

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Friday, August 14, 2020



From 1 John 5

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

This is a portion of the scripture text for this Sunday's sermon. We have been working our way through First John all summer long and now we are beginning the final chapter.

I have been contemplating the text for the better part of this week, as preachers tend to do the week prior to the delivery of a sermon. It seems such a simple text, but like a beautiful, freshly-pulled-from-the-stream-trout it eludes me and slips out of my hands just as I think I have finally got it.

I checked with my good friend, John Calvin for help and here is what he had to offer regarding this slippery fish of a passage:

But we must notice that the apostle is not speaking only of believers and passing over those who are [outside of the church], as if only the former are to be loved and we should have no care or thought of the rest. But by this elementary lesson, so to say, he teaches us to love all without exception when he bids us make a beginning with the godly.

Calvin makes a good point here and it has helped: It is a daunting assignment to love everybody. We hear such talk from the scriptures and especially from this epistle and we might wonder just how feasible is it really? How can we ever love everybody? It seems the toughest challenge of the gospel message.

John here is encouraging us to start with the church. It is here, with the others of the church, that we learn and re-learn and constantly re-taught to love one another. The church now and always is composed of people that we have not hand-picked but have been given to us. This congregation to which we belong has been given to us as a place to practice that challenge to love all. Here we take our first, baby-like steps in learning to love not as the world loves, but as Christ teaches us to love.

I like how Eugene Peterson, late Presbyterian minister, once summed it up:

Church is the workshop for turning knowledge into wisdom, becoming what we know.

We know that we have been called to "love one another"; it is the church that is our workshop, our classroom, for learning this very thing about ourselves and the rest of the world and for "becoming what we know."

Prayer for the Day: (From *Daily Feast: Year B*)

May I show forth your loving presence to friends and strangers alike. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Ankrum
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Greensburg, Pennsylvania
(Saturday's Devotion can be found below)

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Saturday, August 15, 2020



From 1 John 5

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the second half of the preaching text for Sunday. You might recall that we covered the first half of it in yesterday's devotional.

This time I did not spend as much time ruminating over the text but went straight to my beloved John Calvin for help. The old reformer did not disappoint:

To the love of God [John] joins the observance of the Law; and justly, for when we love God as our Father and Lord, reverence must of necessity be joined with love. Moreover, God cannot be separated from Himself. Since therefore, He is the fountain of all righteousness and uprightness, he who loves Him must necessarily have his mind sent to the obedience of righteousness. The love of God is no idle thing.

Alright, so there is a lot there, I admit it. But the point I would like you to see is Calvin's conclusion. He does a nice job of leading up to that point, informing us that the writer of the epistle knew what he was doing when he was merging the concepts of love for God and being cognizant of the call of God to do what is good. Calvin loves this about the writer of the epistle; we get that.

But it is that conclusion that captured my thinking and even a bit of my imagination: **The love of God is no idle thing.** We are not called to merely contemplate the goodness of God and then dissolve into a puddle of inwardly enlightened, do-nothings. We are called to take that love of God and become active in this world; to seek what is the right and the just and the gracious thing to do in all our endeavors. We are called out of our self-imposed and often-preferred isolations from others and empowered to walk out into this world as the bearers of God's love to the world -- to risk in the pursuit of faithfully following the One for whom we profess such love.

Now, I think I am finally ready to write that sermon ...

Prayer for the Day: (From *Daily Feast: Year B*) (Same as yesterday's ...)

May I show forth your loving presence to friends and strangers alike. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Ankrum
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