

FRIDAY 14 October 2022 "Life Priorities" (1 John 2:15-17)

Good Friday morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

For the past week we've been sitting with the apostle John as he writes his first little letter to Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, across the Roman Empire, in the middle of the first century. He's being led by the Holy Spirit to respond to a very important question that amazingly I hear very often today, 2000 years after John wrote his letter! The question is essentially this: *"How do I know if my salvation is real? Can I be certain that I really am "born again" and really have been forgiven of my sin by God and I really am going to heaven when I die?"*

So far in the past several days we've seen that John is providing multiple ways for people to look at their attitudes and their lives to evaluate the legitimacy of their salvation.

Come, let's join John again today as he sits down to continue his writing, now in 1 John 2:15: ***"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for God the Father is not in them. For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from God the Father but from the world. The world and its desires will pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."*** It should not be difficult for us to look closely at the towns in which we live and the lifestyles of people around us to see what captivates the attention and the love of the people. *Have you found that people will somehow find both the time and the money for the things they deeply love? Honestly now, what would you say are the things you love most in life?*

I live in America and for a great many Americans the fall season of the year brings out an outrageous sports passion. The professional baseball season heads into the World Series in October. Both College and Professional American football fill huge stadiums every weekend of the fall with what some might call 'fanatic fans'. College soccer and women's volleyball seasons are also in the fall and soon basketball will begin. And let's not forget NASCAR which draws huge numbers of auto racing fans. The amount of money spent on sporting events and athletic facilities and athlete salaries is simply gigantic. It only takes a few moments of watching the ravenous passion of the fans and we understand the love Americans have for sporting competition. But it's not only America, is it? This is a world cup year and the global passion for 'futbol' (soccer) is clearly evident!

So let me ask an important question: *'No matter where you live in the world, in what order would you list the top 10 most loved aspects of life this world has to offer people of all ages?'* As the apostle John is writing he's making a powerful statement which challenges every person who wonders if they really are a Christian: ***'Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for God the Father is not in them.'*** (1 John 2:15)

I wonder if John was remembering the day, he listened to Jesus sitting on a hillside, overlooking Lake Galilee, near the town of Capernaum. It was the first major speech of Jesus, and thousands of people stretched out across the hillside listening to Jesus speak. Matthew records this 'Sermon on the Mount' with 3 long chapters. Jesus spoke quite boldly about the matter of the appeal of money and things money can buy. Jesus said: **"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** (Matt. 6:19-21)

May I ask, as you look around your part of the world, is consumerism and materialism... the constant buying and accumulating of more and more things, a passion for many people in your town? Has the ease of buying online and having things delivered right to your door only magnified the passion for purchasing?

On the hillside that day Jesus also said: **"No one can serve two masters. Either they will hate the one and be devoted to the other, or they will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Materialism or Money."** (Matt. 6:24) I urge us all to take a close look at ourselves. What is our view of money? Are you a 'saver' or a 'spender'? What is your view of 'debt'? Do you purchase something only when you are able to pay cash for it, or do you enjoy purchasing on credit? If you purchase on credit, do you pay your bills before they are due or are you someone who sometimes finds the bill overdue and yet you are purchasing even more? How much influence or power does money have in affecting your choices, your decisions, even your relationships with other people and ultimately your spiritual relationship with God?

Yes, my friends, if you haven't noticed, money can have a profound effect on our spirituality! Why? **Because love is a reflection of your heart. What you love, what you treasure, you will naturally pursue and prioritize!** So, for every person there is this important question: **'What draws your heart AWAY from God?'**

That is why John wrote: **"If anyone loves the world, love for God the Father is not in them. For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from God the Father but from the world."** (1 John 2:16) So here again John is giving us the opportunity to look closely into our own hearts and evaluate the truth about our passions, our love. *Do we have a love for this world and the things of this world that sometimes draws us away from God and even pushes God out of our thinking, our passions and our choices?*

John is saying an authentic, born again, Holy Spirit filled Christian will be on their guard for this internal battle and will be careful to not allow things of this world to draw their hearts and minds AWAY from their relationship with and their love for God.

John's final statement in this warning is clear: **"The world and its desires will pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."** All of us live in the reality of TIME, we are each getting older every day. TIME is also affecting everything in this world, for everything is decaying with age. Buildings, roads, bridges, automobiles, airplanes, clothing, furniture, and especially technology... everything manmade decays with time. It is passing away right in front of our eyes. *But an authentic spiritual relationship with God should be exactly the opposite, it should be growing, developing and bearing fruit!*

As John was led by the Holy Spirit to write these words in his first letter, I wonder if he was remembering that night in the upper room with Jesus and His disciples as they shared a meal together before Jesus went to the cross. Jesus had told them a great many wonderful things that night including these words: **"As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. Now remain in My love... I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are My friends if you do what I command... You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last..."** (John 15:9-16)

So, my "Walking with Jesus" friends, let's pause and reflect with some honest, personal questions...

1. What are the things of this world I love most? These are the things I will work hard to make time for and if necessary, I'll set aside other priorities in my life for these things I'm passionate about.
2. Honestly now, do these things sometimes take priority over my spiritual life, my time with God, my pursuit of those things which will develop my relationship with God?
3. Are there some things which I know will draw my heart and mind away from God, yet I enjoy them and sometimes I don't resist their temptation and I indulge in them? What have I learned happens to my spirituality when I do that?
4. How do I honestly evaluate my passion and priority in my life for God's Word or Worship of God or Prayer to God or time for meditation on God's Word? How much influence or authority do I allow God's Word in my life and how is that seen in my attitudes, my choices, the use of my time and other resources?

Perhaps the Holy Spirit will help you think of similar questions, my friends, which can help you personalize 1 John 2:15-17 as you give serious thought to the essential question John is helping us answer... *'Do I see the evidence in my life that I am truly "born again", and the Holy Spirit is fully alive in me, leading me through life? Do the priorities in my life reflect my relationship with Jesus or my financial goals in life or my desire to be popular or successful?'* Once again, I offer you a worship song as we reflect on these important life questions...

Today's Scripture is 1 John 2:15-17.