

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

OCTOBER 7 - 11, 2019

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

SERMON SERIES 9/8 - 11/24



MONDAY

1 John 2:28-3:2; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Have you ever heard this from another who self-describes as “spiritual” or “good”: “I don’t like organized religion—I have my own relationship with God.”

A generally effective way of responding, unexpected while also meeting others where they are, is the sincere reply, “Neither do I. In fact, I’m not religious at all and have little use for religion.” You might follow with, “And I don’t know what relationship you have with God, but I know what relationship He seeks: not one that is religious, merit-based and legal, but a *personal* relationship. **Jesus came not to establish a religion, but a family.**” Today’s featured 1 John text reinforces this—notice that the word “children” is used three times by John in its four verses. God calls us into family relationship with Him in Christ (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Of course, there are all types of families. Some are tight-knit, others not. Some seem to embrace an almost militant, exclusionary “us against the world” posture; others are hardly recognizable as a unit. But God’s family is the model that all families should aspire to. Like children, we need to recognize our total dependence upon our Father, grateful that He has adopted us (Mark 10:14-15). The focus of God’s family is rightly “vertical,” God-facing. Proper vertical emphasis then fuels a godly “horizontal” course, one of inter-dependence with and love for our brothers and sisters, which is Paul’s theme in today’s 1 Corinthians reading.

However, our horizontal emphasis isn't limited to Christian family members, but extends also to those living apart from Christ. Therefore, Jesus proclaimed, *"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners"* (Luke 5:32). Thus His "Great Commission"—which is not a "great suggestion," but a command—to *"go and make disciples of all nations"* (Matthew 28:19). We are not to huddle in a "Christian bubble" like the ancient monks, but we are called to be *"in the world, while not of the world"* (John 17:14-16, paraphrased).

Back to those with the "organized religion" hang-up. Talk to them about family. Tell them that Father God is building a family. Those who reject Jesus Christ choose a life (and eternity) apart from God and His family.

QUESTIONS

What are the differences between "organized religion" and true Christianity? What's the connection between proper "vertical" and "horizontal" orientations in our relationship with God? How far are we to extend our "horizontal emphasis"?

PRAYERS FOR GIZEM

Pray for Gizem, as she serves in Turkey with AKÜH, affiliated with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), the same network as InterVarsity. The ministry equips and encourages students to reach out to peers. Gizem's role requires her to connect with students, serve in a local church, and minister to the youth of the broader church community.

TUESDAY

1 John 3:2-3; Psalm 24:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:20

In 1 John 3:2-3, the Apostle John features some strange imagery: “... *what we will be has not yet been made known. But ... when Christ appears, we shall be like Him as He is. ... [purified] just as He is pure*” (NIV). We’ll consider Jesus’ return Friday, but let’s explore these verses considering the process God uses to make His children more Christ-like.

Glenkirk’s September 11 devo addressed justification and the September 13 devo considered sanctification, both relevant to 1 John 3:2-3. You can find these, and all archived Glenkirk weekly devotions, at Glenkirk’s site (www.glenkirkchurch.org/devotions). In summary, the steps in Christian redemption are justification → sanctification → glorification.

Justification deems Christ followers “innocent” because Jesus stood in for us on Calvary’s cross, taking our rightful punishment. However, God’s justification in Christ surpasses even this: we’re not only “innocent,” but in Christ, God sees us possessing Jesus’ supreme merit and standing. Note that *God sees us this way*; we’re not to see ourselves as such, lest we project the self-righteous, judgmental hypocrisy that critics often assign to Christians.

Sanctification is the process God uses to “clean us up,” shaping us continually into Christ’s image through trials, prayer, worship, teaching, study, fellowship, service, sacrifice, etc. We are thereby a special people

and family called to be set apart, resisting the world's sinfulness. The final stage, *glorification*, is where “*we shall be like Him*” (1 John 3:2)—more on this in Friday's devo.

Yesterday we emphasized God's family and our standing as His children. As Psalm 24:1 indicates, however, everything—including all people—is God's, our Creator. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 6:20 that Christ also purchased those of us who are in God's family. So, we are God's twice over—first as part of His creation, second as those redeemed by Jesus. We should be joyful and grateful as His adopted children, yet with such privilege comes the responsibility of those saved and possessed by God.

I wish I could claim that I always act as God's own, grateful and faithful accordingly. I yearn for Christ's return and the accompanying state of “being like Him”! But I'm reminded regularly of how far I am from that glorious promise.

QUESTIONS

What are the names of the three broad classifications in the process that God uses to make His children more Christ-like? How do justification and sanctification work? What does “we are God's twice over” mean?

PRAYERS FOR GIZEM

Pray for deeper relationships with the IFES students whom Gizem met in the summer project. Pray that they would open their hearts to the Lord, and that together they are able to reach even more students through outreach and programs.

WEDNESDAY

1 John 2:28; John 15:4-5; James 2:14-18

In 1 John 2:28, the Apostle John quietly packs a wallop. Depending upon your Bible translation, the first verb is likely either “abide” or “remain”—I find “abide” richer. “To ‘abide’ is to live, continue, or remain ... When a person is saved, he or she is ... ‘in Christ.’ ... *Abiding in Christ* pictures an intimate, close relationship, and not just a superficial acquaintance.” (GotQuestions.org) When using a favorite expression of his, “*in Christ*” (i.e., Romans 8:1), Paul is talking about abiding.

The verse’s second part, “*so that ... we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His [second] coming*” (ESV), is convicting. I’ve pondered, “What if Christ should return while I am sinning or have unrepentant sin? How would I feel?” John answers, “Ashamed!” I don’t want to feel that way in Christ’s presence. But wait! Jesus is with us always (Matthew 28:20), so why should I limit such concern to His return? Sinning—putting myself on God’s throne while displacing Him—is always shameful, which is among the reasons for avoiding it.

The text in 2 Peter 1:10 parallels this week’s 1 John text with its admonition to be “*diligent to make your call and election sure*” (NKJV). Lest one interpret this to mean “saved by works,” remember Jesus’ related observation (paraphrased), “*You know a tree by its fruit*” (Luke 6:43). Here’s a summary of a related, key theme from James’ epistle: We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. Or, said differently, we are not saved *by* good works, but *for* good works.

“One of the proofs of salvation is perseverance ... The saved will continue in their walk with Christ ... [and] bring forth much fruit to the glory of God.” (GotQuestions.org) Paul’s epistles use similar references; e.g., “run [the race] to win!” (1 Corinthians 9:24, NLT) and “fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7, paraphrased).

There are three common conditions: (1) walking faithfully; (2) saved, but temporarily separated from God by unrepentant sin; or (3) lost, alienated from God. Hopefully, none of us are in the third state. Walking faithfully is the goal, glorifying God and bearing fruit by abiding in Christ.

QUESTIONS

What does “abiding in Christ” mean? How does it relate to Paul’s expression “in Christ”? What’s the critical difference between being “saved for good works” vs. “saved by good works”?

PRAYERS FOR GIZEM

Pray for the young people whom Gizem met during the Face-to-Face conference, that they desire to serve enthusiastically with their hearts so that each person will notice the Lord’s call for them and fill a void in their church.

THURSDAY

1 John 3:4-10; Romans 1:18-25

How do you say “thank you” to someone? How do you show someone that you love them? The closer you are to someone, the more you want to do something that brings them pleasure. The last thing you want to do is something that causes them pain.

The old saying is: “Insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results.” In his book, *Eternity Is Now in Session*, John Ortberg quotes Dr. Vincent Felitti as he was discussing addiction: “It is hard to get enough of something that ‘almost works.’ What we call addiction the Bible calls an idol. Alcohol almost works—until it doesn’t. The same goes for success. Or money. Or comfort. Or any of the other glittering things we want to put on our bucket lists that still go by the old name of idols.”

When we seek something other than God to fulfill us, to provide for us, to give us life, that thing can become an idol, a sin. We keep doing it because it “almost works.” But when we find life in Jesus, we begin to seek Jesus for what we need; we trust Him to provide; we desire to please Him, and the result is less sin.

When we know who God is—His greatness and power—we stop trying to figure things out by ourselves; we “let go and let God.” The result is that we sin less. When we suppress this knowledge of God, we are forced to depend on ourselves. We seek to know for ourselves right and wrong;

we seek to provide for ourselves; we seek to be god and the result is sin. That is why John says, “*The one who does what is sinful is of the devil*” (v. 8). They are looking some place other than Father God for their needs to be fulfilled.

Sin is much more of an attitude than a list of rules and regulations. Thus, it makes sense that as I grow in my knowledge of Jesus and in my trust in Jesus, I end up sinning less. I begin to trust that Jesus really does know how the world is put together, that He really does know what works and what doesn’t work—and I respond accordingly.

John Ortberg points out: “[Kierkegaard] says the opposite of sin is not virtue. I may try to cultivate virtue on my own and still be in charge of my own life. The opposite of sin is faith: to be grounded transparently in God.”

QUESTIONS

How have you changed as you have grown in your relationship with Jesus?

PRAVERS FOR GIZEM

Pray for those whom Gizem and IFES met and connected with at the national student conference in September, that they may be encouraged to share the Gospel on their campuses. Twenty-seven students from nine different cities attended this year.

FRIDAY

1 John 2:28-3:2; Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1-5

More than once I've heard, "Heaven sounds boring—floating around on clouds, playing harps all day long!" There are a number of misconceptions in such grumbling, not the least of which is this: heaven is not a believer's permanent, eternal dwelling place with God.

First, though, consider some key phrases from today's 1 John readings. Abiding in Christ will enable us to "*not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming*" (2:28). As well, we're told that "*when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is*" (3:2). There are two exciting truths shared here: Jesus is returning and His resurrected, glorified body characterizes ours following His return.

Jesus' second coming, whereupon He claims all whom He has redeemed, is biblically indisputable. However, the Bible also hints regarding the nature of His glorified body—and ours. Jesus' resurrected body was tangible (Luke 24:39-40) and He could eat natural food (Luke 24:42-43). Though possessing a physical body, Jesus could pass through solid objects like locked doors (John 20:19). Presumably, we will be similarly equipped, material while also able to transcend physical limitations. Our reconstituted, glorified bodies will be imperishable, honorable and powerful (1 Corinthians 15:42-43)!

Jesus, God the Son and Son of Man, was both eternal and physical while on earth, as we shall be when glorified. And so shall it be with our eternal home. God's "rest" (cessation from creating) during the "seventh day of creation" (Genesis 2)—which some interpret as spanning creation to Christ's return—will end as He re-creates heaven and earth into the New Jerusalem (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21). Should we die before Christ's return, we go immediately into our Lord's heavenly presence (1 Thessalonians 4:14; Luke 24:43). However, thereafter we will resurrect to God's glory and dwell with Him eternally in the New Jerusalem.

The world's present fallenness, evident in surrounding strife, death and pain, makes such promises feel elusive. Accordingly, any reasonable person can see that things are not as they should be. This is exactly where to meet the lost. Help them see beyond fallen creation. Share the Good News of Jesus Christ!

QUESTIONS

What's the significance of Jesus' second coming? What's the difference between heaven and the New Jerusalem? Why is engaging unbelievers in discussion about the world's fallenness often a great place to meet them in a witnessing dialog?

PRAYERS FOR GIZEM

Pray for Peter, Gizem's co-worker in Istanbul, who is moving. Pray for his replacement and for the team during this transition period. Pray for all to understand each other and to unite as a true team to glorify and serve the Lord's name.

Sources

- GotQuestions.org quotes can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/abide-in-Christ.html>
- John Ortberg's quotes are taken from *Eternity Is Now in Session: A Radical Rediscovery of What Jesus Really Taught about Salvation, Eternity, and Getting to the Good Place* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 2018).

