

Real Disciples (1): Fellowship with the Father

(1 John 1:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. One thing is certain about election—but it's so muddled, can't tell what it is!
 - 1. Maybe it's this—not since 1960 has candidate's religion been so important
 - a. Evangelical Christians swung the last election, so their vote is coveted.
 - b. So the candidates talk about faith, especially Mitt Romney, a Mormon
 - 1) He stresses “*common points of faith.*” Many see huge differences
 - 2) 32% evangelical uncomfortable with Mormon. *Not Christian enough*
 - c. Seven candidates (4 Dem, 3 Rep) are Catholic. *Is that Christian enough?*
 - d. Mike Huckabee is a former Baptist preacher— far *too Christian* for some
 - 2. If you read *Christian Chronicle*, the real controversy is Fred Thompson!
 - a. He was raised and baptized in Church of Christ & his mother still attends.
 - b. Thompson is vague on faith (“*man upstairs*”). *Is he Christian enough?*
 - 3. The debate continues over whether (fill in blank) is “*Christian enough.*”
- B. Who is really a Christian? What makes a real disciple? What is really true?
 - 1. The church I grew up in used the term “*the truth*” in a very particular way
 - a. We understood “the truth” to be our very narrow practice of Christianity
 - 1) The truth was our view on music, millennium, baptism, communion
 - 2) Any other view was seen as being “in error.” Truth was very narrow
 - b. We had a clear view of who was a real Christian—we were, nobody else
 - 2. At the other end of the spectrum is our multicultural, postmodern world
 - a. Any truth must be valued as equally true— so nothing is ultimately true
 - 1) Want to Christ, Mohammed and Buddha? Well, it is a free country!
 - 2) Want to ordain homosexual clergy or condone homosexual marriage?
 - b. Who are we to say that anyone is wrong? “*Judge not that you be not judged*”
 - 3. Jesus makes it plain He won't claim some who will claim Him (**Matt 7:21**)
 - a. Its not our job to decide who they are; wheat-n-weeds grow together
 - b. But we must do our best to make sure that we are real disciples
 - c. Must be “*fruit inspectors*” not led astray by false prophets (**Matt 7:15-16**)
 - d. How do you tell the difference between a real disciple and one who isn't?

- C. That question became THE question at the end of the first century
 - 1. False teachers arose who began to teach a new doctrine that unsettled man
 - a. They taught that only the spiritual, untainted by material, was good.
 - b. It was their special, spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) led to the spiritual.
 - 2. They claimed to be Christian, but they changed key basic Christian belief.
 - a. Christ was pure spirit—he wasn't born, he didn't die, he didn't rise.
 - b. Their spiritual knowledge, not basic obedience, is what pleased God.
 - c. Having this knowledge was more important than love and fellowship.
 - 3. 1 John was written at the end of the first century to this confused church.
 - a. He writes to stresses the meaning of real discipleship, real Christianity.
 - b. We begin this morning a sermon study of 1 John and true discipleship.
 - c. We'll reinforce the sermon with a small group tracking the same texts.
 - 4. John begins by pointing to the real point of discipleship—Christ Himself

II. From the Beginning (Reading: 1 John 1:1-4)

- A. John begins his epistle just as he began his gospel—prologue (John 1:1-3, 14)
 - 1. Unlike Matthew and Luke, John doesn't tell the story of the birth of Jesus.
 - a. That means that John is not nearly as popular at Christmastime.
 - b. Actually, he does tell a birth story in Revelation 12... about a dragon!
 - c. He begins his telling of the gospel before Jesus birth—the eternal Word.
 - 2. He begins his epistle pointing to “*that which was from the beginning*” (1:1)
 - a. Here “the beginning” refers to how the story had been taught to them
 - 1) They had been taught certain things from the very start (1 Jn 2:7)
 - 2) Gospel had always centered in this story of death and resurrection.
 - b. This strange teaching they were hearing was not part of the story.
 - 3. Things like *DaVinci Code* and *Jesus Papers* suggest new ideas of Jesus
 - a. Jesus was a radical revolutionary, Mary Magdalene & moved to France
 - b. John would call the new ideas—new ideas. Not good ideas, just new!
 - 1) Like John's false teachers, those new ideas change the basic gospel
 - 2) From the beginning, the story of Jesus was clear and consistent
 - c. He really was born of a virgin, died on a cross and rose from the dead.
 - d. The essence of being a real disciple is wrapped up in those basic truths.s

- B. So John begins by stressing this flesh-and-blood reality of story of Christ
1. John says that his ears heard, his eyes saw and his hands touched reality
 - a. Remember invitation to Thomas after His resurrection (**John 20:27**)
 - b. Jesus was no spiritual phantom who appeared to appear—he was REAL.
 - c. John saw, heard and touched— that’s his story and he’s sticking to it!
 2. In John’s day, some saw Jesus as spiritual phantom with no real substance
 - a. In our day, many would see Jesus as only a legend, metaphor or myth.
 - 1) Jesus is an idea– not important if born of a virgin or raised from dead
 - 2) But that is precisely what these false teachers were telling the church
 - b. John says discipleship begins with a faith in the incarnation of Jesus.
 3. John says that eternal begins with fact that “*The life appeared...*” (**1:2**)

III. That Life Appeared: Makes Two Things Possible

- A. **Fellowship:** Because Jesus came, we have fellowship with God & others (**1:3**)
1. The word “*fellowship*” (κοινωνία) means “*sharing*” or “*participation*”
 - a. It begins because Jesus “*participated*” with us— He shared our flesh
 - b. **Hebrews 2** makes two point about Jesus as our High Priest (**2:14**)
 - 1) He has been through the heavens—not limited by flesh and blood
 - 2) He “*sympathizes*” with our weakness—lit. “*share in our suffering*”
 - c. Jesus shared with us, so we now can share (“have fellowship”) with Him
 2. Fellowship he shares with us is basis for our fellowship with each other
 - a. What do we as people have in common? Very little on surface of things
 - 1) Parts of country, socioeconomics, background, candidates, teams, etc
 - 2) We’re blue-collar, white-collar, green-collar and no collar at all!
 - b. All we have in common is Christ, and that’s enough! Fellowship thru him
 3. Our problem is that it’s often easier to see our differences than fellowship
 - a. My uncle R.C. was raised in northern Arkansas, not far from Oklahoma
 - 1) Sectional rivalry— he was brought up as a little kid to hate Okies!
 - 2) He met a family, “*Said they’re Okies, but they acted just like people*”
 - b. Focus on our fellowship with God and its easier to fellowship each other!
 4. Point John will stress—be can’t fellowship (love) God and not love others!

- B. **Joy:** Jesus coming also makes it possible for us to have complete joy (**1:4**)
1. Actually, what John says is, “*We write this to make our joy complete.*”
 - a. What gives John joy is to share with message of Christ with others.
 - b. Later he says that writing is good, but he really wants more. (**2 Jn 12**)
 - c. Sharing a relationship with God with Christian family brings joy.
 2. There is a progression in **John 15** where Jesus speaks of complete joy
 - a. He says “*My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete*” (**11**)
 - b. But what follows that joy, “*Love each other as I have loved you*” (**12**)
 - c. Finally, “*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life*” (**13**)
 3. Joy and fellowship are tied together... and then bundled with sacrifice!
 - a. There was a recent 20/20-type other night on the science of happiness
 - 1) What makes us happy? Nature or nurture? Choice or circumstance?
 - 2) Interesting ideas—money makes us happy, if don’t have too much
 - b. Overwhelming report conclusion—happy people have people around
 - c. We’re made to share our lives with people; we aren’t happy if we don’t
 4. John reached that conclusion without studies—he got there with Jesus!

IV. Conclusion

- A. So back to opening question—“*Which candidate is really Christian enough?*”
1. **Old Saying:** “*You can tell when a politician is lying— their lips move*”
 - a. Maybe not, but candidate who flaunts faith to get votes—wrong reason!
 - b. Not too much different from what Jesus warns us of in **Matthew 6:1!**
 2. The real question we started with was “*How do you tell a real disciple?*”
 - a. John address that in 1 John, but he doesn’t answer it in the first 4 verses!
 - b. While he doesn’t get to a destination, he moves us in a definite direction.
 - c. The place to begin when talking about Christian faith is with Jesus Christ!
 3. John will stress, “*One who doesn’t believe in Jesus cannot be Christian*”
- B. So here is the challenge—“*Are we living like we really believe Jesus came?*”
1. Words are important—we must be willing to confess that “*Jesus is Lord*”
 - a. But words can also be pretty empty; talk can be cheap.
 - b. Do we confess that Jesus is Lord by the way that we live every day?
 2. Are you living in fellowship with the Father and His son Jesus Christ?