

First John is written as a sermon with the key purpose to defend Christian communities against false prophets and to remind them that as children of God they are to live in the light and love one another. Today's section carries on the themes of forgiveness of sin and knowing God from the preceding section. We see that they're tied together through the repetition of the phrase "I am writing to you" which first occurred in 1 John 2:1. Jesus forgives sin which happens when we know him, and in knowing him we know God who sent Jesus. The passage is addressed to multiple generations. It's either about chronological age, or spiritual maturity (as in elders and newbies), or possibly the "fathers" are those who knew and saw Jesus personally (the first generation of followers of Jesus). They all are important and each are addressed as part of the community. The division in the church seems to come from some docetistic teaching about the nature of Jesus. Docetism was the ancient belief, common in Greco-Roman culture, in the superiority of everything that is "spiritual" over the "physical". It led to much debate and division in the church, and eventually to the first great Christian Creeds (The Apostle's and Nicene Creeds) seeking to articulate the oneness of Jesus as Divine and Human. These false teachers seemed to imply that there is no connection between our spiritual-ity (beliefs) and physical actions (ethics). This can lead either to an extreme asceticism and withdrawal from the created world or a lax ethical attitude which considers human action as not important. The pastoral author writes to counter that false teaching, reminding the church of what it means to be a child of God, and to see in Christ the invisible God, modeling our lives – spiritual and physical – on his life and example.⁸

little children τέκνιον [teknion]: (the diminutive form of téknon, "child" ("a child living in willing dependence")) – a little child; (figuratively) someone deeply loved (endeared). In the NT, pupils or disciples are called children of their teachers, because the latter by their instruction nourish the minds of their pupils and mould their characters.

him who is from the beginning from the beginning: this refers to Jesus. See John 1:1-4 "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The Word was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through the Word, and without the Word not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people."

his name: this phrase expands the notion expressed in the last verse of the gospel of John 20:31 "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." In the Hebrew Scriptures the expression "the name" commonly replaced the writing of the full name of God as a sign of respect to God's holiness. See for example: Psalm 135:1, 3 – "Praise the name of the Lord.. Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant."

father πατήρ [patér] father; one who imparts life and is committed to it; a progenitor, bringing into being to pass on the potential for likeness. Here it's used both for those who are older in the community in faith or age (v 13 & 14), and to represent God (v. 14)

YOUNG PEOPLE: νεανίσκος [neaniskos]: a young man, youth; (cf. our colloquial boys, lads) used of a young attendant or servant.⁸

January 27, 2019

1 John 2:12-17

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

- ¹² I am writing to you,
little children,
because your sins are
forgiven on account
of ~~his name~~.
- ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know **him**
who is from the beginning.
I am writing to you,
YOUNG PEOPLE,
because you have
conquered the evil one.
- ¹⁴ I write to you, ~~children,~~
because you know the
father.
I write to you, fathers,
because you know him
who is from the beginning.
I write to you, YOUNG PEOPLE,
because you are strong
and **the word of God**
abides in you,
and you have *overcome*
the evil one.
- ¹⁵ Do not **LOVE** ~~the world~~ or the
things in the ~~world~~. The **LOVE**
of the Father is not in those
who **LOVE** the ~~world~~; ¹⁶ for all
that is in the ~~world~~ —the
desire of the flesh, the desire
of the eyes, the pride in
riches—comes not from the
Father but from the ~~world~~. ¹⁷
And the world and its desire
are passing away, but those
who do the will of God live
forever.

John 14:1-10; 15-27

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

[Jesus said] ¹“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

¹⁵ “If you **LOVE** me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of **truth**, whom the *world* cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the *world* will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I **live**, you also will **live**. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who **LOVE** me; and those who **LOVE** me will be **LOVED** by my Father, and I will **LOVE** them and reveal myself to them.” ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the *world*?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “Those who **LOVE** me will keep my word, and my Father will **LOVE** them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not **LOVE** me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send **in my name**, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the *world* gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

doe

~~children~~ παιδίον [paidion]: a young child; a little child, an infant, little one; a child under training; implies a younger child (perhaps seven years old or younger). Some scholars apply it to a son or daughter up to 20 years old (the age of "complete adulthood" in Scripture).¹⁸

the word of God: that is Jesus, as we see in John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” and Revelation 19:13 “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.”

overcome: this phrase echoes John 1:5 “The light [of God come into the world, Jesus] shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

the world: the antithesis of John is this dualism between world and God. When John says “world” he means a set of ideas: that God created the world and sent Christ to save the human world specifically; but that the human world rejected him as its redeemer. It’s this world, not the natural world, that maintains an organized opposition to God, one that results in hatred and oppression among human beings. So in v. 16 when the author warns about sex, money and power; the warning is less about specific things a Christian should avoid (the things themselves) than our desire for, or response, to them.¹⁸

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- What shimmers in your attention in this reading?
- How do you know Jesus?; long to?
- How do other people help you know Jesus? What responsibility do you have to make Jesus known to others?
- Thomas Merton wrote of loving the world as: “Instead of worshipping God through His creation we are always trying to worship ourselves by means of creatures.” How do you understand and live into loving God and not the world?
- What invitation to act, speak or be do you hear in today’s scripture?

¹⁸ In my notes, I borrowed freely from *Seek. Find.: The Bible for All People* (The Contemporary English Version) ABS 2006 and *The Epistles of John*. David Resenberg. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.