

Fellowship with one another. 1 John 1:7

Reading 1 John 1:1 – 1 John 2:6

How many of you know that the gospel message is **Really good news?**

It is the only reason we are gathered today.

It is the most incredible news we will ever hear and I never tire of it. Sadly though, we often misunderstand it, forget it, ignore it or simply don't believe aspects of it.

If I fully understood, would I still be living the way I am? We are on a journey of transformation.

I know I will be a changed person as more truth is revealed in the days ahead.

I heard last week someone describing how Christians often portray the good news of Jesus.

They start at Genesis 3 with the fall of mankind and the "All have sinned" text (Rom 3:23) and finish with 'Judgement for those who don't know Christ.

In other words, he said **"You suck" and "you are now going to pay for it!"**

For many people, this does not sound like "good news"!

This is not where the gospel story begins or ends though is it?

Of course I believe what the scriptures tell us about judgement and sin however I also believe **people are drawn into the kingdom of God by a loving heavenly Father.** When we come to know Jesus we get to know what God is really like and people are drawn to Him.

It's in this true understanding of God's love that we can fellowship with one another. We come to realise that it's not not the basis of our own goodness, but the goodness of God that we become part of His eternal family.

Would you agree that things are not working perfectly in the world today?

When we look, however, at the story of God and humans and this world, we learn that everything didn't start out bad. In fact God made everything beautiful and perfect.

God made a beautiful paradise for us to live in. How did he do it? He spoke, and things that had never previously existed, came into being. He made the earth and His Spirit hovered over its surface as

He made light – separating it from darkness

He divided the oceans and the sky....

He gathered the water so that land would appear....

He grew plants, flowers, and trees with seeds to reproduce themselves...

He created the sun, the moon and the stars – setting the days and seasons in motion....

He filled the seas with fish, the sky with birds, and the earth with all kinds of animals!

God put great care and creativity into all His creation, Then He looked at everything and said, "This is good!"

After He had prepared the earth God said, "Let us make humans in our image, to be like us. They will be in charge of the earth and the plants and the animals that live on it."

So God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed His own breath into him, giving him life.

Later, God created the first woman, Eve, from one of Adam's ribs, to be a companion and helper for Adam. So God created both man and woman in his own image.

I have heard it said that "**A good marriage is the union of two forgivers.**"

I believe this holds true for any relationship. The more we get to know one another and the more we are involved with one another, the more we have to practice forgiveness!

This wasn't how it was in the beginning though. God created man and woman without fault and in perfect unity.

In Genesis 1 & 2 the message we understand that God is glorious and always does what is good and just.

In Revelation 21 & 22 we also come to understand how everything that was broken in sin, God himself will come back and restore to its original glory. A new heaven and earth.

If we start in the wrong place, with the fall of man rather than the glory of God, somehow God is overshadowed by the problem of sin. But God is not worried about sin, He has dealt with the problem once and for all through Christ.

A little further down in our text **1 John 2:12** it says;

"I am writing to you who are God's children because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus"

Please connect with this truth. If you are a child of God, Your sins "Have" been forgiven.

Every sin you ever have or ever will commit, so far as God is concerned "is" forgiven right now. You don't have to pay for it by beating yourself up with feelings of guilt or shame. We have all sinned and don't have to wear masks to hide the fact!

Just as we are forgiven, we have no reason any longer to hold unforgiveness against another for wrongs done to us or to hold unforgiveness against ourselves for wrongs we have done. God's forgiven you so you can and must forgive yourself and others.

Can we all agree on that truth, right now?

In our text today we understand in the first few verses who Jesus really is. He is the word of life.

This letter immediately dispels any arguments or doubts that Christians may have about who Jesus really is. He is the God we read about in Genesis and throughout scripture, now in the flesh, seen, heard and touched by the Apostle John who wrote the letter.

John walked and talked with Jesus, saw his way of life, watched him as he healed the sick, heard him teach and received personal one to one tuition from Jesus Himself. He watched him die, saw him risen and watched him ascend into heaven. I would say John was a pretty good authority on who Jesus is and what he is like!

The scriptures teach us that when we look at Jesus we see exactly what God is like. Wow!

When we look at scriptures we don't see a God who gives up on people but a Father who loves his children deeply, has made each of us in his image and longs for us to come back to himself of our own free will. We see a God who gave himself for us to restore a relationship broken by sin.

Does this sound like better news to you?

You and I are image bearers of Almighty God, a God we call Father.

1 John 1:3

".....and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

God's plan is for restored fellowship with Himself. Of our own free will, we can now once again walk with God.

One of the reasons **John writes his letter is so**

1John 1 V4 *"And these things we write to you **that your joy may be full.**"*

To know that we now have restored, unbroken fellowship with our loving Heavenly Father must fill us with inexpressible joy. A deep sense of wellbeing that fills our soul and overflows like rivers of living water.

V5

By His Spirit God floods us with his light. To the extent that we are transformed, made into new creations in Him and unable any longer to walk in darkness.

Does this mean we don't sin anymore? No

Every Christian sins. Or has that one completely passed you by?

Sin however requires God's forgiveness and the good news is Christ's death has provided that for us.

Do you feel like God loves you more when you are good? Do you try to earn God's favour by trying to live a better life?

When we turn our lives over to God, our nature changes and we no-longer want to sin. A battle rages between the old and the new nature. We start to feel bad about stuff we never even thought about before. Satan will come along and bring his accusations. He will want to pull you down and feel that you are not good enough for God.

Well, newsflash! None of us are good enough.

Satan would have you crippled by shame and guilt, with feelings of great condemnation. Does this feel like walking in the light to you? No. He is keeping you in darkness and fear. Trapped in your past failures with little sense of your true worth in Christ.

Yes, we must resist the temptation of sin but we have a get out of jail free card when we do sin. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive....."

The devil must hate that! It just isn't fair that God should love to that degree.

Confession of sin disarms Satan immediately and completely. He has no authority in the courtroom of heaven.

So what has this to do with our fellowship with one another?

It has everything to do with it. If we were to continue reading this letter we would see here, as in so many other scriptures, that all those who know Christ, are part of one family.

The Church has been described like this: -

"An eternal community. The community of all true believers for all time."

Who builds this church? Jesus Himself builds His Church (Matt 16:18).

Acts 2:47 – **"The Lord** added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

In **Hebrews 2:12** (quoting from Ps 22:22) it says: - **"He** (Jesus) **would sing praise to God in the midst of the Church."**

Jesus is therefore present in the midst of the church, building it and worshipping in the midst of it with us!

We are born into an eternal family, no-longer **"of the world"** but **"of God"**.

I hope we are starting to see the significance of our fellowship with one another. We are family!

1 John 3:1-2

Of God – this speaks of our origin. No-longer out of the world but out of God. Born of Him.

We become God's children and His life within us enables us to love our fellow family members. How we treat others shows the reality of Christ's life within our heart.

When John wrote this letter, Christianity had been around for more than a generation. It had faced and survived severe persecution but the main problem confronting the church now, was declining commitment. Many of the believers were beginning to conform to the worlds standards, they were failing to stand up for Christ and compromising their faith.

We need the family to keep us on track and on fire for God.

There were many teachers around and John wanted to get the believers back on track, to show the difference between light and darkness (truth and error) and to encourage the church to grow in love for God and for one another. He also wanted to give reassurance to true believers that they possessed eternal life and their faith was genuine.

True fellowship involves relationship with God and one another. It combines the spiritual and social in a living relationship with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus himself wanted all of us to understand what that fellowship was really like and he demonstrated this in the most wonderful way.

Jesus washes the disciple's feet.

If you knew tonight was your last night, I wonder how you or I would spend it. Jesus knew the time had come and He was spending this last evening in quiet seclusion with His Apostles, those closest to Him. They met to eat the Passover Meal together in a friend's house.

You can picture the scene. The men were seated in a large upper room around a low table sitting on floor cushions. There were no servants present and they sat with feet dirtied from the travels and activities of the day. They, no doubt, were aware of the dirt on their feet and it may have been a source of unease as they sat together, but no-one thought to take the initiative and fetch water to wash.

Jesus however demonstrated what true servanthood looked like.

He took on the very nature of a servant and showed his disciples the depth of His love for them. He had nothing to prove and He to their intense embarrassment put on a slaves apron, poured water into a basin and went round washing their feet, doing what none of them had been willing to do.

He then went on to explain what authentic love was like. It always expresses itself in humble service and it's through this humble service that the world will identify us as His disciples. As we love one another.

We mustn't lose, through familiarity with the story, the importance of this lesson. Jesus chose his last meal together with his disciples to demonstrate that true love is expressed in humble service, taking the lowest position as a servant. Servanthood is the pinnacle of the Christian life. In God's kingdom down is up!

We also need to understand something else about fellowship and church life.
“Church is not an event you attend, it's a family you belong to.”

Rom 12:5

We are one body and individuals connected together where EVERY joint supplies.

We see a number of metaphors used in scripture to describe the church:

- A temple and we are the living stones God uses to build it.
- A body made up of differing body parts, of which you and I are one. Not dismembered but joined together.
- A fruit tree and we are its branches benefitting from the life giving sap.
- A family and we are all children of God related to God, who is our Father, Jesus our brother and you and I are also brothers and sisters.

We need to be part of the church family and the number one priority is that we love the other family members just as Jesus loved us.

1Peter2:17

Col3:14

This also means that I am also loved and accepted.

2 Cor 8:15

First they gave themselves to the Lord; then they gave themselves to us also.

This church is for imperfect people. We are all growing.

Through the church we connect to God>others>the truth>self/giftings>world/mission.

Nothing man made lasts forever – the church keeps going and growing!

Video “Reasons why people don't go to church”

Some reasons why people don't come to church: -

“I can't come to church until I get my life together.”

Church is a place for new beginnings.

“Church is a place for hypocrites.”

Imperfect people are welcome in church.

“All they care about is my money.”

People are priceless to God. We are His image bearers.

“Is there a dress code.”

Come as you are. You are not coming to an event but a family.

“If you knew what I had done, you wouldn’t accept me.”

If you knew what Christ has done for you, you wouldn’t be worried.

Read to finish 1 John 1:7