

“Life”
1 John 5:1-12
Sermon #99
5.9.21
Easter VI
61st Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic

1 John 5:1-12 CEB

5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God. Whoever loves someone who is a parent loves the child born to the parent. **2** This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep God’s commandments. **3** This is the love of God: we keep God’s commandments. God’s commandments are not difficult, **4** because everyone who is born from God defeats the world. And this is the victory that has defeated the world: our faith. **5** Who defeats the world? Isn’t it the one who believes that Jesus is God’s Son?

6 This is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ. Not by water only but by water and blood. And the Spirit is the one who

testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. **7** The three are testifying—
8 the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and the three are united in
agreement. **9** If we receive human testimony, God's testimony is
greater, because this is what God testified: he has testified about
his Son. **10** The one who believes in God's Son has the testimony
within; the one who doesn't believe God has made God a liar,
because that one has not believed the testimony that God gave
about his Son. **11** And this is the testimony: God gave eternal life to
us, and this life is in his Son. **12** The one who has the Son has life.
The one who doesn't have God's Son does not have life.

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

Let us pray: 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.

Commentator Peter Rhea Jones gives a connection about today's passage.¹ In the connection, he mentions a story about a certain Dave Timmerman who ended up spending seven years of his childhood devoted to playing the saxophone. Timmerman was in the fifth grade and encountered the sign-up sheet that many of us ran into when we were transitioning into middle school: The instrument sign-up sheet for band! The sheet gave a list of instruments to choose from and the young boy, Timmerman, chose the saxophone.

¹ Peter Rhea Jones. *1, 2, & 3 John*. Macon: Smyth & Hellwys, 2009, pp. 219-20.

The boy didn't choose the sax because he had a whole bunch of musical gifts. He didn't choose to join band because he loved music or because he thought playing the sax would get him a few dates. He started down this path of music because he knew his dad, who had died some time before, loved music.

Yet, this young boy couldn't quite figure out which instrument to pursue. So, he asked his mother. "Mom, what was Dad's favorite instrument?" "Saxophone", she replied.

Decision made.

The story continues that even though Timmerman's father was no longer with him in body, he was with him in spirit. The boy wanted

to make his dad proud. He found out what his father liked and did it.

In some ways, this is how the Elder in today's scripture is telling us how we are to act as followers of Christ. Obviously, while we can't see God, God is with us all the time and has given us instructions that can be summed up like this: Love God, love neighbor, and love yourself. It's that simple. The author of 1 John takes it a step further in 5:3-4:

This is the love of God: we keep God's commandments.

God's commandments are not difficult, because everyone who is born of God defeats the world.

And this is the victory that has defeated the world: our faith.

If we truly have faith in God, then that means we are placing our hope and our trust in God. And when we place our hope and trust in God, then that means we want to do what pleases God. Not because God keeps a tally of our screw-ups or that God's love is like a vending machine, but because God is love and it pleases God when we love each other. And when our faith in God demonstrates to the world that we love God, neighbor, and self, that defeats the evil powers at work in our communities that seek to harm, divide, and destroy each of us.

In other words: Keeping God's commandment to love each other is much easier than loving the powers at work in our world. And if you need a reminder, the forces of evil that seem to plague us are defeated agents because of Christ's death and resurrection.

The commandment to love each other as God has loved us is not one that burdens us, but frees us. Seriously, if you think about it, it makes sense. For example, let's say someone messed up and the offended party was hurt. Yet, maybe they needed to reflect on what just happened for a day or so and then talk with the offender in order to get things straightened out. In an ideal situation, people can repair the relationship, repentance occurs, everyone learns from it, and promise, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to do better.

Or there's another situation. Someone messed up and the offended party holds a grudge for months or even years. They stew on it. Maybe they lose sleep over it. They obsess over it. They start to hold animosity against the person and eventually learn to hate them. Maybe the offended party not only learns to hate the person, but tries to sabotage them at any cost. Obsession,

animosity, and hate are too great of burdens to bear. There's nothing life-giving in them. Sabotage doesn't help anyone and it actually harms the community, not only one or two parties.

Confronting a sibling in love is what God desires for all of us.

Holding a grudge and letting it morph into hate is not Christ-like. In fact, it's the opposite of what Christ demonstrated for us in his life.

Now, I'm not saying that everything goes back to being ok after conflict. Sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. People who have messed up sometimes do not repent of their transgressions and they need to be held accountable. Yet, there are people who have messed up who didn't realize they did and all it takes is a gentle word. On the other hand, the offended parties will need to

acknowledge the pain and determine healthy ways to go forward.

Because hate is too great a burden to bear. It benefits no one.

God is the source of perfect love. As people of faith in the One whose perfect love surrounds us, we place our trust and hope in the One whose perfect love has defeated the wicked forces that tempt us to think they have won. And by placing our trust and hope in God who is the source of perfect love, we strive to live lives that reflect our perfect God who gave us the perfect embodiment of love, Jesus Christ, who breathed the perfect Breath of Life, the Holy Spirit, into the frightened disciples in a locked room. And the Holy Spirit, who still moves in us today, beckons us to love one another because it is love that will defeat the evil forces in our world. It is love that gives life.

We love each other because that is what God wants us to do.

Loving each other pleases God because God is perfect love. And perfect love is life giving.

Like the young boy who wanted to please his dad who was no longer with him, so it is with us. Except, while we can't see the Perfect Parent, God is right here with us. When hate attempts to suck the life out of others, perfect love gives life. And you know what, beloved? It pleases God when we love each other.

Siblings in Christ, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer. Amen.