

*We declare...* First in a series of sermons from I John, preached on September 11, 2016 at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC by Rev. Herb Hilder

Lessons: I JOHN 1:1-4  
JOHN 1:1-5

There is no way of avoiding it, fall start up and schedules are with us  
PJ's all day is over  
Daily consumption of carbs has dropped  
We have places to go, meetings to attend, tasks to do, miles to go before we sleep.

And those who teach and those who go to school no doubt have found that what students had down at the term's end in April May or June of this year has been momentarily forgotten.  
Formulae may have to be re-learned  
Declensions of verbs remembered  
Rules of grammar re-thought  
I never taught school full time, but supplied for a year off and on in Niagara South and never in September.

But I have always thought not just of students in school but the teachers who face classes and have to spend the first few days in reviewing the basics of their particular subject.

It is not owing to their students' obtuseness, rather for the most part it owes that for the most part, and the students have not had to think about the basics in any number of subjects for a number of weeks

French verb declension and dates in history do not good holiday fare make

Therefore there seems at this time there seem always to be in the education system at any level a time of review and remembering in these September weeks.

That said,

I thought it was a good time for us as God's people to review and to remember some basics of the Christian faith.

To do this, we are going to be working through John's first letter

And sometimes it will seem like 'working through' is an understatement.

For John's style is not as direct as Mark's

John seems to use a lot of excess words before he gets to the point

And his language is full of imagery and symbol

He reads more like a poet than a story teller.

Yet, it is a story he tells – a story of the Good News of Jesus.

Further John was very concerned that his readers then and now remember what it means to be a Christian in the world

As we shall see in prayerfully reflecting upon the letter,

John was under no illusion that evil was real

**<sup>19</sup>We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. [I John 5:19]**

Yet, as John goes to great lengths to tell us, evil is not the final word for God's people.

We do not live enchanted lives – bad things do happen to good people and good things happen to bad people.

We are all here in what one commentator refers to as 'the flux of history'

Our world right now is one low on hope and high on anxiety

Fear and panic – corporate, as well as individual.

Like the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963, those of us who remember it can still tell you where we were and what we were doing.

In like manner, September 11, 2001 with the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre by terrorist attacks,

Those of us who were alive can still tell you where we were and what we were doing when we heard the news that Tuesday morning.

However, not to make light of fear and grief of just these two incidents,

Our future, *our present as well as our past is anchored in the truths, principles and promises of God.*

John repeats over and over again, lessons and truths that are given to us,

To strengthen and encourage us

John's powerful and no nonsense beginning – **We declare to you what was from the beginning...**

In other words, this is something of which we may be certain

### HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

What is to be our relationship to the world in which we live each day?

What is the difference between the world and our faith and trust in the Risen Lord?

What is our duty with respect to life in this world?

How are we to conduct and behave ourselves?

How are we to relate to the world around us?

Without any preamble or greeting, John begins to answer such questions.

He reminds his readers then and now that the *message of Jesus Christ is declared to you*

It is not some sort of speculation or solely human only thought.

It is not some removed philosophy

Nor is it a particular outlook or the result of contemplation in the woods.

No, the message of Jesus Christ,

The gospel,

The Good News is PROCLAMATION.

There is authority behind it

If you follow programs like Antiques Roadshow,  
you know the importance of provenance –  
background with no gaps

Gaps can lessen the value of an object

Here John reminds us that the message of Jesus has  
a firm, strong and point to provenance – the  
Apostolic Witness.

This says John is absolutely fundamental to  
how we live out our faith in the Risen Lord.

In the opening three verse of the letter, John keeps  
repeating this.

Three times he writes about having seen it

Twice he says, “We have heard it.”

He also says we have touched it with our hands

Repetition is always used for emphasis – to  
highlight a point.

It is poetic language John uses, for I believe he is in  
awe and wonder about this truth

His faith and trust is in the preaching, teaching and  
healing of a person named Jesus

Who not only claimed, but was in fact realized to be  
the Son of the Living God.

There is nothing tentative in these opening  
verses.

I wonder whether one of the reasons the  
institutional church is suffering in dropping

attendance and interest is not only the busyness  
noise and hurry around us,  
But because we have become UNCERTAIN of our  
message.

Hesitancy and doubt have entered our lives.  
Nothing unusual about that – witness the story of  
Thomas – one of the inner circle of Jesus disciples  
who doubted the Resurrection for goodness' sake!

But Thomas did not wish to remain  
doubting – he eagerly sought some certainty about  
Jesus and he had the good fortune of being a  
member of a faith community that did not shun him  
because he doubted!

Today,  
Too many church leaders – lay or ordained,  
Too many church attenders are being beguiled by  
the chirps and whistles of the world  
Voices which prey heavily on our fears, worries,  
and anxieties  
Doubt is rapidly becoming the default position in  
the lives of too many believers, rather than a  
sometimes state of mind,

John reminds us in these opening  
verses.

Yes, life is difficult, not always fair, and often  
capricious  
BUT the follower of faith in Jesus is anchored not in  
some passing idea, but in the historic life, death and  
Resurrection of Jesus.

Witnessed by the apostles and others  
 Further, Jesus does not just 'appear'  
 He is foretold, promised, looked toward by most  
 writers in the Old Testament.  
 As well this Jesus who was heard, seen, looked at,  
 touched, continues to empower us to follow him  
 and no other, through the work of the Holy Spirit.  
 True truth....

### HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

We shall ever keep in mind as followers of Jesus we  
 must continue to live within and foster **a fellowship  
 with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ  
 (vs.3)**

Christians are not simply people who are  
primarily concerned about the application of  
 Christian principles and teachings in all their  
 relationships and areas of life.

Yes, that is important, but that is not the thing that  
 makes them Christian.

How easy it is to make a church, only all rules and  
 regulations,

A gatekeeper of truth and purity

A place full of dour and dull people

John's letter corrects that too widely held  
 view by reminding his readers, no Christianity is  
 about *fellowship with God and Jesus*.

Sad that fellowship as a word has devolved into word meaning coffee and refreshments after worship or into an active verb – it isn't.

You have fellowship – you are not fellowshipping together!!

Fellowship as John uses it here in the opening verses of his letter means that the Christian is one who has become *a sharer in the life of God*.

*The New Testament offers to each of us just that – and nothing less than that!*

John is anxious to impress this on the minds of his readers

Christians are not just people who are a little bit better than they once were and who have just added certain things to their lives.

Rather, they are people who have received the divine life.

This is mystery,

This is wonder

I cannot tell you how God has entered us

I only know that to take Christianity seriously, to say and mean yes, I have decided to follow Jesus,

We begin to understand St. Paul's statement

<sup>20</sup>and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the

Son of God,<sup>[a]</sup> who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20.

We are now sharers in the life of God.

We are partakers in the life and nature of God Himself.

Stuff and nonsense the world's voices will tell us  
NO—to be *in fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ means that we are working together with God*

*We share his interests and His great purposes*

*We are really interested in God's enterprise in this world*

*We begin to see all things as God sees them*

*We are concerned to bring the purposes of God to pass.*

God is no longer a stranger somewhere in the heavens.

He is no longer some stray force or power somewhere!

He is our loving and very much involved in our lives, in our world, Creator.

The Christian is one *who has come to know God as Father.*

*We can turn to him,*

*Delight in Him*

*Experience joy in his presence*

*That is to have fellowship with God*

Knowing that God is there—in the everyday

Giving wisdom and understanding,

Suggesting caution and restraint,

Providing meaning and purpose

Encouraging us to not be so wrapped up in the tyranny of the immediate,

That we forget the big picture

The wider view.

Supplying us with strength according to our need and according to our situation.

Remember John is concerned about one thing – AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY.

So his letter is a call to God's people –get back to the vital things,  
The things that make for real life!!

#### HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE

Final verse Evelyn read this morning

**We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete (vs.4)**

This is one of the reasons John writes the letter.

As we will presently see,

John is under no illusion – nor should any of us be – of the spiritual power of the world and its chirps and whistles

John is anxious that God's people – then and now – should have fullness of joy,

Though they are in the world which lies under the power of the evil one.

It is by no means a message confined to this letter

One finds it in Philippians, the Gospel of John and the other Gospels

What then is JOY?

What does it mean?

In any definition we may give of New Testament JOY, it will not be found in a dictionary  
 We need to go instead to the New Testament itself  
 and look at when and how JOY is used.  
 It is certainly not something which cheaply makes  
 people laugh.

Rather, it is a state of complete satisfaction – mind,  
 heart, emotions and desires – all fully satisfied.  
 And fully satisfied owing to being anchored in the  
 Lord Jesus Christ.

He satisfies my mind  
 He satisfies my emotions  
 He satisfies my every desire  
 In Him, I am complete  
 The chorus of 'Will your anchor hold sets this  
 realization to verse and song

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
 Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,  
 Fastened to the rock which cannot move,  
 Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

Not arrogant triumphalism,  
 But confidence that each of us are in God's hands  
 and seeking to live as we know it to be true.

AMEN