We have God's power within us by His Holy Spirit. We are

being conformed every day to Jesus as those who are called by Him.

We are protected from the evil one, under the umbrella of God's grace as it were. Yet we can be tempted by him, which is why we must be careful.

James tell us regarding the evil one:

"But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

-James 1:14-15 ESV

We make the choice to chase after that temptation, OR put it to death. We have the power, in Christ to kill it. We have the free will, also, to chase it.

What choice do we make?

Because John is telling us here, that not only for ourselves, but for our brothers and sisters in our community -we can and should be building each other up in love.

Sometimes that means we are prayerful and active when one of our own goes side-ways. Core value number two: Handle all conflict Biblically.

Painful? Yes. Hard? Absolutely. But Biblical and correct, and it seems to me,

according to John, it is the way we help each other.

John, then, is talking to believers here, not non-believers, as he reinforces that in verses 19-20:

"We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."

-1 John 5:19-20 ESV

Herein lies the gospel at the close of his letter. He is true, and we who are in Him know He is true. We know that God sent his son Jesus, and we are sealed by His Holy Spirit.

Just make sure nothing ever gets in the way of that truth:

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

-1 John 5:21 ESV

Much as with our opening story of the boys whose Mom wrote to them at those critical moments in their life, all in order to encourage and direct them in the

right way. Her endearing and enduring love helped them long after she was gone.

John the Apostle, in the goodness of God, wrote to a particular people, but his letter was preserved for us. Let's make sure we live in such a way that honors God and His gifts to us.

One of the ways is to make sure nothing gets in the way of our relationship with Him. If that's right, everything else in life will find its place and balance as we look to represent Him in our world.