

1 May 14, 2006 There was a little girl drawing a picture. Her mother looked at her efforts and with the wisdom of a mother asked, what are you drawing sweetheart? I'm drawing a picture of God. Careful not to discourage the child the mother said, But no one has ever seen God. To that the little girl said they will when I'm done.



vs 12 12 No one has ever seen God; if we LOVE one another, God lives in us, and his LOVE is perfected in us.

Today God's message to us comes from 1John 4. There is so much here, so much to talk about. It's going to take me about 4 hours. You don't mind do you?

Show reading

(1 John 4:7-21) BeLOVED, let us LOVE one another, because LOVE is from God; everyone who LOVES is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not LOVE does not know God, for God is LOVE. 9 God's LOVE was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is LOVE, not that we LOVED God but that he LOVED us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 BeLOVED, since God LOVED us so much, we also ought to LOVE one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we LOVE one another, God lives in us, and his LOVE is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. 15 God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16 So we have known and believe the LOVE that God has for us. God is LOVE, and those who abide in LOVE abide in God, and God abides in them. 17 LOVE has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in LOVE, but perfect LOVE casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in LOVE. 19 We LOVE because he first LOVED us. 20 Those who say, "I LOVE God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not LOVE a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot LOVE God whom they have not seen. 21 The commandment we have from him is this: those who LOVE God must LOVE their brothers and sisters also.

Was there anything in that reading that stuck out to you? Love? Huh! That's funny that's not what stuck out for me. You know what stuck out for me? Flesh. That's right flesh. It didn't stick out for you because it wasn't in your reading. You see I cheated. I went back and read the whole chapter. That is a good tip. If you are not sure what a bible verse means it quite often helps to read it in context. 1The beginning of the chapter starts out like this:

(1 John 4:1-3) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.

Words that have stuck out for me this week are flesh and love and real. It all reminds me of the gospel of Judas. I tell you from what I know the gospel of Judas doesn't belong in the bible but it sure has reminded me of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 2. **By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,**

And then verse 3

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

You can tell from John's letter here that the church had a problem with a new group. The church has often had problems with new groups. This group was trying to tell people that Jesus was just spirit. That He wasn't truly man and truly god which you know is very important to our faith. If Jesus was just a man how could he save us? If Jesus was just a god how would he know what it is like to live as a human being and how could he die for our sins?

This group also tried to tell people that what you did in life wasn't important as long as you understood this divine wisdom.

John was saying in this letter that the real Jesus is the one who was a living breathing man with flesh and blood. If you were believing in any other kind of Jesus it wasn't the Son of God who died to save us.

God is using this letter today to help us to see the real Jesus. Jesus is not just some fairy tale. Jesus is not just some spirit. Jesus is God who came to walk this earth in flesh and blood a real person.

In the same way being a Christian is a flesh and blood, real thing as well. God wants us to understand him and his will as much as we are able but it's more than that. It's more than just getting it right in your head. Being a Christian is about living the Christ-life, being little Christs as Luther said. John would say, being a Christian is about loving.

We reveal that God is real in loving others.

Of course when we talk about love here we are not talking about romantic love. We are talking about love as a verb. Love put into action. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, comforting the bereaved, visiting the sick and imprisoned, forgiving the guilty, speaking out for the afflicted and on and on.

The Church in John day was not only being attached by false teaching about Jesus but false teachings about what it is like to be a Christian. The fruits of being a Christian are these acts of love. When we are not active in love it is a warning sign that things aren't right in our faith. When we aren't exhibiting love it shows us that there is something wrong with our relationship with God.

If we are frightened may it drive us back to Christ. If we hate may it drive us back to Christ. If we are lonely, frustrated may it drive us back to Christ.

Imagine that little girl that drew that picture of God. Imagine her growing up and wanting to show the world what Jesus looks like, what his love looks like. Some smart bible person tells her that (1 2John 4:12) says: No one has ever seen God;

She responded: yes but it also says: if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

She then said: No one has ever seen God but they will see God's love by the time I'm finished and she went off to reveal Jesus in her acts of love.

Let us pray, Fill us with your perfect love Lord so that we might be signs of your glorious love in this world. Help us to bear the fruit of your love in our lives. Amen.

You're weird," the other person said. I didn't get angry. I smiled and said, "Thank you!"

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ his son our Lord, amen.

N: Grace enters Pastor Draglyn's office. She is visibly upset. Her eyes are all red. She looks very tired. Pastor Draglyn greets her.

PD: Grace my dear what on earth is wrong?

N: At home Grace had been crying quite hard. She washed her face and calmed herself down enough to drive to the church. She thought she was in control of her emotions. But when she saw Pastor Draglyn and thought about sharing her struggles the dams burst again.

They just sat for a while until Grace gained her composure again.

PD: Well, do you want to talk about it?

N: Finally she said.

G: I have to. Pastor I was all excited to go to this big party, I'm not ready to tell you where it was right now so please don't ask me.

PD: Ok. Ok you were all excited to go to this party.

G: Yes. All of my friends from school were going. It was going to be the party of the year.

PD: Well that sounds great.

G: I thought so.

PD: What happen? You get sick and couldn't go?

G: No I went.

PD: Ok. So?

G: So, I got there and it was a great party. Tons of people there, everybody was there. Music was blaring, everyone was dancing.

PD: And you didn't like that?

G: No I loved it.

PD: So, what's the

G: I got real hot and thirsty so I went into the back where they said the drinks were.

When I went around back, that's what I found people doing, drinking. They had a keg of beer back there. I couldn't believe it. I was just shocked.

PD: You didn't realize they were going to have alcohol there?

G: No I didn't even think about it because their parents were going to be there, lots of parents were suppose to be there.

PD: So the parents weren't there so,

G: No the parents were there. They bought the beer.

PD: The parents bought the beer?

G: They said they would rather have kids drinking in the safety of their home then driving around.

PD: So what did you do?

G: I tried to get my friends to leave. They wouldn't some of them said it was ok if the parents said it was ok. Some others said it was just too good of a party to leave. They all said that I was a baby to want to leave.

PD: What did you do?

G: I called my parents and told them I needed a ride home.

PD: You told them about the drinking?

G: No, I didn't want them to get all upset and call the police. I told them I was sick.

PD: I see.

G: Jonny Bruce had an accident that night coming home from the party. He hit a tree and almost killed himself. If he would have died, it would have been my fault.

PD: But he didn't die.

G: I'm thankful for that but I've lost all my friends they think I'm weird. I don't know what to do. I can't cry anymore I'm all cried out.

N: Pastor Draglyn said: Grace. Then he didn't say anything for a long time. And then finally,

PD: Grace I'm sorry you had to go through all this. Let me ask you Grace, why didn't you want to be at that party?

G: Gee Pastor I just didn't think that was the place Jesus wanted me to be. Do you think I was being a baby?

PD: No. You were right it wasn't a place Jesus would have wanted you to be. The only thing you should have done differently was tell your parents.

G: But I didn't want to

PD: I know you went out on a limb as it was, saying you didn't want to be there. You tried to get your friends to leave. You tried to protect them. You probably didn't want to tell anyone because you didn't want to get people into trouble. Plus you didn't want people to get mad at you.

But sometimes God asks us to do difficult things. He might ask you to do things that other people won't necessarily appreciate, things people might not like you for.

Grace, Grace you have a wonderful name. I hope that every time you hear some one say your name you remember the forgiveness God gives you freely. And God forgives you for not telling your parents.

Grace I have some good news and some bad news. Actually the good news can be bad and the bad news can be good but...

G: What are you trying to tell me pastor?

PD: The good news is, that Jesus is praying for you. Jesus loves you and asks God to bless you and protect you.

G: Well what is bad about Jesus praying for me?

PD: Jesus is praying for you because you are going to need it. Jesus' wants you to be blessed because you are going to need blessings. Jesus wants you to be protected because.

G: I'm in danger? What kind of danger?

PD: Well that's the other part of the good news bad news. Grace you're weird.

G: What?

PD: Your name represents something very weird and you yourself have been acting weird because you are weird.

G: Pastor Draglyn what are you talking about?

PD: I should say, the world thinks you're weird. When your enemy hurts you? The average person thinks that your enemy should pay the consequences. They might not want to dish out the punishment but some one ought to make it right. At the very least you should be protected from further harm. If we talk about forgiving them freely, the average person thinks that's dumb. Most people call that stupid. God calls it, grace. Forgiving someone who doesn't deserve it, that's where your name comes from.

PD: Grace. The name Grace is a weird concept in the eyes of the world. It is a beautiful gift in the eyes of a Christian. Especially when we realize that's how we have been forgiven from our sin.

G: Ok I get that, the world wants revenge. We want grace and the world thinks that's weird. But why do you say that I'm weird?

PD: You are weird Grace because you did what you did out of your faith in Jesus, out of your relationship with Jesus.

G: Is that wrong?

PD: No it's beautiful but the average person would think it is weird.

This is why Jesus is praying for us, asking for our blessing, asking for our protection. Jesus wants us to be his witness in this world in word and deed. If we do it right people will think we are weird. When you won't go to parties where alcohol is served (for the youth) or abused (for adults). People will think we are goodie, goodies, scared or weird.

G: How else can Christians appear weird?

PD: When they won't use illegal drugs or abuse legal drugs.

When they want to wait until marriage to be sexually involved.

When they would rather go to church on Sunday morning than sleep in or to stay out too late on Saturday night.

When they won't shop-lift or steal or vandalize other's property.

When they honor and respect your father and mother -- and want to do what they say -- at least some of the time.

When they are content not to go along with the crowd, because they know who they are and whose they are.

Grace, You are a Christian – a child of God. You belong to God, not to the world. You don't have to be like everyone else. You can dare to be different -- not just to be different, or to be weird but because you belong to God and not to the world.

But it's not the things we do or don't do that are most important. What's most important is our relationship with God that leads to your actions.

People might accept you being a good student, a good father, mother, sister brother. They might accept you being a law abiding citizen. But if you are living your life as you believe Jesus wants you to live, people will think you're weird. They might not like you because of it.

G: Boy the Christian life doesn't sound very easy.

PD: No it isn't always easy but you do have a great God. All the people of Last Lutheran are pullin for you.

G: Oh.

Pd: All of God's children are pullin for you. Not to mention that if you want to live in the real world with Jesus, it's really the only way to go.

The question for all of us is: Do you want to live in the real world with Jesus? People might call you weird. If they do the correct response is Thank you.

(Revelation 22:21) The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of you and all his people. Amen.

