

There is a redeemer

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[0 : 00] The Elder, to the elect Lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever.

Grace, mercy and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son in truth and love. I rejoice greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.

And now I ask you, dear Lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one that we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments.

This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

[1 : 13] Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

The children of your elect sister greet you. I was with a friend a couple of weeks ago. We'd just been playing squash. And Anna is fairly normal for a conversation.

He turned to me and he said, what are you up to tomorrow? It just so happened I was going the next day to the University of East London to give a talk at the Christian Union. They'd asked me to speak on a talk titled, What Do Christians Actually Believe?

[2 : 20] Now the need for that talk shows that our culture is confused about what Christians believe. And my friend's response highlights it too. He said, how can you do that in one talk?

Christians believe loads of stuff, don't they? People have all sorts of misunderstandings about what Christians believe. The worry is though, it's not just out there in the public.

There's confusion in the church too. And much of it is because people have distorted or diluted or drifted from Christ and his teaching.

Churches across the country and across the world teach all sorts of things that Jesus never taught. Some churches might teach the idea of pluralism. That there's more than one way to God.

It sounds tolerant and accepting, but Jesus was pretty clear when he said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[3 : 24] He's the only way to God. Some churches might teach that God doesn't really mind sin.

He's not angry about it. And it sounds more palatable and loving, but that would mean God doesn't care about evil or wickedness.

Thankfully, the God Jesus reveals cares deeply about evil and wickedness and has promised to do something about it. See, to drift on these issues and lots of others is to move away from Jesus' teaching and away from Jesus himself.

So, if the church, if churches are slowly drifting from Jesus Christ, what are we to do? In pride, we could sit here and think, oh, it will never happen to us.

But, if we're honest, given the pressures and the temptations we face, we're susceptible to drifting away from Christ too.

So, what will we do today? What will we do this week so that in 5, 10, 50 years' time, Grace Church Delich is still proclaiming the truth about Jesus and standing with his teaching?

[4 : 36] And, wonderfully, God has given us the book of 2 John to help us so that we would be instructed and encouraged to stick with Christ.

John, the elder there in verse 1, writes to a church congregation he knows well, personified as the elect lady and her children. And he writes into a similar context.

Have a look at verse 7. John's concern is that false teachers, people who don't stick with Jesus and his teaching, are travelling around the many house churches and might be causing others to drift away from Jesus too.

So, what's John's strategy for securing the church for generations to come? There's an outline on the back of your service sheet if you want to see where we're going.

We'll make notes. John wants them, and he wants us, to be a church that walks in truth and love. Simon was saying we tend to separate the truth and love.

[5 : 50] But look how John holds them together in those first couple of verses. The elder to the elect lady and her children whom I love in truth.

And he says it's not only I that love her, but also all who know the truth. Why do they love? Because of the truth that abides in us.

Truth and love go together. And notice John's joy in verse 4, that some are walking in the truth. I rejoiced greatly.

And notice his call at the end of verse 5 to the church. That we love one another. He's all about truth and love together. And we'll think a bit more about what love looks like in a minute.

But first we need to work out what he means when he says the truth. He doesn't tell us explicit, but I think we can find some clues and put a bit of a picture together.

[6 : 58] In verse 2, he says, The truth abides in us and will be with us forever. And he goes on to say that grace, mercy and peace will be with us.

There seems to be some kind of link there between truth and grace, mercy and peace. It's interesting, John uses the word abide a few times in his letter. There in verse 2, but twice more in verse 9.

Where both times, it's linked to Christ's teaching. And the next clue is to do with the teachers. The false teachers in verse 7.

Have a look. John calls them deceivers. And it seems that their error is something to do with the person of Jesus and his identity.

So, we've got truth linked to grace, mercy and peace from God. The truth abiding in the church. And the church abiding in the teaching of Christ.

[7 : 58] And then you've got this bunch of false teachers who are telling lies about who Jesus is. So, the truth, and the rest of John's writing and Jesus himself will back me up on this.

The truth is Jesus Christ and his teaching. Let's just test that definition. Swap it in there into verses 1 to 3. The elder, to the elect lady and her children whom I love in Christ.

And not only I, but also all who know Christ and his teaching. Because of Christ and his teaching that abides in us and will be with us forever.

Grace, mercy and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son. In Christ and his teaching and love. Okay, so it's not as concise. But because of Christ.

Everyone who knows Christ loves everyone who knows Christ. Here's how it links together. If I put my trust in Jesus and his teaching.

[9 : 07] Then through his death on the cross. I'm given grace. That deals with my sin. I'm given mercy so that I don't face the punishment I deserve.

And so therefore I'm at peace with God. And more than that, I'm adopted into God's family. He is very much my Father. I am loved by God.

And so love overflows from me. And it makes sense then that we love one another. Verse 5.

Because if you trust Christ, you're adopted into God's family.

That makes us siblings. And what should siblings do? They love each other. Because of the truth, the church loves.

So what does love look like? Have a look at verse 6. This is love. That we walk according to his commandments.

[10:17] According to John, the best way for me to love you is for me to trust Jesus and walk in obedience to him. Because if I'm seeking to live like Jesus calls me to, then I'll serve you.

I'll put you first. I'll build you up. I'll encourage you to fight sin. I'll pray for you and with you. And day by day, I'll point you to Jesus. And then as you seek to love me, you'll do the same.

So working together in truth and love, we'll build each other up and point each other to Jesus. And the church will be stunning.

And it will be secure for the future. Now we could go one of two ways when it comes to securing the church. We might be tempted to be truth Christians.

Let's not worry about love. As long as everyone understands the nitty gritty details of the truth. We might be tempted to be love Christians.

[11:24] Let's not worry too much about Jesus and what he says. Let's just make sure we love each other. We might be tempted one of those two ways. Or it could be. We're just not too fussed about truth.

And we're not really worried about loving each other either. Wherever we fall, John wants us to see the real solution is to hold truth and love firmly together.

See, truth without love is cold, judgmental and harsh. And love without truth appears to produce this nice, undiscerning, accept everyone and everything culture.

But in reality, love without truth is not real love. The doctor who doesn't tell you you're sick doesn't care about you. The parent who knows there's an amazing roast dinner coming later but lets you gorge yourself on naff rich teas just isn't loving you very well.

That's why John writes in truth and love to encourage and to warn. Now the flow is that truth leads to love and the two can't be separated.

[12:42] So we need a high priority on truth, Christ. But it must result in love for one another and for God.

So if we're not loving, it's worth asking if we've understood the truth properly. Maybe we understand it intellectually but we haven't let it grip our hearts and change our affections.

And if we think we can love people without regard for the truth, it's worth pondering whether we've grasped the wonder and beauty and seriousness of the truth of Christ.

As John delights to see some walking in the truth in verse 4, I imagine he'd find it a joy to see so many at Grace Church Dulwich walking day by day in the truth too.

I wonder if we're as encouraged by that as John is. Do we get more excited about getting that school place, the new job, our sporting achievements or seeing our brothers and sisters walking in the truth?

[14:00] It's been great to hear from some of the teenagers who have just gone off to university that they're getting stuck into churches that are helping them to walk with Jesus and love each other.

It's so good, isn't it? And when it comes to loving one another, we can look around our church family and see so many amazing examples of brothers and sisters loving one another.

Where you love and serve others well, keep loving them. But I take it as a hard thing, otherwise John wouldn't need to remind us of it.

So those people who you find hardest to love, keep loving them especially. We're brothers and sisters, so let's be a church that walks together in truth and loves one another.

Then we'll be well placed for part two of John's strategy. Be a church that watches for false teachers and false teaching.

[15:05] Verse seven brings us back to the burden of John's letter. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. A bunch of so-called Christian teachers are going around these little house churches drawing people away from Jesus.

Specifically, they're saying Jesus Christ didn't come in the flesh. It's a claim against Jesus' identity. Basically calling him a mere man.

And if they are right, then Jesus' claims about himself are false and his death on the cross couldn't really achieve anything. So if you believe them, your whole faith falls apart because Christ is no savior at all.

The principle behind John's burden comes out in verses eight and nine. Watch yourselves so that you may not lose what we've worked for but may win a full reward.

[16 : 20] Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God. Watch out because the consequences are huge.

If you drift from Christ, if you dilute and change his teaching, you lose your future hope and you don't have God. That intimate relationship, the peace with God, my father, it's gone if I depart from Christ.

The truth is so important. It's a matter of eternal life and eternal joy and eternal death. It's like you've got a ticket for the Christ train, the most secure train in all the world.

It will get you to your glorious destination. So don't tamper with the ticket and don't swap it in for a more comfortable ride on another train that leads you in the opposite direction.

John then takes it a step further in verse 10. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.

[17 : 41] For whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. It's not just watch out, it's avoid like the plague. These false teachers, don't associate with them, don't welcome them, don't let them teach.

To join with them, to support them is to take part in their wicked work. By way of illustration, some friends ended up in a very to John situation.

The minister at their church drifted from Christ and his teaching, no longer abiding in it, no longer bringing it to the church family.

John would have described him as a deceiver, no longer for Christ, now anti-Christ. It was a church, my friends, very much loved and were a part of.

It was their church family, their home. So they spoke to the minister, they aired their worries, and when he wouldn't repent and come back to Christ and his teaching, they decided they had to leave.

[18 : 49] What a hard decision to leave a church that you love. But John would say, what a wise, godly, and Christ-honoring decision, prizing Jesus and his teaching and eternal life with God above staying put.

What an encouragement those friends are as they walk in truth and love. And note, it's not about being right or snobby.

It's about Jesus Christ and our eternal future. John is aware that the problem is out there where false teachers roam.

But his phrase in verse 8 is striking. Have a look. He says, watch yourselves. He knows this is a battle to be fought in our own hearts.

So it's worth considering for a moment. Where are we tempted to downplay the importance of Jesus Christ and his teaching? Do we avoid the awkward stuff that he says?

[20 : 06] Do we tweak things to make them sound more appealing to our friends? John says we need to watch ourselves. Or we might drift from Christ and not have God.

It's worth saying too, abiding with Christ and his teaching in our culture is likely to get harder and harder. If we stick with him more and more, we're going to be labelled bigoted, closed-minded, intolerant, and exclusive.

And we need to be ready to face that. And we need to be ready to defend Christ. I'm grateful it's not all warning from John though.

There are two sides to the coin in verse 9. On one side, anyone who doesn't abide in Christ's teaching does not have God. And on the other side, there's a stunning reminder.

Have a look at the end of verse 9 there. Whoever abides in the teaching of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

[21 : 20] So finally, and more briefly, let's be a church that sticks with Christ and his teaching. The truth saves me and secures me eternal life with God.

intimacy and relationship with him. I think our culture thinks Christianity is a bit pointless. Because not many people understand the staggering wonderful news at the heart of Christian truth.

The God who made the universe has made himself known in the person of Jesus. And he's made it such that we rebellious people can be in relationship with him.

Some friends have recently adopted a little boy. He's very cute. They've got a picture of the moment when the formalities were complete.

Their new son, now with his forever family. He didn't have parents, but now he's adopted into their family family and he has mum and dad.

[22 : 31] It's secure. It's intimate. It's beautiful. And that's something of the reality for the Christian who sticks with Jesus.

A secure, intimate relationship with God forever. forever. So, stick with Christ. Stay on the Christ train.

Don't get off. As Christians, we get to experience our relationship with God in part now as we enjoy our adoption into God's family, as we enjoy each other as brothers and sisters, as we call on our heavenly father in prayer, as we hear him speak to us through his word.

But in the future, we'll know perfect fellowship with God again. Turn with me quickly to Revelation chapter 21. The last book of the Bible, page 1250.

John's writing again. He's received a revelation from God about what is to come in the future. And he says this, Revelation chapter 21, chapter 21, verses 3 and 4.

[23 : 43] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them. And they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

And death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore. for the former things have passed away. That is staggering, isn't it?

God will dwell with his people in a perfect new creation. Stick with Christ and that is your future. If you're here and you're not a Christian, can I invite you to explore the truth, Christ.

Christ and think about the future ahead. Life with God or life without him. As a church, we can be progressive and forward thinking in all sorts of ways.

[25 : 01] With our music, our technology, with the events we put on, invite people to. But we're not to be progressive about Christ. Instead, we're to be conservative Christians.

Not in demeanor or temperament or character. Be charismatic and exuberant or don't. But do long for Christ and his teaching to be conserved.

To be protected and faithfully passed on. That's one of the reasons we sing amazing old hymns and brilliant new songs that point us to Jesus, because we want to embed these truths in our hearts.

That's one of the reasons the words of the Apostles' Creed are so precious. Millions of brothers and sisters have said those words for hundreds of years. They remind us of Christ and his teaching.

And it's the main reason, week by week, we have talks from the Bible. We want people to be pointed to Jesus. So if the sermon doesn't call you to know Christ, tell whoever was preaching.

[26 : 16] Because the goal is that as a church family, we would know, love, and follow Jesus.

Then, we'll be a church that walks in the truth and loves one another and is well equipped to spot and reject false teaching.

As we know and stick with Jesus, the church will be secure for generations to come. Let me pray. Father God, thank you that you've given us your word, that it teaches us who Christ is and what he did and what he taught. And we pray, please, that you would help us to hold firmly to him and his teaching.

Make us aware of areas in which we attempted to drift from him and his teaching and call us back, help us come back to him. Please help us walk with Christ.

Help us to love one another. In his name we pray. Amen.