

Be A Joy And Blessing To Others.

Text: 1 John 4:1-10

Suggested Hymns:

452, 122, 45, 157, 172

1) Through the riches and blessings in Christ

2) Through the love of God

3) Through persisting in the truth

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 John 4:1-10, ¹ *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.* ² *By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,* ³ *and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.*

⁴ *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* ⁵ *They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.* ⁶ *We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.* ⁸ *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* ⁹ *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.* ¹⁰ *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are surrounded by two classes of people — those who make us unhappy and miserable and those who uplift and cheer us. We ourselves belong to one of these classes. We either bless and benefit our neighbours, or we are a detriment and a hindrance to them.

In Philippians St. Paul spoke of some people with tears, *and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*¹ But of others he thought of with thanksgiving, ³ *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.*²

To which of these classes do you wish to belong? May God grant that each of us respond emphatically, *“I wish to be a blessing to all whom I meet, and to all who live with me.”* That is certainly a praiseworthy wish and purpose. But do you know how to accomplish that?

In our text God Himself reveals to us how we may be of the greatest value and blessing to others. Let us pay attention to this important and helpful instruction of God as He tells us how to be a joy and blessing to Others. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Be A Joy And Blessing To Others Through The Riches And Blessings In Christ.

We become a blessing to others by acquiring the riches and blessings which God wishes to give us through Christ. If we are to be a blessing to others, we must first of all ourselves be blessed and have something to give. A person who himself is miserable, a pessimist, complaining, cursing, full of mischief, deceit, and ill will, cannot be a blessing to others.

Some of these people do so much harm that the Government puts them in prisons and some governments even execute them. However, there are many people with whom the Government does not interfere (because it is not the Government's business) who radiate and exercise a very harmful and destructive influence on other people.

Our text warns against these in its very first words, ¹ *Beloved, do not believe every spirit.* That is a very important warning against those people who will make you a curse to others. Remember that among dangerous people none are more destructive than these *false prophets* of whom our text speaks.

Our text tells us of two of their deadly deceptions. Firstly, verse 2 states, *every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.* In other words they deny the deity of Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God. Secondly, verse 3 states, *this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you*

have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. These false prophets are filled with the spirit of Antichrist, which leads them to contradict the Word of Jesus while they use His name as a cloak. They are hypocrites. They deny the atonement of Jesus. Such false teachers rob us of all true riches and they impoverish all who listen to them.

Therefore, if you wish to be a blessing to others then you must be on your guard against these false teachers. They will not only deceive you, but also cause you to deceive and perplex others.

On the other hand if you wish to acquire truth and true riches, you must hear those who are of God as we read in verse 6, ***6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*** This means we should listen to those people who are faithful teachers of God's precious Gospel. John summarises the Gospel in verses 8 and 9, ***8 God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.***

What a fountain of refreshing water of life these words open up, ***God is love!*** Think what that means. We see God's kindness in creation. The revelation of God's goodness in creation is truly captivating. We read in Psalm 19:1, ***The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.*** The whole Psalm shows God's kindness, justice and majesty.

In the New Testament we read in Romans 1:20, that ***since the creation of the world God's invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*** From the creation of the world people should acknowledge God and if they don't they are without excuse.

However, we see God's love and mercy in a far richer abundance, in more exceeding loveliness, in the gift of His Son. ***16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."***³ The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed summarises all that God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

This, then, is the fountain from which we are to drink. Jesus says in John 4:14, ***14 "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.***

But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” This is the bread which we are to eat as Jesus says in John 6:51 ⁵¹ ***“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.”*** The water and the bread is the Word of God through which the Holy Spirit produces faith which saves.

Our text says, ⁴ ***You are of God, little children, ... He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*** This means that Christ is the power which must enter and remain in your heart. Jesus says, ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”***⁴ The love of God is to be in our hearts.

Here is the source of true riches, the treasure-house of God from which we can take without money and without price. Here, in the Gospel of Christ, you and I are made people whose heart is filled with joy. What comfort we have in Romans 8:31, ***If God is for us, who can be against us?***

Our lips overflow with praise and thanksgiving, ***Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!*** ² ***Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.***⁵

In the Scriptures God shows us how we are to become people full of joy. We read in John 16:22, ***I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.*** Eternal life with Christ will be far greater than any joys we currently know.

Scripture tells us about the privilege we have through prayer. We read in John 15:16 ¹⁶ ***“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.***

Scripture tells us that through Christ we can do all things. We read in Philippians 4:13, ¹³ ***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*** Likewise we read in John 15:5, ⁵ ***“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*** It is with joy that we can say that our lives and salvation doesn't rest on our own abilities but solely on Christ.

So have you taken these gifts of God? Do you have them now? Let us take and take again and again by faith all that God's love pours out for us in His precious Word and Sacraments! Only those people who are blessed and enriched by God can be of real help and a true blessing and joy to others.

2. Be A Joy And Blessing To Others Through The Love Of God

Our text adds another consideration which needs to be weighed and heeded by those who wish to be a blessing to others. It is this, the love with which God has enriched us is to cause us to enrich others with our love.

We are to be careful not to receive all these blessings without using them. Therefore the apostle appeals to all whom God has adopted as His children. *⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

In our text God encourages us to love one another by reminding us of the divine origin of true love. *Love is of God.*

We hear so much foolish talk about love, and the natural person is so ignorant of the nature of love that many regard all discussion about love as a more or less temporary sentiment.

However, the love of which the Bible speaks, the love which is mentioned in our text, is that love of which it is eternally true. We read in 1 Corinthians 13:13, *¹³And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.* And in verse 8 we are told that *Love never fails.*

Remember that regarding this love our text states, *God is Love*, and *love is of God*. But now note what is emphatically stated in the concluding words of our text, *¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The love of which we are speaking is not a product of the natural heart, a sentiment that comes and goes based on selfish emotion.

No, the love of which God speaks in these words is that love which comes from the wonderful love of God in sacrificing His Son for us and which fills us with a similar devotion to others. We are exhorted in Ephesians 5:2 to *walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us.* We have seen God's

love in the sacrifice of His Son. Thereby the Spirit of His Son has entered into us, and now, as He died for us, we are to be willing to lay down our life even, if that be necessary, for others. Scripture says in 1 John 3:16, ¹⁶ *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Likewise in John 15:12, ¹² *“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* Christ is to be our example.

God has so wonderfully and abundantly enriched us that we are to be true lovers of people, that is, truly concerned for their souls, and seeking their good.

We ourselves, have received many blessings from God. Firstly, we are children of the richest Father and the most powerful King and Ruler who is always victorious. He has invited us to pray to Him, to make our requests known to Him, and He has promised always to hear our cry. Our response is that we should now show our love for others by praying for them. What a great benefit we will be to others as we do this! Scripture says in John 15:7, ⁷ *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

Secondly, we have the Bible, from which we may take unlimited treasures of wisdom and power to help those with whom we live. They may be members of our household, neighbours, associates, friends, or relatives. By calling their attention to the precious words of the Bible, we do more than by giving them any amount of material goods.

Thirdly, there are other works that flow from the love which God has implanted in the hearts of His children. There are many acts of kindness that we can do for others. Many can be done personally but others can be done through Christian organisations and charities. Each of us should consider what gifts, abilities, and means we have to demonstrate the love which God has poured into our hearts.

Certainly, by being loving fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, sisters, and brothers, we are to show who it is that dwells in us. Our daily walk, conversation, behaviour, and manner should reflect the happiness which we possess. Then, all who we meet and all who live with us will be blessed by us - by what we do and by what we say.

Scripture tells us in 1 Peter 4:10, ¹⁰ *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* And in Galatians 6:10, ¹⁰ *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

The purpose of whatever we do is that God may be glorified as we read in Matthew 5:16, ¹⁶ *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* This also applies in our conduct to unbelievers and enemies. We read in 1 Peter 2:12 that you should have *your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.* In this way we are a joy and a blessing to everybody we meet.

3. Be A Joy And Blessing To Others Through Persisting In The Truth.

In order that all this may not be in vain and be lost, we must heed a third truth which God impresses upon us in our text. It is this. We are going to have very decided and powerful opposition, but those who persist in the truth will win against all opposition.

There have been people who believed in the love of God, and they began to practise love toward others, but they laboured under the false impression that they could create a kind of heaven on earth. They thought that they could convince all people of this plan. That is a mistake, and our text tells us that.

Our text speaks of those who are going to oppose us and calls them the world. Of those it declares ⁵ *They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.* They believe in self-love. They believe in the survival of the fittest. In one way or the other, in a defiant fashion or in a more refined manner, the great majority of people have always followed and always will follow their corrupt nature. The three evils of human nature are described in 1 John 2:16, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*

Make no mistake, these people are active. In the first place, they will not listen to faithful teachers. They will not listen to you when you speak the Word of God to them. Remember what verse 6 says, *he who is not of God does not hear us.* Rather they speak their own worldly opinions and proclaim them persistently and loudly in the press, over the radio and on TV. ⁵ *They are of the*

world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. The world is full of preachers of worldly, selfish wisdom, and the world is full of people who listen to them.

These are the people who may flatter us at times, but at times they may also ostracise us and persecute us. But even though we are conscious of the great power which opposes us, we should not become discouraged nor weaken.

Our text expressly tells us in verse 4, *‘You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* From this we should note two points. Firstly, by the very faith in the love of God in Christ Jesus you have already overcome the world. Secondly, God has entered into you the and He is far greater than the world or the prince of this world who rules the children of darkness.

Remember the almighty God, whom no one and no power can hinder, has determined that we shall be victorious. We read in 1 John 5:4, *‘For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith.*

There may be days in which Pharaoh seems the more powerful, but wait patiently, and you will see Pharaoh swallowed up by the waters of the Red Sea.

When you seem to fall, then listen to these words of the text, *‘He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* Beware therefore of discouragement, beware of unbelief, beware of the *“spirit of fear,”* because that is not the spirit of God. The Word of God says, *‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.’*⁶

Our faith is in the sure promises of the almighty God and this is demonstrated by a courageous confidence in our Lord’s power and grace. The children of the King of kings dare not be faint-hearted, dare not wince nor slink away, dare not deny their Lord and Saviour. They must boldly and joyfully confess their God and Saviour, not only because it is right, but also because they are sure that He, and they with Him, will finally win the victory.

Here God’s has shown us how we may be a real blessing to others. God Himself has supplied the fountain of all blessings in His Son and gives each of us

His gifts and His promises to enable us to be a blessing to others. Let us now go forth to be shining lights of love to the glory of God the Father. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Philippians 3:18

² Philippians 1:3

³ John 3:16, see also Romans 8:32

⁴ John 14:23

⁵ Psa 103

⁶ Timothy 1:7