

A Happy Beginning

(1 John 1:1-4)

9/21/16; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

On Sunday, we looked at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 as Paul contrasted living in the flesh with walking by the Spirit.

And we saw the life that comes from walking by the Spirit produces joy...

However, in a fallen world, it is difficult at times to be joyous...

Even Jesus wept while in this world.

Ecclesiastes even says that there is a time to weep and a time to mourn..

So which is it?

How are we to be joyous people in a depressing world?

Well, it is simple.

We need to take ourselves out of the world to find joy..

Now, I am not talking about some secret meditation or spiritual reality...

I am simply talking about finding joy in thing beyond this earth...

If you only find joy in the things of earth, your joy will always be lacking...

Because the things of the earth are always changing or always beyond your reach...

And look I know that you have heard preachers and Christian teachers separate joy and happiness....

And I understand their argument, but happiness and joy are related...

Joyous people are generally happy people....

Yet, so many people you meet are unhappy and without joy in this world...

However, the great shock is that so many unhappy people claim to be Christians and are in the church...

Now, there are two options...

One is this...

These people in the church aren't saved, or....

Or two.....

They haven't been taught how to have that joy in their lives...

And let me be clear, being filled with joy is not an automatic in the Christian life....

It is something along with the rest of the fruit of the Spirit that you have to constantly pursue and put on while you are putting off the old nature...

So what is the process of becoming joyous in the Christian life?

Well, take your Bibles and look at 1 John 1:4...

We took a brief look at this verse last Sunday night, but I want you to see it again...

4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

Now, you may say to me...

Well I thought John wrote this letter to help his readers know if they were saved or not....

And he did...

1 John 5:13

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

But what is the great result of knowing the certainty of salvation....

It is an overwhelming joy and happiness that spreads to every part of your life....

So, how do you know that your salvation is secure?

Well, there is two parts to that?

Well, you need to know evaluate your response to Jesus Christ?

Have you believed in Him?

Have you turned from your sin and turned to follow Him?

Do you love Him?

Do you see Him as God?

Do you see Him as man?

But even before that, the great question is this...

Is Jesus a reality?

Does he exist?

Did he come to earth?

Did he die?

Was he resurrected?

In short, salvation requires an examination of your life but it also requires an examination of Christ..

And what we are going to do tonight is look at the first 4 verses of 1 John tonight, and what we are going to see is the evidence for Christ's existence followed by 3 responses to the reality of Christ's existence...

These responses will help you tonight to simply boil down the Christian life to its basics...

And then to encourage you to practice those basics in the world...

So, here's the outline for tonight....

- I. Jesus Is Christ is Real, So We Proclaim Him (1-2)
- II. Jesus Christ is Real, So We Share Him (3)
- III. Jesus Christ is Real, So We Find Joy in Him (4)

Let's begin in verse 1-2...

I. Jesus Is Christ is Real, So We Proclaim Him (1-2)

Verse 1....

1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us

Now, John begins with a clear testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ....

He hits on 3 of the 5 senses in describing the existence of Jesus Christ...

He heard Jesus speak...

He saw Jesus live...

He touched Jesus with his own hands...

And John uses the plural “we” because he was representative of all of the disciples who had all been killed by this time...

Like we said Sunday night, 1 John was probably written around 85-90 BC....

History and church tradition have all the original disciples dead at this point in history...

Paul would have also been martyred by this time as well...

So, John is the only one left who had been with Jesus in his life and ministry on earth...

But I am sure the voice of Jesus never left John's head...

I am sure the sight of Jesus never left his mind's eye, and I am sure the touch of Christ never left the tips of John's fingers...

Can you imagine being someone who had close personal contact with the God of the Universe, with the Creator of heaven and earth?

John is an old man but I am sure that Jesus was still fresh on his mind and heart...

I am sure the smell of Jesus was still in his nose...

How could you ever get that out of your mind?

I remember when I was growing up that one of my classmates went to a New Kids on the Block concert...

And she came back to school on Monday and told everyone that she touched the hand of a girl who was on the front row and touched the shoe of the lead singer....

How silly is that, yet John walked the earth for over 3 years with the Maker of the moon and the stars...

And now in his old age, he is writing a letter and it is a top priority to let his readers know that Jesus was real and He was experienced through John's sense of hearing, sight, and touch....

Now, why is this important?

First, the readers of John's letter were under the attack of people who said that Jesus wasn't a real person...

These false teachers came to be known as Gnostics, but one their first attacks on the gospel and the church was to attack the personhood of Jesus Christ....

In their estimation, Jesus wasn't born into human flesh since flesh was evil...

They simply believed that either Jesus was an apparition like a ghost coming from God, or....

God simply came and indwell Jesus for a while after he was fully grown and left before he was crucified....

And the basis for their belief is that all matter is evil, and therefore God would never inhabit evil flesh...

But like I said on Sunday night, Jesus had to be fully human...

He had to have been born and exposed to sin, yet never sinned...

He had to grow up like any person would and he had to be exposed to the temptations of the world in order to keep the law under the same conditions that we face...

And then he had to go through the pain of rejection and brutality and even death to die for the sins of His people...

And he had to rise again from that human death...

And that was all necessary to be our true Substitute...

To be the one man who died for all men and women who would believe in Him and get credit for his life and death....

Jesus' humanity is a essential part of the true gospel...

He had to be a man to be a perfect substitute for sin, but also to be a perfect keeper of the law of God...

Yet, these false teachers in the 80s and 90s AD were attacking the humanity of Christ...

They were calling him a ghost, a spirit that wasn't like us....

Yet, John was writing, "that can't be so. I saw Jesus. I heard him, and then he adds, I touched him."

And that he did as John laid on Jesus at the Lord's Supper on the night before Jesus was crucified..

Now, this idea of the humanity of Jesus must be mentioned with the deity of Jesus in the same breath
...

Because Jesus was fully human but also fully divine.

He is the God man...

Now, the question always comes...

How did this work?

How did Jesus live as God and man at the same time?

And the answer is I don't fully know.

I just know this.

The Bible teaches clearly that Jesus was fully God and fully man, and those two natures existed together in the person of Jesus Christ...

The fancy term for this is the hypostatic union, which is the description of Jesus' two natures existing together in one person..

And it is an important truth about Jesus that Christians should hold dear...

Muslims reject the hypostatic union...

Mormons reject it as well...

For the believer, we must embrace it and hold it tight...

Jesus Christ is 100% God and 100% man, and he must be both if we have any hope of salvation...

So, John begins his letter by taking on those who claimed that Jesus was just a spirit or a ghost...

John, simply says, "Oh no. I heard him, saw him and touched him."

He was no ghost...

Now, remember that the John and all the disciples had already affirmed the deity of Christ...

They had all confessed Him as God, and furthermore, they had taken that claim of Jesus' deity to the world...

John and all the disciples had preached about Jesus as God to the world....

They had spent years proclaiming to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God...

And now, here is John having to defend, not the deity of Christ, but the humanity of Him as well...

Let me tell you a good application of this...

If you want to evaluate the claims of a religious group, ask them about the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ...

If they say anything other than Jesus was fully 100% God and 100%, they don't have a biblical view of Jesus Christ..

And they must be rejected as part of the Christian faith...

So, now John has given us his testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ in verse 1...

And so in verse 2, he gives us our first response to that reality....

If Jesus was and is real, how should we live?

Let's look at verse 2...

John writes, we have seen Jesus, whom John called the Word of Life in verse 1, and then what does he do....

“We have seen and we testify to you....”

“And proclaim to you” the eternal life (Jesus) which was with the Father...

Testify truly means to bear witness; to be a witness in a legal sense...

Proclaim simply means to bring a message from one place to the next place...

The reality of Jesus makes us testifiers and proclaimers of what?

The eternal life of Jesus Christ that can be ours through faith in Christ...

Here's a good application of this...

You see the world tries to hold on to this life with all its might...

The idols of excessive diet and exercise and healthy living are more popular now than ever...

And why healthy living?

People want to go on forever, even though no one has ever achieved it...

Yet, eternity is set in the hearts of men and they seek to achieve it in human ways...

Salvation offers eternal life through faith in Christ....

The message of eternal life still stirs hearts and sells because people have always wanted to achieve immortality...

Look, you can walk into work and try to sell people on coming to church...

But why not walk into work and sell people on how to live forever...

Look, the reality of Christ makes us proclaimers of eternal life in Him...

But that is not all...

Closely related to this reaction to the reality of Christ is the second reaction which we find in verse 3....

II. Jesus Christ is Real, So We Share Him (3)

Look, I worked in a BBQ restaurant for 5 years and they had the best peach cobbler around....

What made their cobbler even better was the simplicity of making it....

It was so easy to make and you could simply substitute any fruit in it, that I went on a mission to take that cobbler to every family function we attended...

There was something about the goodness of that cobbler and the ease of making it that I just had to take it everywhere I went so the rest of my family could enjoy it..

The same could be said of my love of certain authors..

If you ask for a commentary on any NT book of the Bible, I am going to recommend John MacArthur's commentary....

He is so easy to understand and he is so biblical that I can't keep him to myself...

I share the blessing of his ministry with others...

Now, this idea of sharing with others has got me in trouble as well....

I used to fish a lot of bass tournaments, and sometimes, we were catching them so good that I shared too much information with other fishermen and then ended up beating me with my information....

Look, many of you are like that....

Recipes are so good that you have to share them so others can enjoy them...

Some sales at some stores are so good that you share with others so they can save money too...

John feels this way about the truth of salvation in Christ...

Look at what he writes in verse 3...

3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

John says the point of our testimony and proclamation is not to hear our heads rattle, but to draw others into fellowship with the Lord and the people of His church...

You know people often describe their salvation as having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ...

But that is not completely accurate....

Everyone who has ever lived has had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ because he is Creator of them and the Sustainer of all things...

Christians are those who are in a personal saving relationship with Christ....

Look, the demons have a relationship with Christ...

It is a relationship of judgment...

But they have a relationship...

John says here that the point of his letter is to lead people to fellowship with God and the people who belong to God...

And let me add this...

This word fellowship is not what we consider fellowship...

WE look at fellowship as a social gathering...

When I was a kid, we even had a fellowship hall where you got together as a church to bring a dish and eat somebody else's food...

Fellowship in our mind is temporary...

You come together and visit and you leave and break fellowship...

The word in Greek here Koinonian, which speak of partnership....

Salvation brings us into partnership with God...

We don't get an "on again, off again" kind of relationship...

Proclamation of the reality of Christ leads to partnership with God and with Christians...

This is why someone can get saved and have a stronger connection to the people at church than the people they live with...

The promise of the gospel is partnership and communion with God and his church....

Salvation doesn't mean you go from God's enemy to a more likable person...

You go from enemy to friend....

You go from illegitimate child of God to adopted son or daughter of God...

That is the fellowship that we offer to others when we testify of Christ and proclaim eternal life in His name....

We tell the world that they can live forever, and they can be unconditional friends with the God of the Universe...

I mean that is an offer to take to the world right???!!!

Forgiveness of sins, place in heaven, fellowship with God, fellowship with the people of God....

New heart, new desires, new start at life...

That is quite the offer that we should be taking to the world....

And we should be doing it regularly...

And it is more than come to my church....

It is more than God Loves You.....

It is more than I want to pray for you...

The gospel message is Jesus is real...

He offers eternal life to all who repent and trust in Him, and salvation will take you from God's enemy to partnership with Him forever...

So, Jesus is Real.

Therefore we testify and proclaim him, and we share him with others...

And then #3....

III. Jesus Christ is Real, So We Find Joy in Him **(4)**

So, getting back to our introduction....

How do you increase the joy in your life?

Well, you hear the testimony of John and you assure yourself that Jesus was real and not a ghost or a spirit emanating from God...

You then take John's testimony and the the testimony of the rest of Scripture and you believe in the reality of Christ...

You turn from your sins and you throw yourself on the mercy of God,...

And God forgives your sin, he removes his wrath from over your head...

He puts a new heart in you...

He adopts you into his family...

He gives you a new life led by the Spirit of God...

He gives you a place with Him in eternity...

He begins to teach you and lead you from sin to holiness....

And because of all of that and more, your joy is made complete...

And God only increases it and you grow in your knowledge of Him and come to understand Him more and obey Him more....

Let me ask you a simple question....

What brings joy into your life?

Is it a relationship with your spouse or with your children or grandchildren?

A saving relationship with the God of the universe far surpasses any human relationship...

Is it money that brings you happiness...

Partnership with God means that you are one with the God who owns the cattle on a 1000 hills and owns the hills too...

Is it that sense of accomplishment that brings you joy?

Well, how about knowing that you have tackled the world's biggest problem in salvation?

You have gotten rid of the sin that was going to send you to hell in salvation...

I would simply say this....

Whatever brings you joy on earth will be multiplied in salvation in Christ...

Now, for the believer your joy can be less than complete because of a number of things....

Sin works to take your joy...

Unhappy Christians are often sin hiding unrepentant Christians...

The world also works to diminish your joy, but John is going to show you that joy doesn't come from the world...

It comes from knowing you are saved and secure in Christ....

In the case of John's readers, their joy was lacking because they were under the attack of false teachers leading them to believe that Christ wasn't fully human...

Their joy was diminishing because their trust in Christ was being called into question...

And so what John sets out to do is fill up their joy by reminding them of Jesus is, and then he is going to set out to help them understand if they are truly saved in Him..

For us, we are going to tag along and put ourselves to the test as well....

Hopefully to reassure ourselves of our own true salvation, and as a result our joy will grow as our confidence in our salvation grows....

Conclusion

I think this is going to be a great trip through 1 John because I think that joy is lacking in most Christians...

Therefore, I think that joy that is lacking in most churches...

And that is a real shame because Christians and the churches they fill should be happy places....

Yet, often times, you find bitter sulking people there...

You hear complaints and problems and dirty laundry aired there....

Certainly, some of that can be attributed to unconverted people going to those churches and making problems...

But not every frown is from an unbeliever....

Sometimes, people who I know are saved by their fruit rarely smile or have fun or even lack being pleasant...

How can that be if they are saved?

And the answer is simply this....

Their minds are more in this world than the world to come...

Therefore, we need to elevate our thinking about eternal things in order to get our joy back.....

And my prayer for you and me is that 1 John will help us do that....

Let us pray..