

Life In A First Century Church - 2

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Date: 16 June 2019

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[0 : 00] Well let's turn now to 3rd John where we read a few minutes ago this very short letter, the third letter of John, the elder to the beloved Gaius whom I love in truth.

Beloved I pray that all may go well with you, that you may be well in good health as it goes well with your soul. For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth as indeed you are walking in the truth and so on.

Now this morning we looked at 2nd John also beginning with the elder writing to the elect lady and as we, as you recall, those of you who were here this morning recall that there is an idea that that was written to a church rather than to an individual and that it's somewhat a coded reference to the church possibly due to the danger in those days of letters falling into the wrong hands, the Roman authorities and some persecution that might indeed break out then against people for openly living as Christians.

In any case we saw that that letter, the second letter was, if we take it that it was written to a group of Christians or to a church. This one certainly 3rd John is written to the man called the beloved Gaius.

So this is written to an individual but there are also other individuals mentioned as we'll see in the letter. And as we saw 2nd John, one of the main features of 2nd John was saying to those that were written to that they were not to welcome or give support to travelling heretics, people who were deceivers that had gone out into the world and that they had to watch themselves, they had to be careful to look after themselves against such false teachings and those people who denied the coming of Christ in the flesh, humanity of Jesus or whatever fundamental truth of Jesus was being denied, such a one as the deceiver and the antichrist.

[2 : 08] And so he was warning them against receiving that sort of teaching but also later on anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching about Jesus being God and the teaching that has both God the Father and the Son.

He says, don't receive him into your house or give him any greeting. So the first epistle has to do, the first letter really has to do with not receiving those peddlers, those disseminators of false doctrine, of untruth, those deceivers, those who are the antichrist.

Don't give them any encouragement, he's saying. Don't support them. Don't even show any semblance of support to them. When you come to third John, he turns things around the other way because now he's talking about travelling Christians.

Christians are going from place to place. We'll see that they're probably missionaries. We can give them that word. They're certainly going out with the gospel and proclaiming the gospel or testifying to the gospel.

And what he's emphasising here in this letter is that they are actually to give them support, every support they can. That they are to actually see it as something worthy of their support, that those who are travelling about in the name of Jesus, with the gospel of Jesus, that they actually have to give them the support that will further enhance the gospel and support these people as they go about with the gospel.

[3 : 35] And conveniently, the letter divides itself really into three. When it mentions three names, Gaius, the man that is particularly written to by the elder who we take to be the apostle John.

And then he speaks secondly about this man Diotrephes, a very different character as we'll see to Gaius. And then, very briefly, he mentions Demetrius 2 in verse 12, who has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself.

So we're going to work our study tonight around these three individuals and pick up a few points of what's said about each of them. There's not much actually anyway, certainly not about Demetrius.

And we'll see that the points that are referred to there, the points that are brought out about each of them, are important for ourselves. Because, as we said this morning, we can look at these two epistles, like much of the New Testament, as a glimpse into or a look into life in a First Testament setting, a first century New Testament setting, rather.

So we're looking at life in a first century church, even if we take it the first one was written to an individual, as this one is, nevertheless it opens up for us what life in the church, something of what life in the church was like.

[4 : 52] And you can add that to the other epistles in the New Testament to add to what you find here, of course. So we're dividing it into these three points. The beloved Gaius, the one we'll call the bully, Diotrephes, and the faithful Demetrius, who has a good testimony.

Well, the beloved Gaius is the man that John is here writing to, the elder to the beloved Gaius. And we saw in the second letter this morning, how this wonderful combination of truth and love is spoken about in different ways.

And that's the same sort of thing that you find here as well. The elder whom, the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. And then he says in verse 3, I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to you truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

He mentions then the joy that he has in that. When he says the elder to the beloved Gaius, that word beloved there is literally the well-beloved. And it fits in with the testimony that he has.

This is a man who is highly respected. A man who is highly respected by others besides the elder John that he's writing to him. He's writing to him. And the word well-beloved means the extent of the appreciation for this man in the church of the time.

[6 : 15] Something that we ourselves, of course, would want to actually follow and be known for. Or that we would have this kind of reputation where we are highly respected for the truth's sake.

And highly respected for the work that we do for the Lord Jesus. Whatever kind of work that is. That it's faithful to Christ himself and to his standards. Well, that's the kind of man this was.

And this word well-beloved describes very briefly how highly respected, how widely respected and loved he was as a Christian. Then he goes on to speak of him as beloved to himself.

That's to John the elder. This word beloved in verse 2 is really making it very personal. Because he's now speaking to him personally from his own standpoint as the elder, the apostle.

He's well-beloved. He's widely respected. But now he's saying, Personally, I love you too. You are beloved of me. You have my affection as a fellow Christian.

[7 : 21] What he's saying is, Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you. That you may be in good health as it goes with your soul. And we haven't got time to go into every single detail in the letter.

Though it is very short. There's a lot in it that we could bring out. That we have to actually just leave for this particular study. But he's saying that it's important that we notice that he's concerned for the bodily, for the physical health and mental health of this man who is beloved by him, this Gaius.

Before he goes on to speak about him spiritually, he actually says, I pray that you may be in good health. And that's of concern to us all as well, of course. It's important that we pray for good health.

That we pray for the kind of health that would enable us to go on serving the Lord. For as long as the Lord himself will allow that. For the Lord himself has appointed all things for us in this life.

But this is what he's saying. I pray that all may go well with you. That you may be in good health as it goes well with your soul. So all around he's wanting this Gaius to know soundness, to know health, to know well-being.

[8 : 30] Bodily, physically and spiritually. But you see, he's also saying here in verse 3, For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth.

Now literally, it doesn't come across all that well in the ASV here when it says your truth. If you go to the older version, the Gaelic version as well, the translation is when they actually testified to the truth that is in you.

That makes a bit of a difference, doesn't it? Because he's talking here not just about the truth about Gaius. He's talking about the truth that is in Gaius. He's talking about God's truth.

The truth of Jesus. The truth of Christ. And he's saying that this was something that he rejoiced in greatly when the brothers came and testified to the truth that was in him.

And before he goes on to speak about Gaius walking in the truth, he makes a reference here to the truth that is in him. And that's the order in which things must be found in your own life and in mine.

[9 : 38] We're not going to be walking in the truth until, first of all, the truth is in us. It's as the truth actually is in us and in our souls that we are then living by it.

You're not living by the truth, by a mere outward conformity to it. That would in a sense be hypocrisy, even if it matches up with outwardly what the truth requires.

What John is saying here is, I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to the truth that is in you, even as also indeed you are walking in the truth.

In other words, this is a man who has, really what is in him matches exactly what is seen outwardly in his life.

And isn't that how you want to be yourself and myself? You don't want to be known as someone in whom there is a separation or a dissonance between what is being testified outwardly, what is being claimed outwardly, and what is actually true inwardly.

[10 : 46] You want your life to have in your soul, in your inward being, the same as what is seen outwardly and vice versa. And here is a man who has an exact match of belief and conduct.

What is in him, and what is being seen done by him, and in his manner of life. And that's really, essentially, what a Christian is.

A Christian is not somebody who just conforms to a creed outwardly, to a set of rules and do's and don'ts, and who is able to tick the boxes, I believe this and I believe that.

Yes, I believe this about Jesus. I believe this about God. I believe this about the Christian life. And you can tick all these boxes outwardly, and I'm sure everybody here could do that. But no, this man, Gaius, yes, he can do that, but he also has inwardly the belief, the conviction, the assent to this truth, and the acceptance of this truth as truth for him, truth for his way of life.

We've been talking about truth quite a bit the last couple of weeks, last Lord's Day, from the way that truth was depicted in Isaiah as having fallen in the street, the very sad spectacle of truth as it's personified there.

[12 : 07] We try to refer that briefly to our own generation, to what you find in our own day, that truth is at such a discount that you can really say pretty much that it's fallen in the street, it's collapsed.

And so many other things collapse because of that. Here is John saying, this man, Gaius, is a very different person to those that don't really hold to the truth inwardly, and don't live by the truth.

As a man who has a matchup between his belief and his conduct. Now we've heard in verse 4, to verse 4 this morning, there's a similar verse in the previous letter where it speaks there about rejoicing.

I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth. In verse 4, and here in verse 4 as well, you find I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Now he means here, his children are those under his care, those under his pastoral care, and that is something that those of us who have positions of leadership in the church, not just as ministers, but also as elders, we are particularly concerned for those under our care, and this is our burden.

[13 : 17] This is our burden, that they would be seen walking in the truth, that they would be seen following Christ, and there's no greater joy for us than to hear that those under our care are walking in the truth.

You know, when somebody walks into that session room and says, I want to take communion. I really want to come to the Lord's table for the first time.

How do those elders react? Well, if you've never been there, I counsel you to come and see for yourself. But I can tell you how they react.

They react with great joy. Sometimes even the tears flow from our faces because we see people coming in there and saying, I'm testifying to the truth that's in my heart, not in my own self-confidence, but this is what Jesus has done for me.

And their way of life confirms that. Very few of them, if any, are ever surprises to us when they come, when you've come to actually present yourselves for communion, to want to take communion.

[14 : 21] It's very, very seldom a surprise to us who are leaders in the church to see these people yourselves who have come for this privilege. Because we've seen things in your life and we've seen changes in your life and we've seen the truth taking root in your soul and we've seen the effects of that and the fruit of that in your outward life.

That's what makes you a Christian. Born again inwardly. The truth that is in you and it's seen outwardly in your outward conduct.

And there's rejoicing over that. There's joy in respect to that. We have no greater joy than to hear our children walking in the truth. And as I mentioned this morning, it's also a source of great sadness to us when we see people turning their back to the truth.

Walking away from the truth. Not wanting anymore to follow in the steps of the truth. Just as Jesus saw many disciples, that's what they were called, they were followers outwardly.

In John chapter 6, that's what you find. Jesus saying, when the teaching of Jesus became too much and too demanding for them, they turned away and they walked no more with Him.

[15 : 35] And He turned to the twelve, the disciples, the twelve disciples, and He said to them, Do you also, will you also go away? Do you also want to go away? And that's a question that always comes to ourselves, isn't it?

And a question that you and I must always put to ourselves. Whatever it is that's troubling us, do we want to walk away from the truth? However convincing arguments in the world and in atheism may seem to be, however confident they may seem to be and have confidence in their own way of presenting the alternative to God's truth in the scriptures, in the gospel, do you want to go away from the truth?

That's the challenge. Do you want to keep walking in the truth? And of course, the answer to that surely you would always want to be, Yes, I do want to keep walking in the truth.

I don't want to go away from the truth. And you ask for God to help you to keep walking in the truth. Because walking away from God is walking away towards death.

The further away from God you are, the further distant you are from life. And Adam went to hide himself in the trees of the garden and Eve when they went away from God seeking to hide from God.

[16 : 53] They were really saying essentially their life was then showing essentially that they were walking away from life. Walking away from the source of life. And you remember what's said of Cain when God came to put a mark of his judgment upon him for the murder of his brother Abel.

Cain's reference to that to the Lord as he spoke to the Lord and when the Lord banished him to another land went and dwelt in the land of Nod Cain has said my burden is more than I can bear and he went away from the presence of the Lord.

See when you go away from the truth you're setting yourself on a course away from the presence of the Lord and I hope that's not true of anyone here of course but there are some for whom sadly temporarily at least they turned from the truth and you know there's nothing greater than seeing people walking in the truth and one thing I would say rivals that for a source of joy as to see people who had gone away from the truth but have come back and have repented and have recommitted themselves and their lives to Jesus what a source of joy that is what a great source of confidence in the word of God that is to those of us who preach it so he's saying that he's rejoicing that he knows of Gaius walking in the truth but then he says the other thing he says about him not just walking in the truth that he's also in the business of welcoming these brothers these strangers as he puts it there in verse 5 beloved it's a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers strangers as they are who testify to your love before the church you will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God for they have gone out for the sake of the name accepting nothing from the Gentiles therefore we ought to support people like these that we may be fellow workers for the truth now let's just take a few points out of that because here is John saying to Gaius this is really a faithful thing that you're doing that you're welcoming these brothers these strangers the same people are described by the word strangers and brothers they're traveling Christians they're people who are going from one place to the other and going from one group of Christians to the next bringing Christian teaching bringing Christian encouragement and from that point of view you could call them missionaries and you can see that they have actually this role in the church of the time because he says they have gone out for the sake of the name they have gone out they've gone on the specific task for the name and the name there means Jesus but it came to mean the gospel the cause of Christ go back to the book of Acts in chapter 5 verses 40 to 42 you'll find that by that stage the

Lord Jesus Christ the reference to him there had been shortened to the name and then it had come to represent the way of the gospel the way of salvation that's tied up with the name of Jesus and of course you remember that in the Old Testament very often you find the name of God the name of

Jehovah the name of the Lord and that's really a way in the New Testament of one way at least of showing the deity of Christ that he himself has the name and the things that are attached to him are attached to him as God as God in the flesh as God the Son but he says in verse of chapter 5 of Acts there these people were beaten by the authorities of the time they were lashed they were badly treated grievously treated what does that say it says when they were released from custody that they counted it an honour to suffer shame for the name isn't that brilliant they counted it an honour to suffer shame for the name for Jesus and for his cause would I do that tonight if I was thrown into prison tonight if I was in a situation where I would be locked up for what

[21 : 28] I believe and for the life that I want to live in faithfulness to Jesus if you were in that situation tonight would you count it a badge of honour would I count it something to be really proud about in the best sense if you like of the word that's what these disciples that's what these apostles actually thought they thought it an honourable thing to suffer for the name that is Jesus and his gospel what a great challenge that is to ourselves when we suffer most of us at least much less than that there are Christians tonight in North Korea Pakistan and other places in the world who very much fit into the mindset of Acts chapter 5 verses 40 to 42 they know what it is to suffer for the name but they count it an honour it's a badge of honour for them and so the name is something that

Gaius here was actually working for or faithful to and was actually for the sake of the name he was looking after those people who had gone out for the sake of the name it all comes together it's for the name of Jesus for the reputation of Jesus that Gaius was looking after these strangers these traveling missionaries who themselves have gone out for the name for the sake of the name and look when he says in verse 8 therefore we ought to support people like these that we may be fellow workers for the truth that we in the text is actually very emphatic therefore we ought to support now he's going on to speak about someone who's very different to that but before we come to that this emphasis is important we ought to support people like these missionary endeavor missionary projects missionary labors missionary activity has to be supported who's going to support it the church must support it we as

Christians must support it you actually don't go and decide or say the Lord is actually calling us to do some mission work in some particular part of the town or in some new area of housing or whatever it might be but we're going to the world for our support we're going to the world for our financial support of that project no he's saying we have to support that we're serving this Lord we're doing this for the name and when he says that notice he's saying in verse 5 what you're doing is doing a faithful thing and in verse 6 he's you're doing well if you send them on their journey a faithful thing means a thing that proceeds from your faith Gaius was not doing this just because somehow or other he felt sorry for these people or because he was forced into it Gaius was doing this because he was a believer because his faith in

Jesus Christ flowed out into the support of missionary activity that's what he's saying when he's saying it is a faithful thing that you're doing in your efforts to welcome and to give hospitality to these people and to support these Christians who are traveling this is a faithful thing it's an expression of your faith the support is when he goes on to speak about being a beautiful thing doing well in verse 6 that's literally what it means you will do well to send them on their journey literally in the text that's what it really means in Greek this word means something beautiful you will do something beautiful to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God in a way that supports their enterprise that supports their missionary activities that supports the gospel you remember the woman who came to Jesus and anointed him broke that alabaster flask that she was carrying with precious ointment that cost so much when she broke it and anointed

Jesus and the the order of that filled room some of the disciples were indignant particularly Judas Iscariot and Jesus intervened and said leave her alone she has done a beautiful thing to me that's the word that's here she has done a thing of beauty to me you know when you support the gospel as you are doing when you support missionary activity as you are doing whether it's locally or in foreign missions or supporting missionary work wherever it is you are doing a beautiful thing because you are anointing Christ by that you are anointing the name of Christ you are doing something beautiful in his sight God sees it as something beautiful you know when you are looking at what seems a very matter of fact thing when you put your envelope in the plate when you pay by standing order whatever it is in financial support of the gospel yes we can look at that as just it's a financial thing it's a financial transaction comes out of our account whether it's by taking money and putting it in the envelope or otherwise but you know this is how we should look at it it is a thing of

beauty it's a beautiful act it's a thing that anoints

[27 : 05] Christ because it's for his sake it's for the name it's all to do with him even the smallest act the most mundane act something the world might even see as trivial didn't Jesus himself say whoever gives even a drink of cold water to the least of these disciples is doing it unto me it's a thing of beauty you know when we get into our minds this idea of service for the Lord being a thing of beauty a thing that has beauty in the presence of God in the estimation of God well then you see it follows that your delight is even more in doing it when you see it as a beautiful thing and then he says so that you may be fellow workers for the truth finishing off the point by saying this we ought to support people like these that we may be fellow workers for the truth that's what

Christians are when together they support the gospel they become fellow workers for the truth it's as if truth itself is really our employer and that truth is the one we serve we're serving God of course but if you personify truth as it is in God you could say well that's really what you've got here we are fellow workers for the truth for the truth in whose employment we are you know truth is always advertising vacancies vacancies vacancies for other workers to join those who are already workers for the truth is that saying something to you tonight have you given your life to Jesus have you come to testify for Jesus have you come openly to say that he is your Lord are you still afraid of something that's keeping you back from doing that of beautifying the

Lord by a further step of obedience to him will hear his truth as the employer if you like of those who are working for the truth there's an appeal on the part of that truth of that God of that Savior to you and to me tonight will you not fill this vacancy will you not come to be a fellow worker of the truth and for the truth will you not now come to stand alongside work alongside those who are servants of God here's the beloved Gaius he's well beloved he's walking in the truth he's welcoming the brothers the strangers the traveling Christians who are going around with the gospel secondly and we're moving into a very different scenario a very different environment as you come to verse 9 I have written something to the church but Diotrephes who likes to put himself first does not acknowledge our authority so if I come

I will bring up what he's doing talking wicked nonsense against us and not content with that he refuses to welcome the brothers also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church he was probably in the same church as Gaius appears from what is said that Gaius would certainly know him and know of his activities so we're taking that he belonged to that fellowship of Christians that Gaius himself belonged to as well he certainly had some semblance of authority at least he was using authority whether it was given him by the church or not he an official capacity whether it was official or not but you see what he's saying in verse nine John had written a letter which we don't have I don't think it's a second letter but he had written something to the church but Diotrephes who likes to put himself first does not acknowledge our authority it refused to accept the authority of

John he didn't accept that as in any way says our authority what was the problem with this man Diotrephes who was acting in such a bullying manner well the problem for him the root problem in his life wasn't a social problem it wasn't that he was a different category of upbringing to Gaius nothing like that is mentioned it wasn't that there was a theological difference between them it wasn't that this man Diotrephes was a heretic theologically there's nothing like that either it wasn't that he was of a different view ecclesiastically to the structure of the church or something like that what was it about this man that caused the elder John to write this to him it's quite simple it was sin he was in love with himself he had an inflated ego he had a much higher view of his own authority than he ought to have had isn't that what

[32 : 30] John is saying Diotrephes who likes to put himself first likes to have the preeminence something that's written to the Colossian church about Jesus that he must have the preeminence well this man Diotrephes doesn't want Jesus and doesn't want Gaius and doesn't want John to have the preeminence he doesn't want to have Jesus first or them first ahead of him so he doesn't acknowledge their authority he just wants himself in charge that's the root problem he has too high a view of his own importance he has an inflated view of his own authority of his own importance that's why you have in the qualifications for leadership in the church in Paul's letters to Timothy and to Titus I'm just going to read from Titus but you notice how the features of it match up with what's lacking in Diotrephes is character and actions Titus chapter 1 verses 7 to 9 where he says here an overseer as an elder must be as

God's steward must be above reproach he must not be arrogant or quick tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain but hospitable that's what's lacking in Diotrephes he doesn't want to give hospitality to these traveling Christians in other words he goes on to say he must be a lover of good must be self controlled must be upright must be holy must be disciplined he must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine also and also to rebuke those who contradict it what a different kind of person Diotrephes is to that and to Gaius who is commended by John as he wrote to him in this letter not only does he dismiss the authority of John as worse than that that's bad enough but what else is he doing he's saying I will bring up what he's doing if I come he's talking wicked nonsense against us talking wicked nonsense what is that it's slanderous untruth this is a man who has some position in the church of Gaius's and Gaius's time and John's time and yet this is what he is actually like this is what John is writing about him he is actually not just refusing his authority but he's talking malicious slanderous nonsense untruth about him very likely he's building up self-support how does a man like this build up self-support well he's not afraid of talking gossiping untruths about other people he gets people onto his side by misrepresentation by not quite giving the full picture to people by keeping back some essential details or even by just saying simply saying things that are actually untrue altogether that's his description talking wicked nonsense and then he says he's refusing to welcome the brothers and also he stops those who want to do this and puts them out of the church he's preventing others from following the guidance that

Gaius is giving them this model Christian this example and this man Diotrephes is determined to actually put people off from following that example by bullying them into supporting himself and by just putting them out of the church if they refuse to accept his so called authority well the church has had many disputes down the course of its history some of these have been major disputes over doctrinal difference important doctrinal differences whether it's the nature of scripture the person of Christ the atonement there have always been times when these differences became acute and when these differences caused division and disruption and schism in the church but many many church disputes involve personal vanity people not prepared to accept the authority of others people not prepared to accept that actually their opinion is not more important than those of God and those of Jesus and those of other

Christians and that's why as I remind you of this I remind myself of it the sixth question that's put to ministers before they're ordained or before they're re-inducted to another charge is this do you promise to submit yourself willingly and humbly in the spirit of meekness to the admonitions of the brethren of this presbytery and superior judicatories of this church and it goes on to say some other things but leave it there that's the point we're making diatribes may well have answered yes to that question but he's not practicing it he actually loves himself loves his own authority loves his own opinion loves his own conclusions and that's the result of it he's causing havoc he's causing chaos he's causing disruption and John is saying if it is God's will that I come I'm going to deal with this I'm going to deal with it as it needs to be dealt with meantime he's saying beloved don't imitate evil but imitate good whoever does good is from

[38 : 36] God whoever does evil has not seen God so he's just summarizing the difference between Gaius and Diotrephes thirdly he makes a reference and it's another beautiful image again of Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself we also add our testimony and you know that our testimony is true he has a good testimony from all similar to Gaius himself and even from the truth itself and by that he means that the truth itself and what it requires of the likes of Demetrius and Gaius is actually proved in the life of Demetrius the testimony of the truth supports what Demetrius is and is doing and also he says we add our testimony and you know that our testimony is true as he's talking of his own apostolic authority as an apostle of the church it would appear that

Demetrius perhaps was not known actually to Gaius he may well have been as some commentators make out he may have been the carrier or the deliverer of this letter that's what usually happened in those days those who were writing these letters to the churches made sure that as far as possible they were delivered safely by the hand of somebody reliable and of course somebody coming with a letter usually the letter needed to testify to the quality to the dependableness of the person that was carrying it in order for that church or that group to be confident that this person really was safe to trust and that the letter was really genuinely what it purported to be so he's saying here you don't need to have any fears about Demetrius he has

received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself and we add our testimony too and as you come to the end of the letter as you see these three individuals two quite like each other one very different you find a glimpse into life in the first century church and as you look at the church of our own day and as you compare it with this well the thought that comes to mind is well so what's new these problems have been around that you find in our own day the problems have been there from the beginning there are always problems centered around human beings like myself and yourself human beings who have an ego who need to curb that ego and who sometimes forget that life's not all about our opinions and what our mindset is and that others very often know better than we ourselves do and how beautifully he concludes the letter

I hope he says to see you soon and we will talk face to face and he says peace be to you and then he finishes this way the friends greet you greet the friends every one of them what marvellous beautiful ending to the letter the friends are those that are known to the elder john that are sending their sentiments along with his in this letter to gaius fellow christians fellow believers different place in the world but nevertheless this is what he's saying the friends greet you and now he's saying you also greet the friends every one of them wherever you find them as faithful fellow believers they are your friends they are your beloved friends and as friends of christ we are friends with one another and there's something very very special about meeting someone you've never met before that you know is coming to visit you whether it's korea or africa wherever it is and you know that he's a fellow believer or she's a fellow believer in christ and the moment you meet them you know that you're friends and that they're friends of yours and that friendship is very special in christ it be true of us here this congregation that whatever people know us as they will know that we are friends of jesus and that as friends of jesus we are friends of one another and that we are friends of christians elsewhere who come for the name to serve this lord let's pray lord we thank you for the privilege of having that information in your word of such principles and practices as were commended to your church long ago we thank you for their abiding relevance to our own age we bless you that that truth that was commended by john is the same truth that we value today oh lord help us to prize it to live it out in our own lives in our own context we pray to that we too may be walking in the truth on a daily basis help us we pray to do so consistently and faithfully help us lord we pray to know of that friendship with one another that is founded on the truth itself grant that we may never have a diatrophic spirit in ourselves or in our fellowship help us lord to be loving and tactful and loving and careful and yet nevertheless to be robust in our adherence to your truth so that we may constantly give praise and glory to god and prove ourselves to be father children of such a gracious father hear us we pray now for jesus sake amen well we're going to conclude our singing with our singing this evening of psalm 147 psalm 147 that's in sing psalms version page 192 this time singing to tune crediton and singing verses 11 to 15 page 192 the lord takes pleasure in his saints who worship him in fear and those who trust his steadfast love will always find him near extol the lord jerusalem zion your god confess he makes secure your city gates and those within he'll bless the lord will grant you peace within the borders of your land and finest wheat will fill your fields from his sustaining hand to all the corners of the earth the lord's commands proceed for when he speaks his word goes forth through all the world with speed these verses to god's praise the lord takes pleasure in his saints to worship him in fear and those who trust his steadfast love will always find him near thanks to thanks to the lord jerusalem zion your cross confess in his sacred mercy he takes and those within he'll bless the lord will grant you peace within the borders of your land and finest peace will fill your fears from his sustaining hands to to all the farmers of the air let our commands proceed sea on many streets his work goes forth through all the fire will speak I'll go to the side door here to my right this evening and now may grace and mercy and peace from god the father the son and the holy spirit be our portion now and ever more amen to well please thank you too well in a