

February 16, 2020 – Elmont Baptist Church

Text: 1 John 1:1-4

Message Series: 1 John: By This We Know

Week 1: From the Beginning

Introduction:

1. With new kiddos coming into our home over the past year or so, one of the conversations we have gotten rather used is explaining what life looks like in our home.
2. It includes phrases like, “In this family we do these things and we don’t these other things.” Or, “Being a part of this family means...”
3. We don’t address every circumstance, situation, exception, or every detail or application that could arise. It’s a high-level, 30,000 ft view of life in our home – what being a part of our family looks like.
4. This is similar to what John is going to do in writing this letter. He writes in very stark contrasts to say, “Christ-followers, members of God’s family, do this and not that”.
5. He uses contrasts like “light vs darkness”, “truth vs lies”, love vs hate”, life vs death”. He isn’t trying to address everything a believer might deal with or encounter, but just a high-level view of what it means to be a part of God’s family.
6. John is the last living Apostle when he writes this letter. His voice and influence are still very powerful as he lives out his last days. This is most likely around AD 90-95, so somewhere around 60 after the resurrection of Jesus.
7. False teachers had crept into the church and brought with them dangerous teachings that John needed to address.
8. The most prominent teaching what that of Gnosticism. A teaching that said several alarming things such as: Jesus was not fully God and fully man – that He was only the Messiah between His baptism and crucifixion.

9. This is dangerous because if Jesus wasn't God in human flesh from start to finish then we are hopelessly lost and without forgiveness of sin.
10. They also said that the spirit is good, and all matter or physical is bad, so sin all you want and treat others however you want because the flesh is evil no matter what.
11. For the Gnostics, salvation was obtained by "special revelation or knowledge".
12. When it comes to a couple of Gnostic beliefs, it seems easy to see the heresy, but too often when it comes to the Scriptures, we can look more like the Gnostics than orthodox Christ-followers.
13. This is one reason why this 1 John will be helpful for us over the next few weeks.
14. Listen to this quote from one theologian at Ligonier Ministries...
15. *"Ironically, though modern orthodox Christians would find the Gnostic ideas about God abhorrent, their approach to biblical interpretation has much in common with Gnosticism. Many approach Scripture thinking all they need is private teaching from the Holy Spirit to arrive at truth. This private teaching often results in numerous and conflicting opinions about the meaning of a text, none of which are ever declared false by other Christians.*
The Spirit does illumine the meaning of the text for us, but never apart from the use of reason. The interpretation given to us must be the same one given to others because what is true for one is true for all. The differences we see in interpretation are due to sin or an unwillingness to understand Scripture in its original context. These differences can be avoided if we study the context of the text and apply our minds diligently in order to arrive at its one proper interpretation. Otherwise, we embrace a Christian irrationalism and relativism which says that our God speaks to His people in conflicting ways." Ligonier Ministries
16. It's important to know context and something of the original audience when studying the Scriptures.
While the application of a text may look different in 2020 than it did in AD 90, the truth or meaning of the text is the same.
17. Please always remember what one author said, "The text can never mean something to us that it did not mean to the original audience."
18. So, John is going to write to clear up any confusion about how we become part of God's family and what it means to be a part of His family. And that hasn't changed.

19. Throughout this Book, John will give four reasons why he's writing...

- a. That our joy may be complete – 1:4
- b. That you may not sin – 2:1
- c. About those that are trying to deceive you – 2:26
- d. That you may know you have eternal life – 5:13

20. And the last three help in increase the first – fighting sin, deception, and discouragement, help increase our joy.

21. There are three tests, or themes, of Christ-follower faith that John mentions over and over in these five chapters.

- a. Truth or doctrine – what you believe
- b. Obedience – how you live
- c. Love – how you care about and for others

22. All three, he says, are essential evidence of being part of God's family. We may still doubt at times, still sin at times, and still struggle in relationships, but grace rescues us and empowers us to pursue Christ.

23. The hope today is that as we look at what John says about Jesus, we will be challenged to grow in good theology that will help us grow deeper in fellowship and joy.

Read 1 John 1:1-4

- 1. John doesn't start with a typical introduction. He gets right to the main thing – Jesus.
- 2. Remember, he is writing to combat a heresy that is impacting the church – that Jesus isn't fully God and fully man.
- 3. We can have many different opinions about many different things the Bible says, but who Jesus is and what Jesus did cannot be one of them.
- 4. Our belief about Jesus is the foundation of good theology, and then John will quickly get to...

The Goal of Good Theology

1. Fellowship

- a. With the Father and the Son
- b. With other Christ-followers

- i. I love that John doesn't say that the goal is avoiding hell or getting into heaven. He doesn't say it's a bunch of knowledge, or facts, or duties.
- ii. It's not about how you vote or what you think about guns or vaccines or gluten.
- iii. Good theology may influence some of those things, but they are not the goal of good theology.
- iv. John says it's about fellowship. Fellowship is about sharing what you have in common with someone, and because of Jesus, you can have fellowship with the King of the universe and with other Christ-followers.
- v. There is an eternally glorious benefit to learning the Scriptures in order to grow in fellowship with the Father and Son. Time spent there won't be wasted.
- vi. As mentioned earlier, understanding the Scriptures is a diligent pursuit. It requires a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and a very natural work of making time and digging in.
- vii. And then there should be a desire for fellowship among the saints, with other Christ-followers. The thought of a casual, every-now-and-then, Sunday worship only connection to a local church family would have been unthinkable for John and the church in this time.
- viii. I know we live in a busy day with many things pulling us in many directions and from day one I decided we wouldn't be a church that would chase, beg, or guilt-trip people into showing up.
- ix. We want you to experience the gospel in a way that it changes your heart to want to know and love God and in that you'd want to love the things He loves. And one of the things that He loves the most is the church – the bride of Jesus Christ.

- x. I don't want you to come to church. I want you to love being the church – together. That as you draw nearer to Christ you would realize there is a mission to accomplish and the plan of our great God is that we accomplish it together.
- xi. That we need each other to live on mission and to care for one another as family.
- xii. Growing in relationship and deep fellowship with the father and the Son, and with other believers will never disappoint, but instead help us grow in...

2. Complete Joy

a. In Christ now and forever

b. In helping others walk with Jesus (3 Jn 4)

- i. Far too often we forget that God wants us to have, be, and experience joy.
- ii. We're so afraid of sounding like a prosperity gospel goofball that we fail to pursue joy and celebrate the Giver of good gifts.
- iii. Finding happiness in anything less than Jesus is a problem for sure, but claiming to know and love Jesus and not enjoy Him and the things He gives us is a problem just the same.
- iv. Christ followers will enjoy watching, worshiping, and experiencing everything God does forever and ever. The best thing you can do is start now.
- v. Yes, there are very serious things going on and we need to be serious at times, but we also need to get serious about pursuing joy that is only found in God through Christ.
- vi. And then look at what John says gives him joy in 3 John verse 4 – hearing that other believers are walking in truth!
- vii. I love hearing the stories and testimonies lately from our folks themselves or their SG leaders about how excited they are in growing in Jesus right now.
- viii. That some of our faith family have been believers for years, but are just now beginning to experience joy in following Jesus is both glorious and sad at the same time.

- ix. We are just thankful for a God of great love and providence that has put us together right here and right now to help each other grow in Jesus.
- x. So it's a great day to evaluate if your theology is good – is it founded on Christ alone, and if it's accomplishing the goal of fellowship with God and other believers and increasing joy in Christ and helping others grow in Him.

Closing

1. Great ways to respond
 - a. Be honest about where are you in relationship and joy in Christ
 - b. Ask God to help you desire and understand the Scriptures
 - c. Thank God that He wants you to know Him and love Him
2. It's not enough to want heaven, you've got to have a heart changed to want Jesus.