



SCRIPTURE: 1 John 1:1-4: **in a word... LOVE.** Anniversary Sunday next week. Sharing Hope trip.

1 John is a letter written by the apostle John to a group of believers who were in the midst of a serious crisis of faith. There were some in their fellowship who were abandoning their faith because they could not reconcile the idea of God coming to earth in bodily form with the Greek idea that flesh is evil and only spirit is good.

Imagine that... the church being swayed by popular culture.

You see the believers in John's day left their faith because they couldn't reconcile the predominate views of the day with the reality of Jesus.

The question for us today is whether we will allow a more and more secular culture dictate what we believe about God, Jesus and the Bible... or will we allow our faith to lead us closer and closer to God?

And I don't believe it will be our rhetoric or arguments that change hearts and lives, I believe it will be one thing...

in a word... love.

John's letter makes it clear. It's all for the love that God came to our world.

1 John 4:10

¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Things can get a little hostile when you are not on your home turf.

And that's where we are in America these days. We as Christians are no longer the HOME Team.

You see for years we have seen the US as a center for Christianity around the world. But over the last 30 years we as Christians have transitioned from being the home team here in America to being the away team.

According to PEW Research

The religious landscape of the United States continues to change at a rapid clip. In Pew Research Center telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade.

Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular," now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.

Here's what is really interesting. For the first time in American history the emerging generations are less Christian than others.

Less than half of Millennials (49%) describe themselves as Christians; four-in-ten are religious "nones," and one-in-ten Millennials identify with non-Christian faiths.

Just like in John's day, many are leaving their Christian faith.

Over the next few weeks we invite you to join us as we see what John wrote to those who were struggling with their faith in a secular culture.

1 John 1:1-4

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the

Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

The Greek philosophy taught that flesh was evil and good could only come from the spiritual. So you can see how they would have difficulty believing that the God of the universe could put on flesh and become human. It went against their way of understanding the world.

So John begins his letter with three evidences that Jesus was indeed God in the flesh.

We have seen him.

1 John 1:1

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at

and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

If you were God, how would you go about revealing yourself to man? God has revealed himself through creation...

Romans 1:20

²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

But creation alone could never tell us the story of God's love. God has also revealed Himself much more fully in His Word, the Bible.

But God's final and most complete revelation is in His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus said,"

John 14:9

⁹Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Because Jesus reveals the Father John calls him “the Word of Life.”

This sounds a lot like how the Gospel of John sounds doesn't it?

John 1:1-5

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning.

This sounds a lot like how the Gospel of John sounds doesn't it?

Christ is to us what our words are to others. Our words reveal to others just what we think and how we feel. Christ reveals to us the mind and heart of God. He is the living means of communication between God and men. To know Jesus Christ is to know God!

Words are the means by which we reveal our wants our needs our hearts to others.

Same is true with God. He sent Jesus, “the word of life” to reveal himself to us.

John says in his letter...

1 John 1:1

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

Make no mistake... we have seen and heard from God. He has revealed to us by his son Jesus, the word of life.

We have been given a glimpse into who God is because he has revealed himself to us through Jesus.

John and the apostles were eyewitnesses to the fact that God came in the flesh... John says “we have seen him,” but more than that...

We have experienced him.

1 John 1:2-3

²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Three ways that John and the other believers had experienced God in the flesh.

First, is eternal life.

John says "we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us."

When Jesus came he not only revealed the eternal quality of God, but he passed eternity on to us.

To see Jesus is to see the Father. Jesus rose from the dead and John was an eyewitness to this fact. God's eternal nature was revealed in Christ. He could not be confined to death or the grave.

But not only is that true, but he passes that eternal life to us.

Jesus said in John's gospel...

John 10:10

¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

There is a contrast between the enemy and Jesus. The devil comes only to steal kill and destroy, but Jesus says he came to bring life... life to the full!

You see the enemy only wants to take from us. His sole purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. He's the reason we are in this mess.

But Jesus said he came to bring life.

John says, "we have experienced eternal life in Christ." And not only that but John says "we have experienced fellowship." With God and each other.

There's something powerful about brotherhood.

The same is true with our faith.

In war it's called brotherhood. In the church it's called fellowship.

The word fellowship in the greek is the word:

koinōnía, koy-nohn-ee'-ah; partnership, i.e. (literally) participation: *the share or participation which one has in anything*

There is a strong bond or partnership between believers... *kinda like going to war together*. Not only between believers, but also with God.

There is **koinōnía** with others and God, through Jesus.

And we need both. The fellowship with God through Jesus brings us eternal life, and the fellowship with other christians brings a bond that cannot be broken. The enemy will try to take that from us, but we cannot let that happen.

Remember we are the AWAY TEAM. We must not let go of the bond with each other.

And finally John says...

We have found joy in him.

1 John 1:4

⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

Fellowship is Christ's answer to the loneliness of life. Joy is His answer to the emptiness, the hollowness, of life.

John, in his epistle, used the word joy only once, but the idea of joy runs through the entire letter.

Joy is not something that we manufacture for ourselves; joy is a wonderful by-product of our fellowship with God.

David knew the joy that John mentioned; he said,

Psalm 16:11

¹¹You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

You see the ones that John wrote this letter to were in the middle of controversy. Some had left the church. I'm sure their nerves were frayed, there was discord and bad feelings.

So John reminds them of Joy.

It's easy to lose track of joy when you feel like you're losing. But in Christ you can never lose.

No matter what comes our way we are on the winning team.

Romans 8:31

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

With God on our side, we cannot lose. And even if life doesn't go our way... God has given us eternal life in Christ.

So even if it appears as if we might lose... we win.

I don't know if you will watch the Super Bowl tonight. But let me give you an interesting fact.

Tonight's Super Bowl will be the first in the history of the NFL to be played on one of the team's home field. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers will play the game on their home field.

That makes the Chiefs the AWAY TEAM. And maybe it won't be too much of a disadvantage since there will only be a few thousand in the stadium.

But they still have to travel to a different city while the Buccaneers sleep in their own beds last night. They have practiced in different surroundings. And they will not be quite as familiar with the stadium as the HOME TEAM.

Could make a difference. Could be just what the visiting team needs to get their full attention.

We are no longer the HOME TEAM here in the USA. But maybe that's just what we need to get our attention. The stakes are high.

Eternity is in the balance.

John wrote this letter to remind the christians of one thing... Jesus came for one purpose... FOR THE LOVE of God to be shared with the world.

INVITATION:

Faith, Repentance, Baptism.

_____ is going to lead us into a time of communion.

SGL Questions:

1. What does it mean to “feed the spirit and starve the flesh”?
2. The church has allowed some of our culture to creep into the doctrines of our faith. How do we fight back against this?
3. Read 1 john 4:10 - what are some ways we confuse the true meaning of love?
4. There has been a steady decline in people following the Christian faith. What do you believe to be the cause of this? How can we overcome this current trend?
5. Why is it important to understand that Jesus actually lived as a human (in the flesh)?

6. What do you believe is easier; for people to follow Jesus in person, or for people to follow Jesus through faith? Why?
7. If the enemy only comes to kill, steal, and destroy, why do you believe we have such a hard time giving into those things that the enemy offers?
8. Kionania- Greek for a bond, friendship, fellowship, partnership. Why is it important to have this kind of relationship with other believers?
9. What happens when we disconnect with God and other believers?
10. Psalm 8:31 - what hope do we get from this passage?
- 11.