

Very simple.

As we enter into the Word today, we'll be staying in the Word for a little while here in the Psalm and through 1 John chapter 2.

And it's very simple, I say it's very simple because today's all about good and evil.

And in a way, I guess, nearly every sermon is about good and evil.

We preach the goodness of God and the wickedness of the world.

The natural wickedness of man to do harm to one another.

And the goodness of God that by His power alone can prevent that.

We've talked before an awful lot about, as, and I had great conversation just this week, you know, what does the wrath of God look like on man today?

Why is there such evil in the world?

Well, it's because human beings are not inherently inclined to be good.

And you can say, well, I don't know if that's true or not.

I'm talking when we look back at human history, even the past 150 years, shall we say, it's very difficult to argue that we are good to one another.

When we look around the world today and we see the godless fighting the godless, we, it's very difficult to argue that we are very good to one another.

The goodness that can be achieved, can be achieved by the goodness of God dwelling within us and the fruit of the spirit that is born of that, including things like patience and endurance and being able to love one another, even as those individuals are not agreeing, whatever the case may be.

We see in the power of God that the church throughout the years has created educational institutions and hospitals and all kinds of different things that the church has done to benefit humankind, the Christian church.

And we know in part these things are true because it's so often spoken of that how wicked the church is, how evil Christians are and how wars we've all started.

And that's what it's all about.

And we know that that's simply historically factually is simply not true.

That war has been fought and battles been fought and dissension and myths and schisms.

Yes, yes.

Has horrible things happened within the church throughout the course of history?

Yes, of course.

But not as the way Satan, the Satan tries to portray it, tries to portray it, much as you would see, as I've mentioned before, the great godless religions, right, of Marxism and communism.

Where you, the eyes off God, eyes off Christ, worship the state, worship the government.

That is the other alternative that we have.

Worship a false god in false teaching or worship some earthly, powerful, earthly entity.

I hope that that makes sense.

Now I can equivocate it too and say really, they're one and the same.

But the key is that your eyes are off God.

Your spirit is disconnected from the spirit of God.

You do not know the word of God.

You don't experience the power of God in all that comes with it.

And if Satan can accomplish that, however, he can accomplish that.

Whether it's inside a self professing Christian church or whether it is a gigantic false religion or whether it is the idea of no religion, however he can do it, he'll do it.

And this is nothing new.

We know that even as I'm going to read in the song, there was this constant battle in the heart of man, not by God, not with God.

God commanded his people, his chosen people to be holy.

Now we understand that in the New Testament, this means something completely different.

In a way, we are holy and we are set aside by the blood of Christ and his righteousness that covers us.

In order to teach humankind that lesson, he took the Hebrew people and he commanded them to be holy.

And this looked like a lot of different physical things and the things that they ate and the things that they did in the ritualistic cleansing and the separate places that they made.

They said, do as I command and you will look different and behave differently than any other people group on earth.

This will show all of the earth that I am God through your actions.

And of course, if you read three pages into the Old Testament, you know that we haven't gotten that right.

The Hebrews didn't get it right.

The Christian church is still continuing this idea that we are both sinner and saint.

So what I want to bring to you today is from Psalm 36 and then from John.

And of all of the apostles, John really is the one that God empowered to really show us the spirit of God on earth, Jesus Christ.

His gospel account really takes and really leans into Jesus as God.

And it's the spirituality that he was bringing forth by the power of God, true spirituality, the spirit of God, the word of God become flesh.

And that is reflected in his letters as well.

And John, as much or more than any other writers in the New Testament sees with his spiritual eyes good and evil more clearly, it seems.

He is not, I don't want to use the word obsessed, but he is focused, very focused on this idea of the goodness of God.

God so loved the world that he gave his only to God and Son.

And he continually also shows us in his gospel and directly speaks about in his letters the wickedness of man and how that wickedness that is outside of the church is something to contend with for sure.

But he also speaks very directly about the wickedness and how it makes its way into the believers and how we can become very easily led astray.

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

That's the story of the garden.

It wasn't a huge thing.

I mean, it's a huge thing, but it really wasn't seem like a huge decision at the time and easily let astray.

I wrote a little thing this morning because I have this and old saying.

The scripture is and always has been the preferred weapon of Satan.

The word of God is and always has been probably the most powerful weapon of Satan.

If you can take the power of the word of God that has inherent power in the name of Jesus Christ, call yourself a Christian church, invoke the name of Jesus Christ, break out the Bible in some form at least, and then twist and turn it and change it to make it say what you want it to say and to make people believe what you want them to believe.

Satan knows that there is power in the word as we often refer to throughout all of the gospels.

The only ones who knew that Jesus Christ was God were the demons.

Wait, wait, wait.

He goes, okay, he confronts the legion of demons and they say, what will you do with us?

It's not the time for you to send us to hell.

So he throws them into the pigs and they go over the cliff.

We need to be spiritually possessed, if you will, by the very power of God so that we are able to recognize him and his word.

And we must be in his word as it is given to us in our canon, the way it was given to us, be in his word and understand that so that we can not only, as John talks about, discern good from evil outside of the church, but what is correct, right and proper and in good order and what a good spiritual foundation looks like for you as an individual believer and for we as a congregation.

Only one way to do that, and it's not to not read your Bible and listen to me every week.

That's exactly what you shouldn't do.

You should, giving myself credit for being a decent Bible teacher, but you should read your Bible every week and study and grow and then come and listen to me on Sunday as well.

It's not an either or, it's a both/and.

When you get an either/or, you get cult leaders and you get cultish churches and you have people that are not interested in the word of God or may believe that whatever that person up there is saying is the word of God and not his will.

There is a foundation of where we're going today.

The opening psalm I want you to listen for, the wickedness of man and the goodness of God.

And you know I always go Old Testament, New Testament to show you the message of scripture is the same on every page, every chapter.

The power of God is the only power.

Psalm 36.

Sin whispers to the wicked deep within their hearts.

They have no fear of God at all.

I will not preach through the entire psalm.

I see you laughing, but I won't.

But that's exactly what I'm saying.

That is the point of discernment.

Are your eyes on the preacher?

Are your eyes on some other idol?

Are your eyes somewhere where they don't belong?

Are they on Jesus, the incarnate word of God?

There's the point because if you say, well, yeah, there's Jesus, but wow, this guy's teaching over here.

There's Jesus and this guy's teaching should be right in alignment with Jesus because we have his teaching.

So that is the singular point of discernment of false teachers, if you will.

And it's the singular point at which you break from the power of God.

When your eyes are off God, when your heart is not filled with his word and his spirit.

Does that make sense?

And he says it very clearly.

Sin speaks to the hearts of the wicked.

They have no fear of God at all.

And I just keep ringing in my head through judges and kings.

And at that time, all men did what was right in their own eyes.

That never ends well ever in the all course of human history.

It's from the 20th century, from then to the 20th century, when men did whatever they thought was right in their own eyes, all hell breaks loose.

And I'm not, I literally mean that.

All hell breaks loose on earth because that's all that can come forth without God.

OK, so we'll read it.

All of that in mind.

We're hearing the wickedness of man and the goodness and the power of God.

Sin whispers to the wicked deep within their hearts.

They have no fear of God at all.

In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are.

I want to say so much about this, but you can you can envision on newscasts and people doing disgusting things in and around children, whatever the case may be.

And they're flaunting.

And it's just there's no there's no awareness of morality in that.

They're not aware of their own wickedness and its impact.

Everything they say is crooked and deceitful.

They refuse to act wisely or do good.

They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots.

Their actions are never good.

They make no attempt to turn from evil.

Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens.

Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the lightning mountains.

Your justice like the ocean depths.

You care for people and animals alike, O Lord.

How precious is your unfailing love, O God?

All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

What's the key word after he just talked about the wicked.

He just talked about the wicked and those that are disconnected from God and those who mock God and those that don't even know they're being wicked and evil and doing hard.

And then what's the key word when he's talking about God and talking about how God loves all humanity.

All means all.

There's not an image bearer of God that is not worth saving in his eyes.

Now, all of this stuff about raffles, love and the pursuit of God and all that.

OK, but what I hear in Scripture is we are his image bearers.

He seeks to redeem our souls unto him so that we may be reborn by the power of God and become a child of God.

He has made a way.

He made the way in the Old Testament.

He makes the way through Jesus Christ.

That we may dwell in the throne room of the Most High spiritually, that we may boldly walk with him spiritually as Adam and Eve did in the garden, that we may boldly speak to him spiritually through prayer as Adam and Eve did directly, as Moses did directly.

Because of the completed work across.

This is the power of which David is speaking now.

And what struck me most about this song is all of that description of wickedness, which sounds like it's right off of the news page today.

And then he starts talking about God and then he starts talking.

He says directly how God loves all of humanity.

Can you imagine how God's heart breaks when he sees people or they're turned away from him?

They want nothing of him.

The life that he has given them, they deny.

They turn to themselves.

They turn to wickedness.

They turn directly without shame to say tannic and evil things.

And practices.

Imagine your children.

And how that would break your heart.

You unconditionally love them.

And if that wicked child would turn around at any moment, you know that you would open your arms and receive them again.

You imagine how God's heart breaks for his image bearers and just care less about him.

All means all.

And that really struck me.

How precious is your unfailing love, oh God, verse seven.

All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

The rain falls on the righteous and the unrighteous.

You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your river of the lights.

For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see the fountain of life and the light by which we see you are.

Pour out your unfailing love on those who love you.

Give justice to those with honest hearts.

Don't let the proud trample me or the wicked push me around.

Look, those who do evil have fallen.

They are thrown down never to rise again.

And I just hear Paul speaking and the dead in Christ will rise first.

And then this church existed will rise with him.

We're talking about the body of the resurrection.

It speaks to me that we will reside in the completed, renewed heaven, which is the completed and the renewed earth in our bodily forms.

The wicked will not rise.

Those covered by the blood of Christ will.

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

And we're going to see that in 1 John chapter two.

But me and my friends Stephanie are going to play a song together.

Are we not?

Okay.

I think maybe she's embarrassed that.

Can't call him a friend.

I don't know.

But we've been doing more and more of this.

We've been having more fun with it.

This is one of my faves.

And I always say this when we talk about what a friend we have in Jesus.

This is good theology.

And oftentimes it's referred to or thought of as a children's song.



And children can learn it.

It's in, you know, what two, four times.

Very easy beat is very.

But listen, when you sing these words, is it not reflective of the day you gave your life to Christ and your walk ever since?

It's good stuff.

Would you please stand as you're able to sing with F and I?

Otherwise it would be a bunch of chords being played and that wouldn't make much sense to anybody.

Two chords and then you start.

Thank you.

So let's just do something different and stand up and rest in service.

Sometimes when you tap into this preaching, I'm good and evil.

I'm not afraid anymore.

But when you are speaking the truth of God against the wickedness of Satan, stuff happens.

Everything from distractions to try to get you off your game, so to speak, to illness, to panic attacks, to all kinds of things.

Whenever you're involved, especially in dealing with and talking about the spiritual warfare that most people either in or out of the church would choose.

But the spiritual foundation of the human being is the foundation of the human being.

What makes you different than the cattle out there?

It's the spirit within you.

It's the unique way that you have been made in the image of God.

And the opposers of God's will will do anything to destroy you spiritually, emotionally or physically.

In the womb, out of the womb, through war, through self-destruction, anyway.

Through false teaching where you may be sitting and believing something that is not the gospel.

And Satan is cheering that church on because he doesn't care if you miss it by a millimeter or if you miss it by five miles so long as you miss it.

You say, "Well, man, it seems like the deck is stacked against us."

No, it's not.

It's not.

But all you would want to even think about, even think about believing that, wouldn't you?

That the deck is stacked against us.

There is no way.

There is the way.

The truth.

The love.

Go look.

Hit your wagon to that and be guided by his spirit.

Much like our brother John.

How about that for a segue?

But I didn't want to mention that.

I've always said, Satan has no interest in a dead church.

He's already got that one.

Satan has no interest in a dead soul.

He's already got that one.

Jesus does.

He wants to save that unredeemed soul.

Satan's like, "No, no, look over here."

But wait, I don't want to share the gospel.

No, no, run away from that guy.

Because pastors are pedophiles.

Didn't you know that?

Didn't you know the Christian church has started every word ever?

And millions of people have been killed.

And it's all they do.

Oh, okay, you're right.

Get away from the Word of God.

Anything.

And that spiritual battle is very, very, very real.

God often said to individuals and to this congregation as we're gathered, "When we experience these struggles, please receive them as a compliment."

Your feet are in enemy territory and you're fighting.

What do you expect would happen?

Put your feet on the floor.

I have a t-shirt that says, "Pastor."

What does it all say?

Because...

What did it say?

Because Bible-believing, devil-stomping ninja isn't a job play of the works.

I'll go get it in the show, please.

It's working.

Yeah, it's working, too.

"My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who bleeds our case before the Father.

He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins, and not only our sins, but the sins of all the world."

No, John is the fool.

He's writing later in his life.

He's well aware that those who follow Christ still sin.

But do they sin intentionally?

Do they love their sin?

Are they still addicted to their sin?

And he wants you to know that when you do sin, you have an advocate.

You have submitted yourself to that advocate.

Say that you are sorry.

Recognize in the mirror that you actually don't love that sin anymore, and you don't want to do that again.

And pray for the power of God to continue to transform you so you don't.

Gee, the power of God can do that.

And it's not a manipulation by a cult leader or something.

It's the power of God actually making you, I said this before to use modern terminology, quite literally the best version of you that you can be on this planet.

God's vision of you, God's version of you.

And so when you do sin, go to Jesus.

And be convicted and know that your sin is forgiven, and by the power of God, you can still put your next foot in front of the other and move forward.

You're not crushed by the weight of your sin anymore.

And we can be sure that we know him.

If we obey his commandments, I love the way John sets this up.

If someone plans, "I know God, but doesn't obey God's commandments," that person is a liar, and he's not living in the truth.

But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him.

That is how we are living in him.

Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you.

Rather, it is an old one you have had from the very beginning.

This old commandment to love one another is the same message you heard before.

Don't you love that?

Because he kind of gets, or he gets, you hear that all the time.

Christianity is just a bunch of rules.

You've got to follow the legalism.

You've got to wear these clothes.

You've got to dress this way.

You've got to talk this way.

You've got to go to another world.

And John's like, "You can show that you love God by following his commandments."

And so all of the anti-Christians are going, "See, I told you it's all about these commandments."

And then John says, "Love one another."

I thank you.

Jesus sums it up, of course.

All of the prophets can be summed up in this statement.

Love God with all your heart and soul and strength in life, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Love one another.

Now that's a broader meaning than what the world would have you believe.

Different.

It's God's love.

It's not human love, but love one another with God's love.

How is that possible?

You are submitted to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The very power that raised Christ from the dead lives in you.

You are able to love as God loves.

And you are able to model Christ in your life.

Live your life as Christ did.

How do I know how Jesus lived his life?

Hello?

See?

We've got everything that we need.

We've got everything that we need.

Love one another.

It is the same message you heard before.

Yet, in the light of Christ, it is also new.

Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it, for the darkness is disappearing and the true light is already shining.

If anyone claims I'm living in the light, but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness.

Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble.

But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness.

Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

He is speaking into the church.

And he talks about a lot of different things.

Right now he is speaking to the way we treat one another as professing believers in Jesus Christ.

And that might have been okay.

That's pretty easy.

It's pretty easy.

Preaching to the choir here, we're all Christians, we're all believers.

We all get along.

Have you ever been a pastor?

Do it works all the time.

People are people.

And we must apply this directly and intentionally apply this if we are going to stay in congregation.

Why?

Because the satan, the opposer of God's will, hates believers who are in congregation.

Can I maybe just squeeze something into this person over here to say something about this person over here and then maybe we can get a complaint about this and then maybe I can stir this up over here.

It happens all the time.

And we must be intentional by the power of God that to realize that you are a part of something that is so much bigger than yourself.

And one, it is your relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Two, it is your leadership within your family structure as well.

Three, it is your part of being in congregation with other Christians.

And four, it is you being a part of the church universal.

The constant thing, the constant lie that satan tells anyone in congregation is that it is not about him, it is not about us, it is about you.

And that is a difficult thing.

It preys upon our very broken nature and that is exactly, again, the lie that was told in the garden.

It is not about him, it is about you.

Don't you want to be like him?

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

And being able to recognize this, and my hand is the first one raised, is important because we must understand the forces that are trying to drive us apart.

You got to go out to the marriage, you are going to have to fight for it.

You got to go out to the church, you are going to have to fight for it.

You must be intentional about that, about believing in someone obviously and something bigger than yourself.

John knows what he is talking about here when he is speaking into the church.

We want to hear that part, "Oh, just love one another, just love one another."

So easy to do.

It is not because it is not our natural propensity.

My natural propensity is to get out of you what I can because I am selfish.

It is not our natural propensity for selfless love.

It can happen, it does happen.

It can happen and it does happen.

But we must be intentional understanding the words of John when he is speaking about the good and the evil, the lie and the truth, the light and the darkness.

And he is telling the early church right here, right off the bat, this whole "love one another" thing, "Pray, stay united."

Paul talks about this as well.

And it is only by the power of God that you will be united by the Spirit of God that who else would be given.

When you look into each other's eyes, whoever you are, and you see a reflection of Jesus Christ, that is the most attractive, and I don't mean that in any other attractive thing that there is about another person.

It is what makes you my brother.

It is what makes you my sister.

It is what draws people together.

I am writing to you who are God's children.

This is verse 12.

And I want you to read all the different levels here because he is going to speak directly.

And here at church town, you know, we believe, and this is amazing, like I said, when Max and Estella are here at the same time, there are five generations of people, younger and older, all worshipping together as it should be.

And this is one reason why I know that this is the way it was and should be because John is speaking to all of the people that are gathered in congregation and talking about what it means to live out this command within the church itself.

We'll get to the rest of the world.

We'll start that with final reading today after prayer.

We'll get to how we deal with all of the wickedness out there.

Let's get this right first.

That's what we always say, right?

Know what you're going to say about Jesus before you say it.

It's one reason why we gather so that we can learn and grow and become and then go all of that has to happen before we go into the darkness and share the life we know because we are then a reflection of Christ.

I'm speaking to you, our God's children, because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus.

Here we are.

He's in front of the church.



I'm writing to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ who existed from the beginning.

You have a grasp.

You are mature in the faith in God's word, in God's teaching, and you have this grasp of that simple thing that John wrote for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that you know what that means, and you can teach that to other people.

You're mature in the faith.

You know what it means to walk as a godly person in an ungodly world.

You're mature in the faith.

And when somebody comes to you and says, "Has a question," it's what I shared, I think I shared it with Brittany, where we were talking, I said, "You got a question?"

You don't need to ask me.

Ask somebody.

Let's challenge one another.

Let's preach the gospel to one another every time we see each other.

Let's have godly conversation and keep learning and growing together.

Let's do that."

So, I'm writing to you who are young in the faith because you have won your battle with the evil one.

You have repented.

You have turned.

And you have chosen to follow Jesus Christ.

You are indwelt with the power of God.

You are ready to attack hell with a squirt gun.

And you have no idea what you're doing.

That's why you need people who are mature in the faith.

I love that.

You've defeated the evil one.

You've repented and claimed Jesus Christ and the completed work of the cross.

Now what?

You need a little help here, and we all do.

We all do.

I have written to you who are God's children because you know the Father.

I have written to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ who existed from the beginning.

This is a writing technique of repeating in sort of a couplet.

I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong.

God's word lives in your hearts and you have won the battle with the evil one.

Younger.

Younger.

Older.

Chronologically age-wise.

Young in the faith.

Mature in the faith.

You could come in here as a 75-year-old non-believer.

Give your life to Christ.

And John is writing to you who are young in the faith.

Depend on the church and you should be able to depend on the church.

You could come in here as a child of whatever age of understanding and say, "I do repent and I give my life to Jesus."

And you are both young in the faith and young chronologically.

And all of the above.

All five generations.

Wherever you are on the age scale, wherever you are on the faith scale, John wants you to invest in one another.

And that's what he's saying.

Invest in one another.

Here's something, and this is not an admonition in any way, shape, or form.

Please don't receive it that way.

But I've had a couple of them.

Maybe this has helped shape, at least, the preaching a little bit today.

But over the past two or three weeks, I've had conversations with people and will mention another person in the church and will know, "Who is that?"

This has happened several times.

And I'm thinking, "How do you not know who that person is?"

Like, "We're us.

We're small.

We should know one another."

And it got me to thinking about not just this sort of thing, but also just asking you to be very intentional about speaking to somebody who you might normally speak to.

How about you sit somewhere else next week, sit beside somebody that you never sat beside before, and say, "Hi, my name is Jenny," or whatever.

"Nice to meet you."

Just a thought.

But it kind of struck me, and I shared this as well with my football teams.

We had a three-year run where we were Keystone Division champs, and so we had some real big dogs on the team.

And they were looked upon with great reverence by the younger classmen.

By the time they got to be seniors, they were just rolling, man.

And they got to be really admired and really looked upon well by the lower classmen.

And I would be very intentional because I would know what's up on the coach.

And I would take the biggest dog on the team, and the scrawniest little sophomore who probably would never see the field.

And I'll say, "Do you know his name?"

And the kid would say, "No, I don't know his name."

And I'm saying, "Do you realize, however, that because he practices against you, and his charge is to make you the best that you can be on Friday night, we as a team are only as strong as he is.

And you don't know his name.

Shame on you."

This is a little exercise that I would think about when these conversations have popped up over the weeks.

So I have to challenge him to do that.

I'm not going to pick people out that didn't get away without a teenager and not get slapped.

But I couldn't do that with you when I got slapped.

But we're challenging to draw close to him on another intentionally.

It does take intentionality.

There's going to be all of this that John is talking about, does.

Amen.

Amen.