

Father God, thank you.

Thank you for the families that I see out here.

Thank you for the generations that are represented who have come to worship you this day, who have come to gather in fellowship, bound together by your Holy Spirit, who have come to worship you in song with these gifted musicians, who have come to worship you in prayer as we lift our silent and our voiced prayers to you, who have come to worship you in the Word as we go deeply into what it is meant when you say the love you bestowed on us.

Lord, thank you.

Thank you for the men who came to church this morning with their mothers.

And guys, I don't mean this glibly.

That is a good act.

That is a good thing.

And there's a very good chance that you are a decent man because of the mother you're sitting beside.

God bless you.

God bless you all as we celebrate together in your name, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns you will not be full of courage, or you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame.

Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children.

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are.

But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.

Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what will be like when Christ appears.

But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure just as he is pure.

Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God.

And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him.

Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin, but anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.

Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this.

When people do what is right, it shows they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous.

But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil who has been sinning since the beginning.

But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.

Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's light is in them.

So they can't keep on sinning because they are children of God.

So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil.

Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love another believer, other believers, does not belong to God.

The rest of the preaching is going to be a commentary on this.

The final scripture reading is going to also be a commentary on these opening scriptures.

It is a wonderful thing when so many members of the channeling are so willing to bring forward their gifts, whether it be leading Bible study, leading children, bringing forth their musical gifts.

They know people who know people who come forth and give their gifts here to this congregation, and that is wonderful.

Because we often talk about the communion of the saints, right?

We talk about church and what it means to be bound together by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

We always say, and I was taught this by my mentor and I've shared this with you, if I come to the pulpit on a Sunday morning and nobody else shows up, that's not church.

But if I have down and out with aspiration pneumonia and I don't show up and you all do, church should go on as normal.

Because my ultimate purpose is to replace me with you.

That is what we should be doing one with the other as members of the body.

We should be willing to talk with one another, share with one another.

Remember when we read in John, I'm speaking to those who are mature in the faith?

Because you know what you're talking about and you can share it with people.

I'm talking to you who are young in the faith because you are so full of vigor and just on fire for God that that can be used as well.

I'm talking to you older folks because you can mentor younger folks.

I'm talking to you younger folks because you have more energy than all of us older folks come on.

And that's what he's saying.

He said this is how it works.

And I look out and I see five generations of people and I see people bringing people and I see people bringing people because they're happy to be here and they want to share that expression with their family.

And that's wonderful.

And then what I said, gentlemen and ladies, sons and daughters who have come to church with your parents today, that is honoring to them.

It is honoring to them.

It's more than something that you do that's just nice for Mother's Day.

It is honoring and I honor that.

I really and truly do because like I said, chances are you're the decent human being you are today because of the mother you're sitting beside today.

So that's fantastic.

That actually is what John is talking about here today.

Believe it or not, I usually say that's not what I came here to preach about.

But that is what I came here to preach about.

And one of the difficulties, especially with this letter but with all of the letters, and we need to keep this in mind, and I told you this before, there were no chapters and verses until what like the 12th or 13th century, somewhere around there, chapters and verses.

And they're random.

It was just a way that people, you know, a guy broke down the Bible and decided, well, I want to reference something, I'll break it down into chapter and verse and now I can pinpoint it.

It's like coordinates on a map.

So when we read a letter like 1 John or Corinthians or Thessalonians or Galatians, we need to keep in mind that it wasn't preached line by line over a series of weeks.

There would be a gathering and the individual who was leading that gathering, if you will, or individuals would have the letter that was written by John or have the letter that was written by Paul or Peter and they would read it to the congregation, to the gathered.

Church didn't look like it looks like today.

They would gather and they would gather and stay gathered until it was done.

And oftentimes when these letters were circulated, they were there and they were read and reread and read and reread again until all the teaching of the letter was poured forth into the congregation.

All of the questions were asked and answered so it's kind of unusual, not unusual, but it's difficult for we to get the feeling and the flavor of how an epistle operated.

I would love to try this sometime if there are people on board.

Gather on a Sunday afternoon, Saturday afternoon, a Wednesday evening, a Monday and read an epistle and just gather and read it and then just ask questions and talk with one another and ask questions.

What do you mean by this?

I think that would be a wonderful thing to do.

That's a sidebar and maybe I'll bring it up and maybe I'll put something up on the board and we'll see if that can actually happen.

But probably as much as any letter, first John should be read that way because John is talking about the all-encompassing aspects that bring people together under the banner of Christ and he talks about the good and the bad and the glorious and the wicked and he talks about very spiritual things that guide us very spiritually and he talks about very practical things about how we should treat one another and he's speaking into a group of people to try to help mold and shape them.

We always say around here to learn, grow and become.

To learn, to grow and become the disciples of Christ that Christ knows they can be.

So like I said, the second reading today is actually a commentary on the first reading today because the second reading today is John's commentary on these very important points and let's bring up those points right now.

I opened with, "And now, dear children," this is going back to the opening word there, thank you, "And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ when he returns.

You will be full of courage and not shrink back in shame."

Last week we talked about "remain in fellowship with Christ."

We talked about, "Okay, what do you need to defeat evil?"

Well, I need this, that, I need the armor, I need swords, I need tongs, I need this, I need all these demonstrations of God's Holy Spirit pouring out so I can show that I am wielding a mighty sword.

No, you need God's Holy Spirit within you.

Now, we also have the caveat, God is sovereign, he will do with that then whatever he wishes, and it very well may look like a variety of different things, but the baseline is your faith in Christ is enough.

You walk literally as light in a dark world by virtue of being indwelt by God's Holy Spirit.

And so if we recognize God's sovereignty and we allow for him to operate in our lives however he wishes, that's a far cry from sort of demanding signs and wonders or else I won't believe.

I need signs and wonders to show you that's about you, that's not about him.

So there is, there's an open-heartedness and a willingness and an understanding that it is God's will we serve, not ours, and we serve at his pleasure, which very well may mean that someday, I don't know, a broken leg comes in and he's like, "Ryan, touch this man and pray and his leg is healed."

He can do that if he wishes, but if I demand that of him, that's wrong.

So there's the point of differentiation, the point of discernment.

So that was, now we go into this.

Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children.

And here's the big point, the big first point.

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are.

But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.

Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears.

But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

Point one, God does not provide a pathway of salvation.

God does not seek to redeem us back unto him out of pity for us.

God does not seek to redeem us back unto him so that he may demonstrate how awesome he is.

And we just talked about that, that's what humans like to do, that's what humans want.

God has created a way to redeem us back unto him because he loves us.

And this is John's push throughout his gospel, throughout his letters.

"Please understand that God is love," John says.

And nearly all of his theology, all of his preaching, all of his teaching is premised on the fact that God is love.

And that is unlike human love, lust, desire, whatever the case may be.

And it is certainly unlike the deceitful, if you will, love of Satan who tries to put these temptations in front of you like he did to Jesus.

See how much I care about you?

I will give you all the kingdoms of the earth.

Bow down and worship me.

See how much I care about you?

So we must understand God's love that he bestowed upon his special creation, human beings.

That is the cornerstone of everything.

And as we progress through in this second reading, you will see that John doesn't leave us hanging as a good teacher doesn't.

He talks about we are able to be called children of God because God, this is John, so loved the world that he gave his own lady God his son.

Whosoever believeth in him will not die but have eternal life.

Same person, same theme, same cornerstone.

God did it out of love.

He didn't do it because you're good enough.

He didn't do it because of something you did first.

He didn't do it out of pity for you.

He didn't do it to show off.

He did it because he loves his special creation and he wants you to be adopted as a son or a daughter.

We've talked about this before.

One of the great heresies that is out there is that, "Hey, we're all children of God, man.

Can't we all just get along?"

That's not true.

That's not a reality.

And John preaches it, Paul preaches it, Jesus preaches it.

As we, when we are adopted into the family of God, when we are given the right, as Paul says to call him Abba, Father, is when we are indwelt by his Holy Spirit, is when we are transformed.

It is when the old person is dead and the new person is reborn.

Now we have the right to be boldly in the presence of a holy God.

Now we have the right to be called sons and daughters of the Most High.

And that's different.

You see how Satan takes, I always need to write the best lies are 99% true, and Satan's digging in there, "Well, are you a child of God?"

I don't know.

"Are you?"

That's the question that we're asking ourselves.

It's the question that any good preacher will ask of a congregation or an individual when he or she is speaking to them.

The cornerstone of who we are and the cornerstone of our spiritual foundation the cornerstone of all of our behavior toward one another, fellow believers, and toward non-believers is God's love dwelling within us.

If you have a son or a daughter who is going astray and you know that they're going astray, you see all of the wicked things that they're doing, all the self-destructive behaviors, how much must you hate them not to address that as a parent?

Your love is so strong that you're going to tell your son or daughter that's wrong and you shouldn't be doing it.

That's wrong and you're on a pathway that will lead to destruction.

That's love.

It's not all hugs and kisses, jolly ranchers, and you know, bubbles.

That's an old love sometimes, tough love, however you want to call it, the difficult doctrine of God's love is to speak the truth of the Word of God into the wicked world and tell folks what you're doing is wrong and you are on the highway to hell.

But there is hope.

Let me share that hope with you.

Let me share God's love with you because he loves you so much.

He was to redeem you, forgive you of that sin, and redeem you into relationship with him, righteousness, right relationship.

All of that is inherent in those opening words and a big thing here is that none of this is going to come to its fruition until we are with Jesus and see him as he truly is.

I love that line.

It says, "We do know that we will be like him for we will see him as he really is."

I can't wait for that.

I've read so much about him and his spirit leads me in so many ways and glorious prayers and I love singing like you start great as the Lord and I'm like, "Woo!

Let's go!"

You know, I know so much about him, I feel like I do know him, but man, I can't wait to meet him and see him as he really is.

That's a powerful line of scripture, that that day is coming for his children and he has made it possible because you're so awesome.

No, because he loves you and he wants to redeem.

He has created a pathway of redemption through his son Jesus Christ.

That's a powerful line.

"I can only imagine" comes to mind, that song, right?

"I can only imagine" and it kind of refers to this, that yes, we are dwelling by the power of God's Holy Spirit, leaning into his word, learning so much about God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, living in the Spirit, being challenged in the Spirit, right?

Because John doesn't mince words either.

"You think they hated me, wait till they get a little you out there," right?

He's right now, he's telling us.

"One day we will know him as he really is."

That line just jumped out at me.

Now this, I don't want this to be confusing.

I'm going to, like I said, I'm going to preach through this piece and then I'm going to read the second piece and you're going to see the commentary on God's love in this second reading.

But I don't want this to be confusing.

I broke up my expanded Greek version so I can better explain this.

"Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God, and you know that Jesus came to take away our sins and there is no sin in him.



Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin, but anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.

Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this.

When people do what is right, it shows they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous, but when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil who has been sinning since the beginning."

Now that seems to sort of contradict itself.

There's sort of a guarantee there that you're going to sin and the guarantee there that you're not going to sin.

So let me clear this up.

In many translations, the New Living Translation that we're reading here doesn't do a very good job of this.

The New International Version does a pretty good job of it.

The New American Standard does a pretty good job of it because this verb that is being used in this language is a very complex verb that can mean a wide variety of things and what it means is to be existing in a condition.

When we talk about God taking away your sin, He takes away your sin and the power that sin holds over you.

Your addiction to yourself, your addiction to your sin.

He takes away that power.

He breaks that chain.

Perhaps this will do a better job.

This book is always interesting to read.

The expanded Greek.

This is verse 6.

Let me begin with verse 5.

And again, this also demonstrates the difficulty.

I have that question again this week.

If it is so difficult to translate, why did God make it so difficult to translate the Bible?

Why did He put it in this language that could mean so many different things depending on where the word is and how to handle it?

What other book 2,000 years later are people all over the world gathering to study?

Tell me what an incredible author he is.

No, there's not, there are not, I don't know how many Christian churches there are globally, but I know there's not a million Homer Iliad Odyssey book club meetings this morning.

I know that, but I do know that millions are gathering to dig in to the meaning of His Word.

Oh yeah, He knew what He was doing, for sure, and we're still digging in constantly into His Word and it's amazing.

So this is sort of gives you a little piece of what a translator may go through.

Verse 5, and you are now spiritually knowing that He has made manifested in order that He might take away our sin natures and sins, while in Him is definitely no sin nature or sin.

Whoever is continuously abiding in Him is definitely not continuously sinning by His choice.

Whoever is continuously sinning is not beholding Him attentively.

Neither is down by His choice knowing Him.

Right?

So it means you, if you are abiding in Christ and Christ is abiding in you, you are alleviated of the desire for the behavior of sin and the power that that sin, your sinful nature, has over you is broken by the power of good.

You have no desire to continuously live in sin.

And when you do sin, you realize that you have sinned and you go to the Father and you say, "I'm sorry.

Rejuvenate me, teach me, guide me.

I don't want to do that again."

Oh little children, nothing must be deceiving you.

He that is doing continuously righteousness is righteous, just as He is continuously righteous.

God is God and He is righteous.

He that is continuously by His choice doing sin is of the devil.

Continuously by His choice doing sin.

Continuously by your choice doing sin.

So it's a lot more nuanced than, "Hey, I believe in God, I don't sin anyone."

Ha ha, you might, but I don't.

Because it says so right there.

That's not what it's saying.

Because the devil, I love this last passage here and the way it has exploded in the grave.

He that is continuously by His choice doing sin is of the devil because the devil is sinning continuously by his choice from the beginning.

"For this purpose the Son of God has been made manifested that He should remove the man works of the devil."

I love it.

And I hope that that shows you and it sort of explodes that passage.

And I hope that if you didn't have that sense of freedom before I read that, that you have that sense of freedom now.

And I hope that if you are living in a sense of guilt because you're like, "I'm a Christian and I sin," you have no faith you sin.

It comes from your human being.

You are simile.

You are simultaneously sinner and saint.

You are being sanctified.

You are being moved into the image of Christ.

You're not Christ.

One day we will know Him as He truly is.

So I hope that one way or another you receive that Word of God to break that chain.

Maybe you're like, "I'm like I said I'm a Christian and I still sin."

Yes.

Do you love it?

Do you want to sin?

Ask yourselves these questions.

I always say, right?

Mirrors still work.

Look anymore.

Do you love it?

Do you love that sin?

You want to keep living in that sin?

If you are continuously wanting by your own choice to live in that sin, you are of the devil.

I didn't write it.

If you are continuously wanting to live in righteousness because Jesus is righteous, then you are of God.

And that allows the grace, grace for the believer.

When you do sin, there's the questions that you can ask yourself.

Is this what I want to be?

Is this who I want to be?

Do I really love this?

Do I want to continue in this?

If no is the answer, and it's truly no is the answer, but gee whiz this is hard Lord.

He knows.

Repent and come back and rejuvenate me Lord.

Fill me Lord.

One step at a time without doing that thing again.

It can be done.

And finally, I want to make one last point and then like I said, I want to read the letter as the commentary about what we've just preached about God's love and his imparted righteousness and what it means to be a child of God.

This last piece, "Dear children," this is verse 7, and I'm driving with you crazy over there.

"Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this.

When people do what is right, it shows that they are righteous even as Christ is righteous, but when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil."

Like I said, I didn't write that.

"Who has been sinning since the beginning?"

That's when we ran into the pure word.

It talked about that.

That's all he does.

All he does is lie.

All he does is sin.

You think, "I can dance with the devil a little bit.

Lord, I'll be a Christian if you just let me do this over here."

You can't dance with the devil a little bit.

What's the saying?

You have too much of the world in you to be of the Lord.

You have too much of the Lord in you to be of any use to the world.

Good and evil can't exist in the same place at the same time.

Choose this day whom you besook.

How many more cliches do you need before you get sick of them?

Put it to truth.

And he says, "They chose their righteous even as Christ is righteous, but when you turn to the one who has been lying and sinning from the beginning, it shows that that's what you want."

So that God came to destroy the works of the devil.

Not appease them, not welcome them into the church, not change the Word of God so that it could mean whatever we want it to mean.

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, which is anything that is opposed to God's will and God's Word.

Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning.

Now it becomes a little bit more clear because God's life is in them.

So they can't keep on sinning because they are children of God.

Now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil.

Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

The last question that I'm going to ask and probably, John if you're here, now would probably be the time because I'm going to read that last piece of scripture.

We're going to move into the astoundery of zeros.

Do you look any different?

Holiness is being set apart.

Are you set apart?

Does anybody know you're a Christian outside of anybody that you have told you were a Christian?

Can anybody tell you're a Christian?

If you're with a group of strangers who don't know you, would they be able to see anything different in you because you are indwelt by God's Holy Spirit?

Great questions to ask.

If the Churchtown Church of God closed its doors today, would anybody care?

Great question to ask.

If somebody came in off the street who is an absolute non-believer and experienced one of our services, would they experience the cornerstone of the love of God and the preaching of the gospel?

Great question to ask.

What does it look like and do you look any different?

If you're supposed to be light in a dark world, are you?

Great question to ask.

Big things, little things.

Dave Reese came this morning.

We bought a butterfly bush.

And he said, "I'm not confident.

I'm a plant killer.

I'm a killer of plants.

I'm a mower and a weed whacker of all things green."

Dave, well I said, "Kellan, we're afraid to plant this.

We want to plant it right.

You may become implanted."

It's raining!

He's got Mother's Day plans.

He shows up early with his shovel and it's stuck and he plants our plant for us.

Little things.

You see any light in that?

Oh, it's okay.

It'll only take a few minutes.

It's what I do.

It's what he does.

It's fantastic stuff.

And he'll do it for anybody.

Ask him.

He'll help you.

Ask Ryan.

He'll help you.

Ask Jeff.

He'll help you.

You young mothers, ask older mothers.

They'll talk to you.

Older men, speak to younger men.

They'll talk to you.

It's what we do.

Come on in guys.

Come in and have a seat.

The whole front row up here.

But do you look any different than the world?

We're gonna get settled in here.

I'm gonna read this last passage and I'm gonna inflate this reality.

But now you know what you're listening for, right?

You're listening for the cornerstone of the love of God.

You good, Miss Willow?

Mackenzie's over here.

There you go.

Well, when you're short, you gotta look.

Right?

I got you there.

Here you go.

You're coming up soon.

I love this.

I love this so much.

Listen.

Listen for the love of God.

Now, here's John commenting on the big points that he just made and I just preached.

Verse 11.

I know.

I'm messing with him so bad.

There we go.

This is the message you have heard from the beginning.

We've heard this from John before.

I'm not gonna preach this.

It's your job to hear the commentary.

This is the message you have heard from the beginning.

We should love one another.

We must not be like Cain who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother.

And why did he kill him?



Because Cain had been doing what was evil and his brother had been doing what was righteous.

So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

Good and evil cannot coexist.

Cannot exist in the same place at the same time.

If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life.

But a person who has no love is still dead.

Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart, servant on the mountain.

And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us.

So we ought also to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.

If someone, and that's Romans 12, if someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion, how can God's love be in that person?

Have compassion on a person who kills plants to make sure that the plant will live.

Dear children, let's not merely say that we love one another.

Let us show the truth by our actions.

Our actions will show that we belong to the truth.

Abide with me, I will abide with you.

So we will be confident when we stand before God and see Him as He truly is.

Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings.

Hello world, God is greater than your feelings.

What you feel is not necessarily what is right or true.

Capture your feelings as you capture your thoughts.

You're in charge of even what you feel.

God is greater than our feelings and He knows everything.

Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence and we will receive from Him whatever we ask because we obey Him and do the things that please Him.

And this is His commandment.

This is what pleases Him.

We must believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as He commanded us.

Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with Him and He with them.

And we know He lives in us because the Spirit He gave us lives in us.

Hear it?

Foot wide, five miles deep.

Just live in it.

Just live in it.

If there is anybody in this congregation today who is feeling convicted, I don't want you to leave today without knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Please talk to me.

Please share with me that you would like to know Jesus.

Please pray with me.

Let me anoint you.

Let one of the elders anoint you.

Let the members of the church come around you so that you may know the love of God so that when you leave these walls you don't just go back to loving your wicked ways.

Everything, I promise you this, if you are not a follower of Christ today, everything that He wants to take away from you are things that are destroying you.

Your greed, your addiction, your lust.

Everything that He wants to take from you are things that are destroying you.

The enemy is using to destroy you while making you think you love it the whole time.

Another cliché, right?

Don't be the nicest person to ever go to heaven.

You can do it on the He can.