

Bethel Christian Church

See How the Father Loves Us

Studies in 1 John

Study 2

God's Goal, Communion & Joy

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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-- 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-- 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.

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

(1 John 1:1-4)

The two great outcomes in John's proclamation of the Gospel are communion (fellowship) and joy. But not just a human fellowship and a human joy polished up a little. The staggering reality gripping John's heart is the substance and scope of this communion and joy. John is aware that sinners, even those saved by grace have the propensity to under estimate the wonder of the Father's love (See the spirit of his injunction in 3:1). His desire is that we take stock of the revelation God has made of himself in his Son.

One of the subtle lies propagated by the serpent from the beginning has been that knowing God means analysing information about God. What do we mean? It is clear in the Scriptures that God speaks continually to his creation and His word is not separate from his presence.

The evil one constantly attempts to separate the word of God from the presence of God in the thinking of humanity. Then he can get us relating to 'a' word about God not the word 'of' God. Hence his guile to Eve, "Did God actually say?" Get human beings analysing the word of God as if they are above it and in control of what it means and you get religion not trust. This religion has a club mentality rather than fellowship and contractual relating in the place of communion. When the first pair sinned it was not against a book placed at the bottom of the garden. God's word is not a self standing 'word'. He was with them and spoke to them. His presence and communication was their only source of life, light and love in the universe. Their rebellion was against and in the face of the only one who was giving them this light, love and life.

Discuss: There are many self standing 'words' in our culture that promise life, light and love. The New Age movement, the 'health' and 'healing' industry, all manner of cults seek to establish a word that will restore. In the light of Genesis 3 why are these movements so appealing?

Jesus the Word of Life

Similar to his Gospel John begins his first letter with a revelation of Jesus of Nazareth as the 'Word of life'; the word about the life the Father; The word that communicates the life of the Father to us. The Son had always been with the Father, so he is the one most qualified to explain life with the Father. He was '*from the beginning*'. Go back as far as you like and the Son has always been the final word about the Father (Cf. John 1:1f). However, John makes

the astounding claim that the eternal Son was now Jesus of Nazareth and was now explaining God on our turf and through human perceptions and comprehension.

Now the life, love and light of God were clear. All human speculation and self standing words about God and how to please God were made redundant. An unveiling had occurred *before their very eyes*; one which their *hands had touched*. While the mystery of God's magnificence had deepened with the Son's coming in flesh, the mystery of his holy Fatherly love for his children was laid bare. We will see later that this love is directly related to the mystery of holiness exposed in the cross (chapter four). We must always remember this in order to avoid romantic or sentimental pagan ideas pressed upon when love is disconnected from the cross. The life that Jesus brought to John had pressed through their deadness and confusion. It found no good 'potential', no good 'inner heart' only deadness towards the Father Jesus knew. Had it not been for the determination of God to unveil Himself and communicate his love, light and life they would have remained dead to it all.

The Gnostic teachings which abounded in John's world saw Jesus as just another piece of the puzzle of religion, just another step of man towards God: Another step in man's glorious movement towards God. Their assumption was that humanity was already on the path to glory and simply needed help on the way. Their arrogance was that they felt no incarnation of the Son was required, only special knowledge achieved by man. Some teachings today concerning the Holy Spirit and his 'special' revelations border on the same error.

Salvation is Fellowship with the Father, the Son and their Family

The manifestation of life, love and light brought by Christ is not first and foremost information, it is a relationship, communion with the Father and all who love him. Salvation is not simply friendship with God it is communion with the Father in Christ and like Christ. When the prodigal, in Jesus story, returned home he was not simply received as a friend. A friend may live in an outhouse on the property, or down the street a way. The son's live in the Father's home. Hence the tragedy of the elder brother's rebellion is deepened when he, '*wouldn't go in*' when his brother returned.

John's emphasis that the man Jesus Christ is now in communion with the Father, at home with him means that all who are in Christ, those who have received his gospel are there in that same home with him. John finishes this introduction with enthusiastic delight.

Communion with the Father is deep joy

In his book, The Great Divorce, C S Lewis pictures the lost in an accelerated flight from each other. They live in what he calls grey town where everyone moves apart and relationships disintegrate. John is speaking of the reversal of living in grey town. In Christ the joy of living with him with the Father creates every strengthening human relationship. The fruit of this is true joy. It is the very joy that the Son and the Father have in each others presence. So Jesus said that his gift to us was his actual joy.

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full (John 15:11).

The life, love and light of the Father creates nothing less than a joy fest. Actually the joy fest has existed from the beginning. The Father always enjoys the Son. The Son delights in being the Son of the Father. The Son delights in being the Bridegroom of his Bride. Now we too enter this joy fest as we delight to be the possession of the Son.

The old pagan word for happiness and joy meant being under the protection of good demons. The word the Apostles used means having a sense of God's approval which rests upon his holy love. When John felt this he knew he was experiencing what Jesus experienced.

All the things Jesus had from his Father which filled him with joy he makes clear and true for us.

As the joy of Christ could not be extinguished even by the curse and fire of Calvary, so his joy we now share in is good for good.