

Lives Shaped by Truth

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Date: 06 June 2021

Preacher: Ciáran Kelleher

[0 : 0 0] if you have your bibles please do open up again to to john to john that is where we are going to be drilling and digging into this evening my hope is i'm placing my ipad if any of you are here with us this morning i'm placing my ipad under the music stands i think i've tightened this and i'm hoping it is going to stay steady for our time together this evening as we work through this passage and what i'm hoping as we look through this short letter is that we will see what it means to have our lives shaped and molded by the truth of jesus christ to be able to identify identify counterfeit truth claims and how to deal with them with the evolution of the internet there's been a whole new avenue of work for fraudsters and scammers last year there the chief operating officer for the university of glasgow had to publicly apologize because he had shared false claims about the covid crisis there's been much hand-wringing because of this spread of false news not just in universities but the question more broadly is how do we equip our citizens and our young people the skills to recognize and to counteract false truth claims how can we tell who cares for the truth and who is trying to pull the wool down over our eyes and this is a question that is important for us as well as the church if you see the word of truth the gospel is also the word of life it is that which heals and strengthens and redeems and so it is important for the health of the church to know what is false and what is true and so this is a question for us as well how can we help one another to be able to identify that which is false and that which is true and then also how can we walk and abide in the truth so i want you to keep open this letter in front of you this is a letter that john wrote to another church when he talks here in verse one he says here the elder to the lady chosen by god that word lady that essentially just means another congregation of believers john here is writing to another church that he knows well and i think there's three big things that he was wanting to put forward to them and they're going to be our three points this evening and the first one in verses four to six we see that we are to walk in the truth to walk in the truth in the christian faith in the christian life love and truth are bound together to be someone who has accepted the truth of the story of jesus loving your neighbor and loving god is necessarily tied to that like salt and pepper like a knife and fork like sunny and share love and truth go together and here john is writing to a church where the people are sticking with the gospel they have not abandoned this or moved on from it instead what john is doing here first is he is celebrating and commending them for standing by it and walking

in it this is what he says there in verse four it has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth just as the father has commanded us here in this section he wants to then remind them that those who have accepted the truth about jesus must necessarily be those who love one another and you see here in verse five that john isn't just bringing a new teacher but he is reminding them of something that they have heard before if you've got your bible in front of you just flick back a couple of pages with me to one john three and have a look with me at verse 23 and this is his command to believe in the name of his son jesus christ and to love one another as he has commanded us you see truth and love are married and must not be separated must not be taken apart from one another actually this is because of the truth that jesus came you see jesus coming is the ultimate act of self-giving and self-sacrificial love from eternity past in in the bosom of the holy trinity father son and spirit they have always harmoniously and perfectly loved one another and then jesus coming is an act of self-giving self-giving humiliation in love for his people the king of the entire universe came to live among his own in poverty he was mocked and slandered he was beaten crucified and died in the place of his people this is the love with that we as christians are called into this is the love that saves and this is the love that calls us to serve one another you see to believe in jesus means that we are called to live that out in our own lives as well we don't just stand in awe of what jesus has done for us but we go out in the way that he lived himself to walk in

the truth is to walk in love to do anything different is incongruous with the truth it's like the chief of an environmental lobby buying a petrol guzzling hummer or a vegan running an abattoir it doesn't make sense there is a disconnect between truth and love which are meant to be joined together you might have heard of that preacher you know the one he can be rude and cursed in his conversations with his congregation but he is a tremendous preacher of the word he stands firm on the truth he preaches this unvarnished to his congregation he is not waylaid by the things of this world but he stands firm on what god has said and so we can tolerate his quirks we can pass over the fact that he hurts

people in the church but that treats a short temper as if it's just a mere foible or how about that person who is in your bible study you know the one they know their bible inside out yet you know that they're a gossip they revel in hearing about the lives of others and sharing that with everyone else we tend to think of them as a better christian than us because they can quote scripture at a moment's notice they can correct us in a study being able to point to something else but this passage doesn't allow for that it doesn't allow for this divorce between love and truth john stock was an anglican rector in the last century and he wrote this i think it's really helpful for us he said our love grows soft if it is not strengthened by truth and our truth grows hard if it is not softened by love in our next point we are going to see how important the truth is but hear what john is saying here truth without love is hard and sharp it never offers hope it doesn't heal but here's the thing love is not an optional extra but in absolutely essential nature of the christian life this is the point that john is trying to drive home here that to be those who have accepted the truth about jesus means we are to be those who follow the way of jesus which is to walk in love that's what he says in verse six and this is love that we walk in obedience to his command see there the way truth and love are brought together as you have heard from the beginning his command is that you walk in love and so paul's concern here is that the church would walk in the truth and in verses seven to nine he then calls on them to abide in the truth now as life starts to open up more and more i'm sure we're going to get more knocks on our door which aren't just the guy from amazon delivering that latest book or that uh that food or those clothes that you've ordered but i imagine soon enough we'll start to have people knocking on our door wanting to ask us questions i want you to imagine with me imagine a mormon or a jehovah's witness arrives at your door and they ask you would you like to know more about jesus now how are you going to respond to that question uh what i normally do when i have them come to the door and it's happens uh more and more infrequently now that uh they know of my profession but i say to them well you see actually i'm an elder in a local congregation a christian church and i'm studying theology part-time at our seminary and my first question for you before we get into anything is tell me where do you think the differences are between what you believe about jesus and what i believe about him and immediately we see that we worship a very different person and have a look with me at verse 7 of to john john is saying this that we are to walk in love that we are to

walk in the truth verse 7 i say this because many deceivers who do not acknowledge jesus christ as coming in the flesh have gone out into the world john is dealing with deceivers those who peddle false news who propagate counterfeit truth claims about christ and look at what john says here about through this lesson the deceivers are those who have gone out into the world what he means there is the deceivers who have gone out into the world as it is where we live east of eden but before the new creation the the world where sin has distorted what is good and what is true and what is beautiful and so these deceivers it seems they are those who the suggestion is they are those who are part of the church but have been influenced by the world it is and have left god's people and what here is we see is that they have denied the coming of jesus in the flesh you see right at the center of our faith right at the center of christianity is a person a man who lived 2000 years ago one who walked the dusty roads of the middle east who drank water and wine who ate food who sat around tables of all kinds of different people he slept he cried he bled he died and he rose physically from the dead the church right from the very beginning has confessed that jesus is fully god and fully man he was not a man who did godly like things god like things and he was not god who came in a way that maybe looked like humanity he wasn't really no the church has always said that he is fully god and fully man he was the one who after his resurrection ate fish in front of his disciples who invited them to touch the scars in his hands and his feet but he's also the one who said that he is i am taking on the name of god himself god who says i am that i am the eternal self-sufficient god and so here the people who have come into the church who are going around different congregations they were saying that while jesus might appear to have been a real human

that's all it was just an appearance but we know that jesus is god clothed in flesh and they were denying this fundamental truth and this is dangerous as they deny the true jesus the only one who can redeem and renew us because he is god he had the power to heal and because he came in the flesh he was able to heal our flesh so that when he raised from the dead that is our hope as christians is the same way that he rose is the same way that we will rise when jesus returns again in glory and listen to the language here it is strong at the end of verse seven it said here that they are anti-christs some people here might have grown up in traditions where there is a there is a waiting for the antichrist but listen to this it kind of changes the way we understand that anyone who denies that jesus came into the flesh came in the flesh anyone who denies key fundamental truths about jesus they are anti-christs because they deny the true lord the true savior and so that's the deceivers have gone out into the world but here look at the danger of the deceivers have a look with me at verse eight watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for but that you may be rewarded fully anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of christ does not have god you see here's the the two big dangers for the deceivers for anyone who would follow their teaching first they lose their reward the hope of christians god gives us many great things in this life but we look forward to a time where there will be a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells a place where there is no more hypocrisy no more corruption no more anxiety no more stress no more stay-at-home orders from test and trace where all death where all disease where all of the deceivers harmful works have been dealt with a place where beauty and goodness flourish undimmed by sin and that is our ultimate reward but what john is saying here is those who the deceivers and those who succumb to their teaching lose that great reward but maybe even worse than all of that is that they forfeit god himself you see that's the greatest thing when jesus says that he is the way the truth and the life he follows that up by saying that the only way to come to the father is through him you see through jesus who is the truth that is how we come to know the father the creator of the heavens and the earth the one who rules over the entire universe the one who made us the one who has saved us that is the ultimate blessing of salvation is that we are restored into relationship with god that we are reconciled to him through the cross of jesus christ that's the offer that's the offer that we hold out in the gospel and it's what those of us who have believed treasure most is that in our prayers we can call god father but you see here verse nine those who do not continue in the teachings of christ does not have the one who does does not have god and so those are the dangers of the deceivers and the christians are told instead of believing their ways following their ways instead we are to abide in the teaching of christ we are encouraged and commended pushed and urged in that direction what is in sight here is not just an intellectual assent to the truth but a wholehearted embrace of it let's think of it this way coming up to the european championships there is a really big difference in saying i believe

[20 : 19] that steve clark is the scottish football manager and someone who says i believe in steve clark as a scottish football manager one is saying look i believe that that is true and one person saying that is this is true and it is my truth what john says here to the church is he says this whoever continues in the teaching has both the father and the son and actually that word there if you see if you've got the esv translation in front of you it says whoever abides in this teaching whoever remains in this teaching it's the same language that jesus says john 15 that we are to abide in him as true vine remain in him you see think of it in this way someone might say that they believe in the structural integrity of a tree house but they never guess inside of it but abide has a fuller picture than that it means to set up our home to put your life into that space that's the same with abiding in jesus placing all of our hope all of our trust all of our expect expectations in jesus and so john is saying to the church abide in him because that's where our reward ultimately is that is how we know the father if you're someone who is here this evening and you're still investigating the claims of christianity the advice here is to abide in jesus in his what he has taught the way of love and of life and for those who are christians the encouragement the urging of john is to stay there don't leave us don't go out into the world but stay in the words of jesus and so here john is saying to the church he's saying continue to walk in the truth to abide in the truth but here at the end he says this that they are to deny the truth deniers and we see this in verses 10 to 11 have a look of me at verse 10 if anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching do not take them into your house or welcome them anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work now i think it's important just as we look at this first is what what did hospitality mean in the time that this was risk because this can sound a little bit extreme here doesn't it does this mean that if you're a christian that if you're talking to one of your neighbors over the fence you could say it's nice for you to talk here but

you're not allowed to come over our boundaries what happens does it mean that if we are living with someone who's not a christian that immediately we either have to have to kick them out so we need to go find somewhere new to live no i don't think that is what this passage is saying the concern here isn't those who are seeking the truth who are trying to find out the truth that shapes the world helps them to understand our reality it's not those who are wanting to investigate the claims and examine the evidence of jesus wondering christian wondering whether christianity works if that is you this evening now i'm glad that you've tuned in online or you're in the building in bonacores we welcome you this evening now there's something different in sight here tonight we have to remember back at this time that churches were in their houses

they weren't in lovely stone buildings in the center of aberdeen they weren't in hotels in brought you ferry they weren't in warehouses across the world no most churches met in one of the congregations houses and to allow someone into your house in that time hospitality to allow someone into your house was to say that they were one of your own it was always the equivalent to saying this is my family in communities to keep a community safe if anyone was to come in someone would have to vouch for them and so for someone to come into your house you were saying to community i vouch for this person and so to allow someone in would be to suggest that they were orthodox that they were part of your church and what john is saying is don't allow any of those people into your houses those who deny these central and core and vital truths about jesus but what does this mean for our current context well what it means is we must not do anything that would suggest that we support those who have denied the truth and are trying to deceive god's people about the true identity the work and the purposes of jesus so to translate that there's probably two key areas it can mean the purpose and membership it means not allowing anyone who will stand up at the front and deny that jesus came in the flesh not allowing someone to come into the pulpit and say that jesus didn't really rise physically from the dead is now seated at the right hands of the father but it can also mean for membership it can mean someone who has not yet put their trust in jesus someone who does not yet believe that jesus is fully god and fully man is allowed into membership as we said earlier on if you are someone who is coming and wanting to learn more we welcome you but membership in a local church is for those who are believers in jesus christ god who has come in the flesh to die for his people and to rise from the dead giving the promise of new and eternal life for all those who believe in him but why hold such a hard line in a in a polarized and a fragmented age like we live in i i know that some people are going to hear this as intolerance maybe this sounds to some like cancel culture but i think we have to understand how important the truth is it's not going out and silencing those voices but it's not wanting the watching world to think that these are both legitimate positions to hold you know you might hear someone say as long as both of us believe in jesus does it matter what we believe in him and we say resoundingly yes i mean our own in our own congregation here in broseley ferry there is a great variety of opinion and belief and a whole number of points whether that's to do with spiritual gifts whether that's to do with what kind of songs we sing in church whether we are to drink alcohol or not there's a whole range of things but none of those leave us outside of the lines of healthy and life giving faith but the denial of jesus as fully god and fully man does that very thing for you see the truth of jesus is essential to the health of the church it's not just medicine that heals but it is food that sustains and strengthens for we are to abide in him and he is our refuge he is our security he is our hope and our joy and our peace and to know the fullness of jesus is to walk into the fullness of life and that is why for john it is so important to make sure that the truth is front and center in a church that a local congregation keeps the main thing the main thing trusting that the word of god does the work of god and the people of god by the spirits of god that the truth of god is known through the proclamation of jesus as fully god and fully man the one who came to liberate his people from sin and to bring us into fullness of life and so as we finish here we see john's concern about truth leads to the denial of truth deniers because he he cares for the health of the church but as we work backwards we see that his concern is not just to deny them but to encourage his people to abide in the truth and to walk in that truth because that truth ultimately leads to the loving one another and this is what john wants the church to be known for a church that cares for truth a people whose great desire is that truth is made known and their life is shaped by truth because a life shaped by truth is a life walked in love and a love that spreads out to all of those whom we know let's pray together god our father we thank you for your truth it is not something that we have found something that we have devised but it is something that you have revealed to us

and revealed to us through your son as we know him in your words thank you for jesus thank you for the gift of your spirit your holy spirit who inspired your words and illuminates it for us who opens up our eyes so that we might encounter jesus in your words we pray this for this evening that the congregation of bonacores and your people across this nation and all across the world would be marked and characterized and shaped molded and molded by your truth that we would show that truth and love are not against one another but they drive one another onwards as they are joined together in the life of your son and in your people in jesus name we pray amen and thank you