

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Twelfth Sunday After Trinity, September 7, 2014

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 228:1-5, 233:1-2, 367, 336, 488.

Lessons: Exodus 30:22-33, 1 Corinthians 1:18-30, Mark 16:1-6.

Sermon Text: 1 John 2:20-28.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Aren't Christians often made to feel and think that they don't know important things? Aren't Christians often made to feel and think that what they know and believe is unimportant and even useless? These kinds of ideas are especially prominent when we consider the origin of all things and the origin of man. All theories of evolution deny creation, and most believers in evolution mock, or look down on, or think of and even tell us that we are stupid for not accepting evolutionary theories. Almost every area of life, even literature, is infused with evolutionary ideas. And for more than a century, even leaders in churches have accepted or tolerated evolutionary theories, or tried to harmonize evolution and creation. Such people, claiming to be Christians, have given up the simple truths of Scripture including *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1) And that is often only the beginning of teachings in churches which deny the Word of God. The fact that God became man is an idea that many consider something from ancient mythology. The idea that such a God-man could atone for all the wrong-doing of all mankind is ridiculous. The idea of life after death or eternal life is just a strange hope. The idea of attaining or receiving such eternal life simply by believing what some "God" said and not by earning it is foolishness.

Well, haven't you heard those kinds of things? Haven't you been mocked behind your back and even to your face for believing and expressing such ideas? Our epistle lesson said *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Even in John's day, unbelievers with what they thought was some kind of superior knowledge mocked and even persecuted believers, encouraging them to abandon such simple Bible truths.

In our last sermon from First John 2, warning against many antichrists and the great Antichrist, we concluded with this question: In the face of all these threats – including the threat of being drawn into a non-Christian cult and the threat of being misled by false teachers within the church – what are we to do? John is reassuring us that God has not left his people helpless. He goes on: *"You have an anointing from the Holy One"*, that is, from Christ. Every believer has been given spiritual gifts when he or she was baptized – anointed – beginning with the basic gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of faith: *"all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth."* That Spirit-anointing enables us to hear and believe the Word of God, the truth. The objective truths of God's Word are greater than any false teacher, any cult leader, or any denominational tyrant. We already know the truth – we don't need any secret knowledge. We already know the truth well enough to tell others about Jesus Christ and his work of Salvation. We already know the truth well enough to tell when someone is lying about Jesus Christ.

CLING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD AND REMAIN IN HIM!

- 1. You have been anointed by Jesus Christ.**
- 2. You know the truth.**
- 3. Don't give it up!**

John moves from warnings about antichrist, warnings about those people and things who are against Christ and seek to draw people and especially believers away from Christ, to the hope and comfort that believers have in Jesus Christ.

John tells us by inspiration: ***“you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth”***

What does it mean that ***“you have an anointing from the Holy One”***? The Holy One is Jesus Christ himself, the Messiah, THE Anointed One. This anointing has come through the Holy Spirit who comes upon each believer when the Word of God is heard and read and especially came upon each believer at his or her baptism.

Anointing is something which we don't usually do. It is not part of our worship services or our private worship, but it was apparently quite common in the New Testament church; and among God's people in the Old Testament it was used with special instructions for special purposes.

Anointing was to pour oil on the head of someone. It is used in three ways in the Scriptures. An ordinary anointing in the time of Jesus was an act of courtesy to pour oil on the head of guests. The official anointing was conferred on prophets, priests, and kings even in Old Testament times. It was a symbol of special gifts or responsibilities to be given to the one who was anointed. The words “Messiah” – from the Old Testament – and “Christ” – from the New Testament mean “the Anointed One”. Jesus Christ, perhaps more formally “Jesus the Christ” was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be the great prophet, the great king, the great high priest. There was also a medical anointing, as the “Good Samaritan” did to the man who had been beaten and robbed in Luke 10:34: ***“He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.”*** The Christian places reliance not in the natural means themselves, but in God who works through the means and renders them effectual.

John says that ***“all of you know the truth.”*** I think it could be said of everyone here today that you, too, know the truth. For various reasons, we seldom have visitors to our churches who know nothing about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the heart of every sermon that is preached here, and the heart of our Sunday School and Bible classes.

But in the context of all the messages that are being offered today, even by churches, it is crucial that believers think for themselves and that they not just allow themselves to be swept along into exciting but non-Christian ideas. You must examine what you are told. And you are to ***“search the Scriptures”*** (John 5:39) because in them you find eternal life. You must evaluate all that is taught and done, especially by other churches lest you lose the truth. For when the truth becomes a ‘half-truth’ it is no longer the truth.

In John's day many believers were drawn into cults. Perhaps you, too, know someone who has been drawn into a cult. It is crucial that believers not simply swallow anything and everything that they hear. It is crucial that Christians evaluate carefully both the claims of new spiritual movements and groups as well as evaluating carefully the claims of established denominations. Size of one's denomination does not guarantee truth. We have the tools we need—we have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and faith – we have the power – and we have God's clear and unshakable Word – we have the truth.

In the first part of his letter, John urged his readers to walk in the light, to obey God's commands, to love their brothers, to remember their identity, and to beware of antichrists. Here he gives the earnest exhortation to remain in Christ!

“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.”

The Greek verb “remain” is repeated over and over – more than 20 times in 1 John. Why? Because it is human nature to drift. Because sin within us causes people to give up, to lose interest, to grow bored, to want something new and different, and to be driven by their appetites instead of their heads. Steadfastness in your

spiritual life doesn't happen by itself. It is a conscious choice that must be acted upon and followed daily. It is a conscious choice that many of those not worshiping with us today have made, and they need to be admonished by you, their Christian brethren.

Satan's agents, knowing and unknowing, are spreading many terrible lies among believers. One of the greatest is this: Maybe you're not fully saved. You need to know the missing knowledge, you need to have certain experiences, even personal emotional experiences. You need to speak in tongues, or be baptized by immersion, or be in the "true" organization, and on and on. Every one of these lies tries to substitute a work of man for the work of Christ. Christ did enough for us through his incarnation, his cross, and his resurrection. John's readers knew that already. They didn't need to be retaught. They had the Spirit-anointing from their baptism and from God's Word. When people who were once Christian are lost from Christ, it's not because they didn't get to advanced levels of Christianity – it's because they let go of the basics. They thought they could take the Word of God or leave it and come back to it when they were ready – perhaps on their deathbeds. They ignored such admonitions and exhortations as Hebrews 10:24: ***"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching."***

They failed to search, to ransack the scriptures. They failed to join in prayer and worship and all that goes with it together with fellow confessing Christians.

If you were to take time to read the Gospel of John, chapters 14 through 17 and then the First Epistle of John you would notice how many things John repeats in his epistle.

John had heard these things from the master himself over and over on Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus himself had used the word "remain" eleven times in John chapter 15 alone. For example, Jesus said: ***"I am the vine: you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"*** (John 15:5).

"And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming." Hang on! Remain in Christ! Hold on!

One commentary gave this illustration for this verse: It is nice to have a clear conscience if you need to visit a police station or courthouse. It is nice to walk around and know that you have nothing to fear from police officers or judges. Your business with these powerful authorities can be pleasant. Well, says John, ***"the world and its desires pass away"*** (verse 17), and ***"this is the last hour"*** (verse 18). Imagine the terror some people will experience when they encounter the Lord Jesus in person on judgment day. They will be overwhelmed by the sudden realization that they have wasted their time, or foolishly believed lies, or made wretchedly bad choices, and chased the wrong things. The day of Christ's return to this planet will be the worst day of their existence up to that point, and things will get worse!

That day will be utterly different for those who remained connected to Christ, who overcame the temptation to wander off in search of new revelations and new experiences, who overcame the temptation of spiritual boredom and apathy. John writes ***"See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us--even eternal life."*** The great reward for all who choose to remain with Christ will be a joyful face-to-face meeting, confident and unashamed. We will enjoy judgment day! It will not be a day of fear and dread, but a day of joy that we will now be with our Savior eternally. All this because ***"you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth"***

"And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming." Amen.