

1 John 2:3- 29 Sermon Tregear 15.8.2021

Encouragements, Reminders and warnings

One of the highlights of the Olympic Games for me was the Decathlon. That's where each athlete competes in 10 different events over 2 days. Australia had 2 athletes in this event, Cedric Dubler and Ash Moloney. Ash Moloney performed amazingly well and won the bronze medal and his mate Cedric, an older athlete finished last. But you may have seen Cedric in the last event the 1500 metres giving up his chance of a good place in order to urge on Ash to a bronze medal. Their coach is a guy called Eric Brown. He's been coaching them since they were teenagers and been coaching decathletes for 35 years. He couldn't go to the Olympics so he had to send text messages to his 2 athletes during their events. He was encouraging them and urging them on after each of their events, giving them the appropriate advice, reminding them of what he'd told them as they trained all those weeks before.

I couldn't help thinking that this is very much a picture of John here today as he writes to his brothers and sisters. He's most likely an old man at this stage, maybe in exile on Patmos island. But he writes to his brothers and sisters and encourages them, reminding them of the truths he has taught them but also warning them of those who would lead them astray.

So just a quick recap on our key thought last week – John said walk in the light, confess your rebellion against God and God forgives all our sin, past present and future.

Just to remind you, John says I am writing this to you so that you won't sin, that you won't rebel against God. So John proceeds in the next section of his letter to give some encouragements, reminders and warnings.

v.3 – **Keep his commands**. Now this doesn't mean that we are under the law again. No, when we confessed our sin, we were freed from that because of Jesus' death on the cross. But we are now people of the kingdom and as his people we are to follow the King. The key commandment as we will see through this letter is to love; to love like God loves us; to love like Jesus did. And Jesus gives us the blueprint of what keeping his commands will look like in the Sermon on the mount. And then v.6 describes our goal in all this – it's not to obey commands; it's not to be a good person – it's to **live in him**. *Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did*. The Message expresses it this way, *Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived*. Intimacy with God – that's what it's all about. And our supreme example of how to live a life of love is Jesus. So we are to look at Jesus and see how he lived. And John is a witness of this life and so we should listen to John's words as he describes to us what it means to live a life of love as Jesus did.

In v.7 & 8 the new commandment is almost certainly the command to love, love God and love others. John 13:34 – “Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.” Yes, this was in a sense the old commandment because it was there in the Old Testament and also it would have been something that John had mentioned on many occasions. But, remember, there are people that John is writing to who do not acknowledge that Jesus was God, who are leading others

astray in this thinking. John wants to say this is the word from Jesus, the Son of God, who lived it out and showed us a new way to love, by giving up his life on the cross for us. And the last thought in v.8 is again a reference to light and darkness. Jesus' new way of showing love is at the very core of light coming into the world and darkness being overtaken. And we as Jesus' disciples have a part in this as he shines through us.

Then v.9-11 flows quite naturally from these earlier verses. If you say you live in the light then this will show in your actions. You will not want to practice hatred, have an attitude of continuing in hatred towards your brother or sister. Again the ideas of light and darkness are here. As God changes you, you will want to love. You won't want to continue in hating others. You will want to change.

And then we come to v.12-14. He is including some important reminders. I sense that as he's writing v.9-11 there will be some who might be feeling; "Oh no, I have hated my brother. I don't want to do that. I have fixed things with my brother. So am I still walking in the darkness? And so John is saying to these ones but to all of the believers as well. Look I want to remind you, "Your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name. When you repented your sins were forgiven, you've come into the family, you're a child of God."

It's an interesting way John writes here though isn't it. Why does he go through each group? Why not just put it altogether? It's as if he's writing specific things to different groups in the church. There are many ideas about this. Some say he's literally writing to different age groups, but it's strange that if this is the case there's no specific order. Some say he's writing to different groups in respect to their maturity as Christians. In either case it's strange that women are not

mentioned at all. We don't really know but there are some important things here. It's as if he is saying no matter what your age or stage remember, the words "I remind you," (The Message) "I am writing to you to remind you" (NIV) are used; what your present status is in Christ; remember who you are in Christ; what his death has earned for you. Your sins are forgiven; you know him; because of what he has done on the cross you have won a great victory over the Devil; and then again you know him, you know the Father; you know the one who created the earth, who started it all; you have strength because God's word lives in you and this enables you to have the victory over Satan. Don't forget these truths, my children. And that word comes to us today. Don't forget the great victory that Christ has won for us who have responded to his call of repentance. Our sins are forgiven and we are in Christ. Nothing can take us away from Christ.

I read this little quote this week and I think it's so true. Our value to God is not in how little we sin or how much we go to church but in the fact that we are his children and that Jesus has forgiven our sins. Who am I? I am God's beloved, forgiven child, full stop. And don't you forget it.

Another reminder/encouragement, v.15-17. This section seems to not fit in here, seems to be a digression. But we need to remind ourselves that John is making it clear what will be some of the marks of a new life in Christ – people will walk in the light; they will be obeying God's commands, particularly loving God and others. So here, don't love the world. Don't put the things of this world before God. What does he mean by this phrase, "the world" – John does not regard God's created world, the material world itself, as inherently evil; it is people's inclination to follow evil instead of good by worshipping material things (rather than God their creator) which is condemned. It's man's inclination to pursue worldly things

to satisfy their longings or to give them security. John's saying keep following after God. The lusts or temptations of the world are to try and secure security for us in this world. But, as John says in v.17, these things will pass away, they are fleeting. Keep loving God, keeping seeking his will; keep loving like Jesus. God is our master now, not the world.

So let's summarise what we have so far. As God's children obey God's commands, above all his command to love. That means there is no room for hating others. And remember you are God's beloved children, live in the light of that, don't live in the darkness, or follow the ways of the world. Keep following Jesus, the light of the world.

And then some warnings v.18 – 23 – 2 warnings -antichrists are everywhere – they used to belong but now they've shown their true colours (it's a bit like our parable of the wheat and the weeds that we read in Matthew 13 – they look very similar but they're not the real thing. And it will be exposed eventually). So we need to say a word about these antichrists. John is the only one who uses this term in the Bible. From v.18 and 22 it is clear that John is referring to those who in one way or another, were denying the true identity of Jesus and the fact that what Jesus did on the cross saves us. He regards such people as anti-Christian; they are opponents of Jesus and they were leading other people astray. So John talks about there being a number of antichrists. What he is saying is that they have this spirit of opposition to the very core teaching of Christianity which is that Jesus is the Son of God, not created, but equal with the Father and the Spirit and he came to earth as a human being, took on our nature in order that he might be the sin-offering for us.

John indicates in v.19 that these people left the church of their own accord, they weren't chucked out. But in doing this they showed that they had never belonged in the first place. So possibly there is some anxiety amongst the remaining members. What's happened to those who left us? Where do they stand with God? So John has a word of encouragement for them. Yes, there are some who have left us. Note that he uses the word "us". This seems to be the first definite indication that John had been very much a part of the group that he's writing to. So in v.20 – But don't you worry – you belong, "you have an anointing from the Holy One" (Is this Jesus? The Holy Spirit? I don't think it really matters – it's God) so you have an anointing from God AND you know the truth. One thing that comes out of this – if we are truly seeking God as his people, if we are seeking wisdom, God will reveal the truth. And John is writing to remind them of the truth. There are some who also say that the anointing refers to the right understanding of God's word. If we have the Spirit in our lives, the Spirit will lead us into the truth, and give us true understanding of his word.

So John's saying - Don't be anxious – no one can take you from God.

So this second warning occurs here in v.22-23 – which ties in with what was said in v.18 about antichrists – people who deny that Jesus is divine, that he really was God, that he was both Messiah and God. by denying this, they are also denying God the Father as well as God the Son. But there were also those who emphasized that Jesus was just divine, he wasn't a real human. This would've probably come from the Gentiles who had come from pagan religions that had these sort of ideas in their teaching. So why is this important? You'll notice if you look at various cults and also other religions that a crucial difference is how they view Jesus. Muslims say that Jesus is one of the 5 most important prophets, but he is not the Son of

God and he didn't die on the cross or rise again. Mormons say that Jesus is kind of on a higher rung than us seeking to become like God, but he is not God. He's just better than us. Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe in the Trinity. They believe that Jesus was created by God, so Jesus is just a created being.

If Jesus wasn't truly human and wasn't truly God at the same time then what he did on the cross does not save us. So this is central to our faith and how we understand Jesus.

So the final encouragements for today in v.24-27 – again reminders. John says Let the original message sink deep into your lives, deep into your hearts. The NIV states: *“As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning **remains in you**. If it does, you also will **remain** in the Son and the Father.”* The Message states it like this: *Stay with what you heard from the beginning, the original message. Let it **sink into your life**.”* I like that thought, let it sink into your life. We cannot lose our salvation. Once we are God's child he will never let us go. But John is reminding the Christians to whom he is writing, KEEP THESE TRUTHS that I've been reminding you of, to walk in the light of Jesus, to love, to obey God's commands, to not love the world. Stay on the path.

Did you notice in v.24-27 three times John uses the phrase “remain in him.” Yes, you've got these guys with wrong ideas about Jesus around you. But don't worry, you hang on to the truth. Make sure you hang on to the truths I've taught you and that the Holy Spirit is confirming in your lives. Remain in them. Remember, v.27, the anointing you received, that is, I think, of the Holy Spirit, remains in you and you do not need anyone to teach you. In other words, the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth as Jesus promised, and this truth will be the right understanding

of God's word, as John would have taught them in earlier days. So remain in Him, remain in Jesus. John is using the words of Jesus in John 15 (his gospel) you remember the picture of the vine. Jesus said I am the vine and you are the branches. Remain in me. Keep drawing strength and nourishment from me. And John has been saying in v.27, "remain in him". And repeats again in v.28 – "continue in Him" – or as The Message says, "Live deeply in Christ". This is the message for us today my brothers and sisters. Remain in Christ, continue in him. "v.27 – the anointing you received remains in you, no one can take that away. You are God's child.

Two things we've seen in John's letter so far – these are warnings and encouragements. Warnings for those who have not accepted Christ and still in rebellion. And there are plenty of encouragements for those who are believers. John has strong words for the rebellious but gentle words for the believers, encouraging them to stay on track, keep on going the way you are. Don't forget who you are in Christ. He's telling the true brothers and sisters , "Keep loving." Keep trying to be patient. Keep trying to display the fruits of the Spirit in your life. It's going to be really hard because you still live in the flesh but keep going and if you fall down don't worry because the good shepherd walks beside you. Remain in him and even though you stumble he won't let you fall headlong, just get up dust yourself off and keep going. It'll be a good thing. It's good for you, it's good for the people around you, it brings glory to our heavenly Father. If you fail don't panic. Remember that you are his child, NO ONE can take you away from God. But let's also, like John, encourage each other to remain in Christ.

And that's my encouragement to us this morning, brothers and sisters. Remain in him; keep remembering who you are in Christ. Don't be led astray with false teachings about Jesus. He is truly the Son of God come in complete human form. And by his death on the cross, the sin problem is solved by God and those who believe and trust in Jesus are forgiven. Keep in God's word, keep growing in intimacy with God. Keep walking in his light.