

Christ: Do You Know Him?

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Preacher: Andy Pyrch

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

And then we'll start reading God's word together. 1 John 2, verses 1-6.

1 John 3, verses 1-6.

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1 John 3, verses 1-6. 1 John 3, verses 2-6. 1 John 3, verses 1-7. 1 John 3, verses 1-7. Amen. This week, we kind of had a big week as a family. We welcomed a new baby into our family.

And yeah, yeah. And as we did, yep, not clapping for me. I did nothing. I did drive to the hospital. So that was a big achievement, driving to the hospital.

But as I was welcoming this new baby into our family, I was reflecting on what I've done well as a parent and what I've done poorly as a parent. And I'll let you choose which column this falls in.

I was reflecting on the fact that I taught my youngest or my oldest to drive before he was three.

Now, before anyone gets really nervous, I taught him to drive in Alabama, where the road in front of our house wasn't paved, had very little traffic. And as I was teaching him to drive, sitting on my lap, I told him two things. Just keep it out of the ditches. Don't fall into the ditch on the right.

[3 : 15] Don't fall into the ditch on the left. You might have heard something very similar when you learned how to drive, whether that was at two or 12 or 16. Keep it in between the lines is another famous phrase.

But as I was teaching him how to drive, I wanted him to focus on what was ahead and not worry about what was on the left and what was on the right. First John has that same singular focus.

But when you enter into the conversation, what do you do with this thing that is sin? Oftentimes, Christians can deviate and fall and slide into the ditch on the right or slide in the ditch on the left.

And John knows this. And he's saying to these Christians, hey, sin is a big deal. But don't think that you have no sin. He talked about that in 1 John.

And don't think that as you slide into the ditch on the right, that sin doesn't matter at all. So as a Christian, that message is still pertinent to us today.

[4 : 19] We need to be concerned about sin. But we can't slide into either of those ditches. And as we look at the Christian life this morning, let's be mindful of those two ditches.

And as we do, John's going to tell us a couple things. The first one is what Jesus does. And the other is what we do. That's not to make them equitable or even.

But we do something. But Jesus does something. So first, we're going to look at what Jesus does in this passage. Let's look back at verse 1.

He starts out with this phrase, my little children. Now, I'm sure nobody remembers this past summer, the last time you looked at 1 John. But John has a very different tone to start out for the first chapter of 1 John.

He's kind of railing against them. He's giving them the business. And then he comes back and he says, my little children. Imagine going from yelling to speaking tenderly.

[5 : 18] Or whisper yelling is probably more accurate. To speaking very tenderly and calling them my little children. It represents a shift in his tone. Because he's addressing, if you remember, all these bad ideas that are in the church, are floating around in the day, or even had invaded some of the hearts of some of the people he's writing to.

And it was this idea that sin doesn't matter. If you're a Christian, you don't have any sin at all. Now, let that sink in. If you're a Christian, you don't have any sin at all.

And John says, no. That's not the case at all. I mean, can you imagine if we said that if you're a Christian, you don't have sin anymore at all?

The wheels in your mind might start turning and saying, uh-oh, I'm in trouble. Because I realize, even though if I put my faith in Jesus, I'm still struggling with sin myself.

So what do I do? If they're saying I shouldn't have sin anymore at all, what do I do? And then the next step is, oh yeah, man.

[6 : 23] If that's the case, I'm just so discouraged I'm going to give up. John's saying something different. He's saying this, that Jesus is not only an advocate before the Father because you do sin, but Jesus has paid the penalty for your sin, for the sin of anybody that's going to believe in him.

So we're going to look at that in kind of two headings. Jesus as an advocate and Jesus as the atonement. That second part of verse one, right after my little children, he says, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

Now that's even more confusing if we're saying, hey, if you're a Christian, you should flee from sin, but you're still going to have it. John's saying very clearly that Jesus is this advocate before the Father.

He says that, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate before the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. Jesus Christ, I think we all have a good idea of what an advocate is, but let's just review that for a second.

It's a little bit more than being really, really interested in something. I can be really, really interested in astronomy. If I get out my telescope and look at the night sky, I can be really, really interested at baseball.

[7 : 38] If I follow all the baseball games in the playoffs, I can be really, really interested in dogs or Legos or Pokemon or whatever. But an advocate is somebody who has a big interest and then takes action on behalf of that interest.

So Jesus is not just interested in us as people, as an academic exercise or even compassion. He takes steps for our good because he's not just simply interested in our outcome.

That's why John calls him an advocate. An advocate, not just generally, but before the Father.

That's not the only picture that we have of Jesus as an advocate before the Father.

Listen to this. Paul describes Jesus as an advocate interceding for us in Romans 8. He says this, Who will bring a charge against God's elect?

God is the one who justifies and asks again, Who shall condemn the Christian? It is Christ Jesus. It is he who died, yes, rather raised, who is at the right hand of God the Father, who also intercedes for us.

[8 : 50] So here we have this picture of a courtroom, interceding on behalf of the person that's the defendant. The charge is coming against that person, and he's interceding before someone who's an authority.

That's not the only picture we have of Jesus as an advocate. Think of Hebrews. It's Jesus who's interceding, bringing the cares and concerns of his people before the Father.

That's who Jesus is, and that's what he does on our behalf. He's an advocate interceding for us. But why does he do that?

How does he have standing to intercede before the Father for us? It's because he is the atonement. He is the one who's doing the atoning work on our behalf.

Now that's just a really fancy word, and John uses an even fancier word, propitiation, for canceling the debt of our sin. Look in verse 2 with me.

[9 : 50] He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the world. He has canceled the debt for our sin. He has paid it with his own blood by giving up his life, the righteous for us, the unrighteous.

And so that charge stands no more. That's how Jesus can intercede. That's how he can advocate before the Father for us. There's a French theologian who described it this way.

It's kind of wordy, but he says this. There's great force in this word, propitiation. For in a manner which cannot be expressed, God at the very time when he loved us was hostile to us until we were reconciled in Christ.

Now that word is so interconnected in all of the Bible, atonement. When we hear it, it might not jog our memories. It might not cause us to have flashbacks.

But for an audience like this, for people that heard this, read this, it did. And this is what it looked like. It's kind of like in those Marvel movies where you see those flashbacks, and you see the whole timeline come to fruition.

[11:06] And that timeline looks like this. It looks like the temple. It looks like sacrifices. All of those things are jogging the memories of these readers.

It's things that were once dirty, made clean, made right before God. It's pictures of Abraham, and at the last second, not his son being sacrificed, but a lamb.

It's sheep being led to the slaughter. Not because the sheep are guilty, but because of another. All the way to Christ, the one who is righteous, dying for the unrighteous.

When we hear that word, that's what we should think of, because that's what the readers thought of. It's a word with baggage. It's coming in with all these other meanings, but finding their fulfillment in what Jesus has done.

That's what atonement means. That's what the sacrifice, or John uses the shorthand version, of the blood, to mean all of that. Jesus.

[12:09] Jesus' blood means all of that. All right. There's an interesting phrase in here, though, that probably a lot of our minds go straight to in verse two.

But also for the sins of the whole world. Okay. Let's buckle up. Let's put our big boy pants on as we kind of like try to figure out what's going on here.

Because some people can come to this text and say, surely that means everyone at all time forever is forgiven. And it could mean that. But if you look at the context most specifically, and then more broadly what John does, we're going to try to see if that's right.

Now, some have come to that text and said, hey, based on that, everyone is saved. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether you have faith in Christ. It doesn't matter whether you believe the gospel.

That Christ has died for that. And that is applied to you whether you believe it or not. Whether you trust in it or not. If you look at the context of what John is saying, remember, he's calling them his children.

[13:20] He's talking to those who have faith in Christ. He says something a little bit different than that. He's saying, even if you think, you skip down a couple chapters or even a couple verses, he's really concerned with what?

Walking in holiness and believing the gospel. If he's so concerned with those things, it surely cannot mean that. John will even say later that some will not have eternal life because they do not have the Father because they deny the Son.

Think about that immediate context. That if we keep his word, we walk in him, we abide in him, that wouldn't matter if we took the former.

So what is John saying? John is saying this, that it matters if you have faith in Jesus, but it doesn't matter what you look like, where you come from.

It doesn't matter if you're a Jew or Gentile, male, female, or a child. All types of people can come to him. All types of people.

[14:34] Jew or Greek. The blood of Christ is for you. The blood of Christ is for Rahab and Abraham. It's for the judges, even the really bad judges.

The blood of Christ is for them. There's power in the blood for the mighty kings and peasant girls, for fishermen, for those that would walk with Jesus and those of us that come after him.

The blood is there for all of them. It means the whole world, all kinds of people during all times can come to Christ.

The gospel is not just for them and it's not just for us. It's for all kinds of people. That's what he means. That's a good reminder for us that the gospel is not just for us at Shine Mountain.

It's not for us just in the springs. It's not just for those of us that are Americans. It's not even for those of us who have good theology and think all the right things.

[15:38] The gospel is for all people. The power is not in our right thinking, in our right living. The power is in what Christ has done and it applies to all of us at all times.

That's a good reminder to us, especially as Presbyterians, because we can sometimes think, if I think this way, even if it is biblical, even if it is right, that's what saves me.

No. Christ is what saves you because you don't bring anything to the table except your own sin. That's what John is talking about.

We are pardoned by blood that does not discriminate. We are pardoned by blood that is bought. We are bought by Christ.

We must be reminded of that. I've spent a lot of time over the last couple months in courtrooms, which is an interesting comparison because I'm not a lawyer.

[16 : 42] I don't know if you are, but I've seen some TV shows about lawyers. And the thing that makes lawyers powerful is not what they look like, although that can be a factor, but I've spent a lot of time with some people that I work with in courtrooms.

And as I have, I've gotten to watch different lawyers and their different tactics. What happens at different kind of hearing? I'm not even going to act like I know everything that happens, but it's fascinating nonetheless, especially when you come to this idea in Scripture that Jesus is interceding before a judge.

on our behalf. And the most interesting one was when a man who was in an orange jumpsuit, so clearly not a lawyer, interceded on his own behalf.

And he was powerful, not because he was wearing the orange Crocs and orange jumpsuit, and not because he was wearing a fine suit. He was powerful because of his argument.

It's the same thing with Jesus here. The argument that Jesus makes is powerful before the Father because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. And we should rest in that.

[17 : 55] Because all of us face this question of what to do with our sin. If we believe the ideas that are swirling around in John's time that says, we don't sin at all, we err.

If we believe some of the lies that we hear in our modern day that say, yeah, it's okay. It's okay if you sin. We err in another way. We all have to deal with our own sin, but the gospel gives us good and gracious news.

It gives us confidence because we have an advocate before the Father who pleads on our behalf because of what he has done. That's what John is telling us.

So what do we do in response to that? One, we should worship him. We should be thankful for what Christ has done. We should go to him again and again with our cares because our temptation is to shrink back and say, Jesus surely can't understand what I'm thinking or going through.

But the irony in that is Christ has and he's come out the other side perfect, but he's still compassionate towards us. So we must worship him and go to him so that he can intercede and advocate before the Father on our behalf.

[19 : 15] What else? We should be prompted to tell others about this. If there is truly goodness in what has happened, what has been done on our behalf, we should be prompted to tell others, the people that we work with, the people in our homes, even small children, those awkward family relationships where there's a cost to be lost.

Something that's surely not going to be gained by me telling others about Christ. I have to use my words. I have to point to him and say, my life is better because of Christ.

Not simply that, my life has been changed that I have confidence as I walk because of what Christ has done. That should be our response to Jesus and what he has done in our lives.

But what do we do? We talked about what Jesus does, but what do we do? Look with me at the text. Look at verse 3. And by this, we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Knowing him is not some secret formula or secret handshake or a secret knowledge, but it's a relationship with Christ.

[20 : 40] A relationship, and John talked about this earlier, that if we have fellowship with him, if we have fellowship with God, we know that if we have fellowship, and he kind of circles back to this idea.

Thankfully, we've had some time off from 1 John because 1 John has a couple themes, and all he does is just repeat them over and over, which kind of seems boring if you think about it.

But then, if you realize that as humans, how many times, even in the Gospel of Mark, have we seen the same thing over and over again, just packaged in a different way with different people?

And one of those themes is having fellowship with God. And John returns to it again. He says, if we have fellowship with God, we can know that. How?

If we know that we keep his commandments. It's important that we remind ourselves when we talk about this that it's not prescriptive, but it's instead descriptive.

[21 : 37] I don't know God because I keep his commandments. I know God and in response, I keep his commandments. Those might seem very similar, but they're very different.

And as we approach Reformation Day, that's something that Luther reminds us of. John's not saying keep the commandments and you'll have a relationship with God.

He's saying, if you have a heart that's changed by what God has done, what Christ has done on your behalf, then we will live out of that. And joyful obedience will keep his commandments.

Jesus says this another way, that a tree is known by its fruit or even another. John says that obedience or somebody writing about, paraphrasing what John has said, he said, obedience contributes to our assurance that we know that we are in Christ because my heart is changed and I want to follow after him.

I want to do what he loves and I want to do what he's told me to do. I don't know about you but when I hear that, when I see this in this text, I go, uh oh.

[22 : 47] What about me? Because I don't obey perfectly. What am I to do now when I see that I don't keep his commandments? Not even for a nanosecond. Does that mean I'm truly a Christian?

Let's revisit something that John's told us in chapter one. He said, if you say that you have no sin, you deceive yourself. Okay, I got that part. I got sin. So, how do I know that I'm a Christian?

There's evidence of knowing and loving God and desiring and having some success year after year, week after week, maybe even day after day in growing of my ability to keep the commandments, of my joyful obedience to his word.

Yes, there will be mountains and valleys in that. Yes, there will be times when I fail and fail big. But, year after year, that's what it looks like.

Remember, John is writing to this group of Christians that's interacting with these ideas that say, there is no sin or sin doesn't matter. And those keep coming up. They're kind of lies from the first chapter.

[23 : 59] And John re-kind of packages one of those lies here in verse four. He says, whoever says, I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.

He says, if you have no care for bringing honor to Christ, you need to question if you actually have faith in Christ. He goes on to correct this way of thinking in verse five.

He says, but whoever keeps his word in him, truly, the love of God is perfected. And by this, we may know that we are in him. He's reframing what we've already heard in verse three.

He says, what does a Christian do? It looks like this. He keeps his commandments and in doing so demonstrates the love that we have for Christ.

The love that we have for the gospel and that God is working in our hearts. That he is at work in our lives. Jesus says this another way. What does he say to his disciples?

[25 : 00] If you love me, keep my commandments. John's re-addressing some of these challenges that this church was facing in a number of churches. Instead of knowing God, they were saying they abided with him, that they lived in him, but they had no concern for what God has concern for.

Instead, one who is a follower of Christ has a relationship with him, lives with him, loves what he loves. Today, if you love the good news of Jesus, our lives should look like what God has called us to.

A concern for his commandments, a love for his word, a love for what is holy. Why? Because it brings honor to God and it shows that there's a transforming power at work.

the only reason that we would love those things that are lovely to him is because we see with new eyes because of our faith in Christ. That that message has changed our heart from the inside out.

It's not a rote obedience, but instead, a love for God that begins internally. That's really hard to see the difference sometimes.

[26 : 21] It might look a little different. My obedience to God's word because of a transformed life might look the same as somebody who just follows this list of rules.

In Colorado Springs, every September, we have this event, the hot air balloon launch. It's pretty magical. I hate to use that word, but it's really cool. And when you see all those balloons lift off, especially at nighttime, what makes that hot air balloon different though than if I put a turkey fryer underneath a plastic bag.

It has heat, has a little bit of fire sometimes, and it has something that can provide some amount of lift. Now that seems ridiculous, right? When we approach God's word, when we approach his call to obey his commandments, it can seem like those are the same thing.

But in fact, the world's apart. A transformed heart that lives in obedience to the commandments because of the gospel looks fundamentally different.

It feels fundamentally different internally than one that says, I'm doing these things because I'm earning the Lord's favor. We have to stay away.

[27 : 39] We have to be on guard against that. But Christ, but the Lord, nonetheless, has called us to love him and obey his commandments. And that's the challenge for us as Christians.

So we are called to examine our own hearts and to see if we're following after Christ because of a transformed life? Or do I think in the deep recesses of my mind and heart that in fact, I am making myself more lovely to Christ because brothers and sisters, that can never happen.

You are altogether lovely because of what Christ has done, not because of anything that you do or fail to do. We are lovely because Christ has seen us as lovely because Christ has given of his own life.

So we are called to look inwardly, look in our own hearts and see if that has happened. To see if we live out of that or do we live out of just a mere obedience because we view the Lord as a taskmaster instead of a joyful father who looks on us as we are clothed with Christ.

Look today at your own heart. Do I follow after Christ? Do I love him? And do I love him and do I share that love with others?

[29 : 16] Is my heart overflowing because of what he has done? Am I seeking out opportunities to advance his kingdom? Whether that's in my own home, my own neighborhood, or where I work?

Sadly, too often, the answer is no. But today, look to Christ. Look to share that love with others because of what he has done for you and those around you.

No matter what your life looks like, no matter where you've come from or where you're going, Christ calls you to himself and calls others to himself.

Let's pray. Lord, we're thankful this day of the good news of Christ. We're thankful that if we walk in the way that you have called us, we pray that you might fit us for the task because without your spirit, without your transforming power, it's impossible.

We pray that you would allow us to look in our hearts and confirm that it's true. And Father, that we would be assured of your work in our lives, that we'd be encouraged by what Christ has done.

[30 : 37] And Father, that we would be prompted to go out and share that with others. Father, we pray that as we follow Christ, that we would flee from sin and that we would be reminded that our sin is remembered no more.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand as we sing our closing hymn this morning.