

“Remain”
1 John 2:12-3:12
Sermon #97
Easter III
58th Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic

1 John 2:12-3:12 CEB

12 Little children, I’m writing to you because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus’ name. **13** Parents, I’m writing to you because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. Young people, I’m writing to you because you have conquered the evil one. **14** Little children, I write to you because you know the Father. Parents, I write to you because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. Young people, I write to you because you are strong, the word of God remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

15 Don’t love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. **16** Everything that is

in the world—the craving for whatever the body feels, the craving for whatever the eyes see and the arrogant pride in one's possessions—is not of the Father but is of the world. **17** And the world and its cravings are passing away, but the person who does the will of God remains forever.

18 Little children, it is the last hour. Just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not really part of us. If they had been part of us, they would have stayed with us. But by going out from us, they showed they all are not part of us. **20** But you have an anointing from the holy one, and all of you know the truth. **21** I don't write to you because you don't know the truth but because you know it. You know that no lie comes from the truth. **22** Who is the liar? Isn't it the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This person is the

antichrist: the one who denies the Father and the Son. **23** Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father, but the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

24 As for you, what you heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you will also remain in relationship to the Son and in the Father. **25** This is the promise that he himself gave us: eternal life. **26** I write these things to you about those who are attempting to deceive you. **27** As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains on you, and you don't need anyone to teach you the truth. But since his anointing teaches you about all things (it's true and not a lie), remain in relationship to him just as he taught you.

28 And now, little children, remain in relationship to Jesus, so that when he appears we can have confidence and not be ashamed in front of him when he comes. **29** If you know that he is righteous,

you also know that every person who practices righteousness is born from him.

3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are! Because the world didn't recognize him, it doesn't recognize us.

2 Dear friends, now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when he appears we will be like him because we'll see him as he is. **3** And all who have this hope in him purify themselves even as he is pure. **4** Every person who practices sin commits an act of rebellion, and sin is rebellion. **5** You know that he appeared to take away sins, and there is no sin in him. **6** Every person who remains in relationship to him does not sin. Any person who sins has not seen him or known him.

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you. The person who practices righteousness is righteous, in the same way that Jesus is

righteous. **8** The person who practices sin belongs to the devil, because the devil has been sinning since the beginning. God's Son appeared for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil. **9** Those born from God don't practice sin because God's DNA remains in them. They can't sin because they are born from God. **10** This is how God's children and the devil's children are apparent: everyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not from God, including the person who doesn't love a brother or sister. **11** This is the message that you heard from the beginning: love each other. **12** Don't behave like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he kill him? He killed him because his own works were evil, but the works of his brother were righteous.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer.

Amen.

As we continue our journey of 1 John, here is a reminder of the context. While 1 John is considered a letter, there is no greeting or name attached to it. It simply gets down to business. 1 John is considered part of the body of letters that include 2 and 3 John, which are written by a person simply named “the Elder”.

1-3 John, we are cautioned, are not to be lumped with the Gospel of John. Yes, there are some similarities in language. For example, the dualities of “light and dark” and “life and death”. But, these letters stand on their own because there are internal threats

at work in this community of believers that are trying to trick people into joining them. These opponents that the Elder is calling out are claiming they live in the light of God, yet they hate their siblings. They claim that they have no sin in them. They claim that they have never sinned. Of course, the Elder argues that these people and anyone else who claims to have no sin is lying and are trying to make God a liar, too. We all have shortcomings we deal with, yet, the Elder assures the congregation and us that we have an advocate named Jesus Christ who modeled for us the love of God, neighbor, and self. In him, there is no hatred. There is only love. And it is that love we yearn to live in and demonstrate to everyone around us.

Now, here we are in the middle of chapter two and going into chapter three and there are three things to remember in this section

of the letter. The Elder is encouraging the believers to continue to persevere against the lies being spread in the community, to persevere in the face of antichrists, and to remain grounded in God's love.

In 1 John 2:12-17, the author addresses people directly: Parents, young people, and little children. The Elder reassures the people of God's call and claim on their lives. These believers have had a hard time in their community and they need encouragement. Yet, the Elder also warns them about what lies ahead of them. They have done well because of God's leading, but more trouble is on the horizon. Don't be complacent! Don't compromise with those who seek to lead you astray with their lies. The same lies that claim to live in God's light, while also saying they don't have sin or have never sinned!

There are forces at work against the community. And the Elder labels these forces as “the world” in 2:15-17. For us, let’s think of “the world” as anything that stands against God. The world is not necessarily a bad thing. It’s the evil forces at work in the world that are dangerous. We are to love the world as God loves the world. And we are to call out evil when we see it. And when we feel consumed by anything other than God’s love, it is not of God and will fade away into nothing. However, anyone who remains in God’s love will remain forever.

The Elder then directs the audience to the issue of authenticity in 2:18-28. As people within the community are claiming to live in God’s light yet they hate their siblings, the Elder calls them the antichrist. And the antichrist is actually many people and their lies

are spreading. By using the title “antichrist” paired with the urgency of “the last hour” in verses 18 and following, the Elder is persistent in getting their point across to the community of believers that while they have done well, their being tested is about to step up a notch or two. It’s about to get harder. These deceivers are numerous and it’s just another sign that the final moments of life as we know it are at hand before Christ’s return.

And while there are many self-anointed false teachers, the Elder reminds the believers that they as people who live in God’s light and love are anointed by God. They have the power from God to remain grounded in the light, love, and life of God as written in 2:20. These people know the truth because they know God and they are not the liars. It is the antichrists, the self-anointed false teachers, who are the liars.

But, how will people know who is real and who is fake? I mean, we in 2021 hear people being accused of being wrong or called liars more often than not. But, this question is a recurring question throughout 1 John: Who is telling the truth and who is lying?

The answer rests in the person's actions. If a person commits to living in God's light, they are children of the light. If a person continues to sin and is unrepentant about it, then they are not children of the light. If a person hates their sibling while professing Jesus as LORD, they are fake. Again, the Elder makes it clear in the final verses of chapter two and through the end of today's passage. In 1 John 3:9, for example, the author is explicit about distinguishing truth-tellers and lie-spreaders. Those born of God do not sin because God's DNA remains in them. In other words:

People who love God and each other are born of God. There is no room for hatred of a sibling.

Remain. Remain grounded in the truth. Remain grounded in the light. Remain grounded in love. God's truth. God's light. God's love. These echo an old commandment to love God, neighbor, and self. Being in relationship with God, neighbor, and self. Yes, we will screw up. But, if we are indeed children of God's light and love, we are not content to stay in the muck, but we admit the truth of our shortcomings because God is light and love and truth and God remains in us. And our sins are forgiven.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are anointed. We are anointed to remain alert as there are many false teachers who are trying to

trick us, much like the context of 1 John. We are anointed to proclaim the truth, light, and love of God. We are anointed to be in relationship with God and one another.

Siblings in Christ, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.