God is Love

 1 John Bible Study

Welcome to our *Maymester* study of 1 John. Each week in May on Wednesday, I will post a short study of 1 John that includes: a reflection based on the reading, a synopsis of the reading’s importance, some ‘I wonder’ questions to ponder, and a prayer. May we be encouraged and enriched in our faith of Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

Pastor Judy

**Reflection**

To me *Love God, Love neighbor* is God's word in a nutshell. So, I am excited to look at 1 John, a letter of faith written by someone who knew Jesus personally and teaches what they learned about him: God is love.

  For the past several years, I have wondered: what has become of our world? Why are people unkind to one another? That's not what God is and how Christians should be. This week I heard a song on K-love radio that helped me to articulate it better. The song is not my typical style of music, but the words grabbed me.  I served in the Virginia synod for many years where our theme was Ambassadors for Christ. We had logo shirts that we wore inside out, as that's what Jesus did: he turned the world upside down and inside out by being totally countercultural in showing God’s love to all. Jesus lived out love God and love neighbor, and John saw this. So, Jesus was, you could say, revolutionary, which is the title of the song. Here are the lyrics that grabbed me:

Why does kindness seem revolutionary

When did we let hate get so ordinary

Let's turn it around, flip the script

Judge slow, love quick

God help us get revolutionary

Here is a link to listen, if you would like, with the lyrics: ["Revolutionary" by Josh Wilson](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6glQdaQUZ1U)

**Introduction to 1 John**

  The main question is: Who is Jesus Christ? This is a rather important question arising from some early believers who have rejected Jesus is several ways. The book is written by John, and most scholars agree with the Apostle John as author. 1 John is written between 80 and 90 AD to the churches that John is known to in Asia Minor, most likely around Ephesus.

We find John mentioned several times as a disciple, one of the earliest disciples of Jesus ([Mark 1:19-20](https://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=mark+1:19-20)), the one whom he loved (John 13:23). John is also the author of the gospel of John, which this letter follows closely, and Revelation. The early church fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen, all say that he is the author, even though he is not identified in the letter.

John is writing this later in his life, and it's his faith and belief in Jesus that he wants people to remember when he is no longer there to tell the story. As with most letters, it is to encourage the faithful in a time of difficulty. We find that after Jesus' death, John was in Jerusalem until the fall of the temple around 70 AD and then travels to Ephesus where he leads churches, teaches, writes, and lives out his life. We may see 1 John similar to a pastoral letter like Paul’s writings, but it reads more like a sermon.

The major purpose of 1 John was to refute the heresy of some who had left the church and were stirring up problems: false teachers or antichrists. The main issue was that they denied both the humanity and deity of Jesus.

Two prominent hereises throughout time were being shared in the churches in their early forms. The first  was Docetism.  It is from the Greek word that means to seem, and the Docetists taught that Jesus only "seemed" to have a body.  They insisted that he was only a phantom and never had a flesh and blood, physical, human body, that he was a purely spiritual being who only appeared to have a body (From Walking Through the Bible).

The second heresy was Gnosticism.  This Gnosticism led to about three different attitudes:

1. Since it regarded the body as evil, it sometimes took the form of  asceticism with fasting, celibacy, rigid control  and evil deliberate ill           treatment of the body.
2. Or, it might take the form that the body did not matter, therefore Its appetites and lusts might be gratified without control and without limit.
3. The Gnostic regarded himself as an altogether spiritual man; he was above all the material things of life, so completely did they consider themselves above sins that sin, for them, had ceased to exist.

The definition given in Merriam Webster's dictionary is this: *gnosticism* : the thought and practice especially of various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through [gnosis](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gnosis)  (Knowledge).

 No wonder John felt that he had to encourage his churches to follow the one true Christ, Jesus, and who better to say who and what Jesus was than an eyewitness of his life, death, and resurrection?

What John wants his church, and us as the church now, to know is that Jesus is the Christ, the messiah, the savior of God's people. God is love, and we as a church are a family that loves both God and our neighbors. I hope this letter encourages us and helps us to say who Christ is.

**So, I Wonder:**

* Who is Jesus Christ to you?
* Are these heresies alive and well in our society?
* How do we rate as a family of God at Shepherd of the Sea?
* How do our lives reflect God's love?

The Bible project is a series of short videos that quickly describe many books of the Bible. Here is a link to the video for 1 John: [Bible Project 1 John](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3QkE6nKylM)

**Prayer**

Dear Jesus, help me to truly know you as my lord and savior. Help me to be revolutionary and share your love with my neighbors, as I love and serve you alone. In Jesus’ name, amen.