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“Walking In the Truth”
Pastor David Pranga, Brewster Baptist Church

2 John 1-13 (NIV)

Welcome to our service. Whether you are watching online or are here in the sanctuary, we are glad that you have joined us. My name is Pastor David Pranga, and I am one of the pastors here at BBC.

As many of you know, I have been away this summer on Sabbatical. It has been great coming back and catching up with everyone. I shared briefly about my sabbatical a few weeks ago, many of you were gone and wanted to hear some of the highlights. I thought I take a few minutes today to share some highlights from the summer, and then we will begin on *2 John*.

I want to thank the church for giving me time away this summer to replenish my soul and refocus on God. One thing that I focused on was exercise. I found great joy in setting time in my schedule every day, sometimes twice a day, to go out and exercise. I did a variety of things: hikes and walks in Nickerson State Park, biking on the rail trail, running, kayaking, and even paddleboarding. The time alone gave me time to think and meditate with God. During these times, my heart was refreshed.

A second joy was spending time with family. My two older daughters returned home from college this summer. We celebrated Jeremiah’s high school graduation. We also traveled to Wisconsin and St. Louis to see family. Christy and I had time to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary in Canada where we visited old Montreal and Quebec City. We enjoyed historical tours, attractions, and delicious food. At the end of summer, as a family we went camping at Acadia National Park for five days. We hiked and relaxed by the fire. This trip was probably the highpoint for many in our family. At the end of the summer, I found great joy taking the kids back to college: Rebekah (Colby College), Rachel (UMass Amherst) and Jeremiah (at Grand Canyon University) in Arizona.

This summer I also had the opportunity to learn and grow by attending two conferences and reading some books for my Baptist Policy class. Plus, I attended many churches on the Cape.

When I think back to this time away, I can honestly say, I felt renew and revived. My heart was filled with joy. I look forward to serving for many more years to come.

If you are visiting with us, we are in a series called, “The Bible – A Story of Love, Belonging, Redemption, and Hope.” We are going through all 66 books of the Bible, and we’re in the home stretch as we only have four books left to cover in the entire Bible. Today, we are looking at *2 John*. *2 John* is the shortest book of the entire Bible with just 13 verses. Even though it falls into the category of “letters to the churches”, I think this letter could fit on a “postcard” as it is really brief and to the point.

Second John was written by “Apostle John”. For those historians, John was the youngest disciple who Jesus choose to follow him. John was eyewitness of all of Jesus’ entire ministry. John and his brother James were called the “sons of thunder.” John refers to himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved.” Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, 1st 2nd and 3rd John, and the book of Revelation. John probably wrote 2nd John around 90 AD and when he was serving and overseeing churches surrounding Ephesus.

I think it is very important to understand the historical context in this passage. The church has been spreading and meeting in people’s homes. Almost the entire first generation of Christians have passed on, and now the church is in its second generation. The church had endured a lot. The first great

persecution under Nero had come and gone, claiming the lives of thousands of Christians. The current church was in flux.

These house churches did not have pastors or teachers at each home. The churches had Elders who served the people in the local communities. The churches relied upon teachers and prophets to teach God's word. A prophet would come and share a message to these house churches. This was a gift to the people and blessings to have a teacher or prophet come. Remember the people did not have a Bible to look to and read. Unfortunately, these traveling prophets and teachers had nowhere to stay. Ancient inns did exist, but they were quite dirty and filthy and not a place you'd want to stay. Christians would step up and provided hospitality to these teachers and prophets that were in need. The believers would provide them with housing, food, and essentials, as the teachers spoke to their church.

Unfortunately, with any good act, there were some who abused the situation. False teachers would take advantage of the hospitality of the early Christians. These false teachers were polluting the teachings of Jesus Christ. As we will see, John was warning the early church of heresy and how they should treat these false teachers. Follow along as I read *2 John verses 1 -13*:

The elder, To the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth—because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love.

It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.

I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. The children of your sister, who is chosen by God, send their greetings.

John starts off his letter by addressing himself as “the elder” which probably had more to do with his age as he was a very, very old man and one of the last disciples still living. John is writing to “chosen lady,” and there has been much debate as to the meaning of the “chosen lady.”

- 1) Some believe the “chosen lady” could simply be referred to as a lady in a particular church. John was writing to her and her children. Her home was used as a meeting place for the church. The house would have been big enough for many people to gather. Remember, back in the day, believers would meet in people's homes.

- 2) The second thought was the “chosen lady” is referring to the church. The children are referring to the members of the congregation. This letter was written to a specific church, but the letter was probably passed on to many churches.

I personally believe that the letter was written to the church and members. When I read this letter from John, a few things stand out to me. The first is his repeated use of the word “truth.” John uses the word “truth” five times in the first four verses. You must ask yourself: What is this “truth” that John is referring to? The “truth” that John is writing about is their relationship with Jesus Christ. These Christians understood who Jesus was and what Jesus had done for them. As Christians today, we must remind ourselves of the “truth” that we have in knowing Jesus.

Jesus said in *John 14:6*, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to Father except through me.**” *John 17:17* reminds us that God’s word is “truth.” We know that God has revealed His truth in the pages of scripture – the Bible. God has also given us the “Spirit of Truth” which is the Holy Spirit. It’s this Spirit that helps, guides, and leads us in life.

When John speaks to us about knowing the truth, he means that as Christians, we know the truth about Jesus Christ. It is vital as Christians that we understand the truth of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we believe Jesus Christ, is the Son of God. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus came as both fully man and fully God and lived a perfect life, teaching about the Kingdom of God and performing many miracles. He suffered under Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. Jesus was resurrected three days later and appeared to the disciples and over 500 people. Jesus ascended to heaven and is seated at right hand of God. One day He is returning as King and Judge over all people.

For the apostle John, knowing the truth and doctrine of Jesus was very, very important! As believers, this truth should never leave us. We need to know the “truth” of Jesus Christ.

The second thing that stood out to me is the love John has for the church and its members. Let me read again verse 4: *It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.*

John is a very old man at this point in his life. John has great joy and delight that there are some walking in the truth. John could see that the next generation is carrying on the faith and truth which is exciting for John. This new generation had never physically seen or known Jesus, yet they accepted the truths of Jesus Christ. It is now up to the next generation to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and to keep it pure for the next generation.

I believe many of you feel the same way with your own children. As many of you know, there is nothing more exciting than seeing your children “walking in the truth.” This is especially true when children go to college, get married, and have their own family. The fact that our children are walking in “truth” by their own admission, is something we should be celebrate, and it should bring us joy.

John continues in verse 5: *And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.* - verse 1:5,6

What does it mean to “walk in love”? When does it mean to “walk in truth” as a believer?

I believe it means that we are to be “*obedient*” to God’s commands. If we truly say that we love Jesus, then our actions need to demonstrate that love for God. We understand that God loved us first. Since God loved us, we want to show our love for Him, by being obedient to His commands. It’s not out of obligation or duty that we keep these commands: it is out of honor and love that we obey God.

John reminds the believers of the command that Jesus gave His followers. This is a central theme of John writings in 1st , 2nd and 3rd John . *We are called to “love one another”.*

It reminds me of a famous hymn we sing. *They will know we are Christians by our love.*

For John, *truth and love are interconnected*. You need both, and they are not exclusive of each other. John wants us to understand that truth (which is doctrine) of what we believe, and it should have an impact in our lives. We also need to show love, which is action. Since Jesus loved us and rescued us from our sins (truth), we need to show God’s love (action) and learn to love one another. It is not easy or simple to do. For some people, it takes a lot of work to really love one another. As Christians, we are called to love one another.

Lastly in this letter, John is very concerned about false teachers and deceivers who are not preaching the truth about Jesus Christ:

I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.

John wants to warn the church about deceivers and false prophets which was becoming a bigger and bigger problem in the early church as they were leading people astray and polluting the teaching of Jesus Christ. There were two different types of false teachers and prophets.

- The first were false teachers who probably were not Christians. They denied the deity of Jesus Christ. Some of the teachers denied that Jesus really was the Son of God, that was Jesus was fully man and fully God. Others denied that Jesus really came back to life. They taught a false gospel of Jesus which was a great concern to John.
- The second group of false teachers were probably Christians who added on to Jesus’ teaching. They put their own spin on things and added to the teaching of Jesus. This also was not good and often led people astray.

In both cases, John is writing to the early church that they need to watch out for these deceivers and false teachers. John goes so far as to tell the church not to offer them hospitality. Remember hospitality was a big deal in the church. What John understood is that false teachers can wreak havoc on our faith in God. Often these teachers will do it very subtly. Unfortunately, these false teachers are polluting the teaching of Jesus which would lead people astray, and the people would fail to obey commandments.

When my daughter Rebekah was around four years old, she enjoyed watching her “kids shows” on television. Christy would often come and watch with her. When commercials would come on, Christy would talk about, how they were trying to get us to buy something, and they would make a game of it by discussing what the commercials wanted us to buy, and how they were doing it. One day, Christy drove to Target with Rebekah in the back seat. They parked, and Rebekah was watching all the people

coming out of the store with carts overflowing with their purchases. *Rebekah said, "Wow Mom, those people must watch a LOT of commercials!"* For Rebekah, the commercials impacted what people bought. As our kids have grown, one thing Christy and I have tried to emphasize is to think about what we put into our mind: what we watch on social media, tv shows, movies, the news, music, or even books.

Lots of voices are telling us many things, and they are not all true. We may need to realize that everything that we are listening to and watching is a message with an agenda to go along with it. We may even need to say to ourselves, how does this match up with what the Bible teaches us about Jesus? John is telling us to be alert to what people are saying. Unfortunately, our culture is impressing upon us truths that go against scripture and gospel of Jesus. We need to be watchful of this.

When you look at a church, it's important for you to see and be familiar with the church's statement of faith. It's what the church believes to be true dealing with doctrine. BBC has a statement of beliefs which guides what we believe and what we teach.

In summary, when I reflect on *2 John*, I am reminded of the truth we have in Jesus Christ which brings us together as a church. But truth is not enough. God wants us to apply this truth to our lives. God wants us to keep his commandments. As John reminds the church, we are called to "love one another.". Lastly, we need to be mindful that there are some inside and outside the church that are trying to lead us stray from the truth. The truth is something we need to guard with our hearts.