

Warning Against Antichrists.

First John 2:18-29 Sermon 5

Our section of scripture today starts with a warning. “It’s the **last hour**.” All kinds of people have speculated what this means and when the world will end. Whole theologies have developed about the end times.

Three friends die in a car crash. At their orientation in heaven, they are asked, “When you are in your casket and friends and family are mourning over you, what would you like to hear them say about you?”

The first guy says, “I would like to hear them say that I was a great doctor and a great family man.”

The second guy says, “I would like to hear people say, that I was a wonderful husband and school teacher, who made a huge difference in our children of tomorrow.”

The third guy replies, “I would like to hear my friends and family say, ‘Look, he’s moving!’” Most people are like that last guy.

Many people fear the process of dying, and particularly the last hour of life. There is only one sure cure for that fear. It’s a growing relationship with Christ!

It’s trusting in the words of a Psalm we all know. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” (23:4)

It’s good to be reminded of what Hebrews (2:14-16) tells us. “Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear

that Jesus did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham” – you & I.

This is good news. Through Christ’s death we are free from the fear of death. Why? We know Jesus took our sins on himself, that He conquered the grave & He promised the same to us! Praise and thank you Jesus.

Furthermore, the Apostle John reminds us in I John 4:18, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

So the more we grow in our love for the Lord Jesus, the less we’ll fear Him, when we die and face judgment. God’s love is better and more powerful than fear!

On his deathbed, British preacher Charles Simeon smiled brightly & asked the people gathered in his room, “What do you think especially gives me comfort at this time?”

When they all remained silent, he exclaimed, “The creation! I ask myself, ‘Did God create the world or did I?’ He did! Now if He made the world and all the stars of the universe, He certainly can take care of me. Into Jesus’ hands I can safely commit my spirit!” This is an awesome testimony of faith in Almighty Creator God!

It’s important to know that the term, “**last hour**,” means “every hour is the last hour.” John is the only New Testament writer to use this phrase. This concept is often in the Bible using the term “last days.” It refers to one age ending and another beginning. Like Israel moving from Egypt to the Promised Land. Or when the nations will flow to the mountain of the Lord that the Old Testament Prophets talk about. Or when Jesus returns to this earth. But John’s interest is focused narrowly on the deception of the faithful, by

antichrists - plural. John is concerned that people's souls are in danger if they believe and follow the heresies he's teaching against.

This is why sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ is so urgent. It's why it's urgent that we are ready to witness, pray, sing, forgive & die – at a moment's notice. We are always confronted with choices to ally ourselves with the God of the Bible or the evil forces and beliefs that try to separate us from God.

This is such a big deal that this situation may be like those two airline pilots who were supposedly playing on their laptop computers when they flew past their destination in Minneapolis, Minnesota by 150 miles. They claimed to lose concentration while flying. Well, if this is true, they were really dumb and/or stupid. I don't want to fly with them.

But sometimes we do the same spiritually. We lose focus as to what we're supposed to be doing and then end up getting into trouble or else have a bad spiritual crash. It can happen to anybody, to any follower of Jesus who isn't keeping his or her spiritual eyes open and seeking the Lord's will every day.

The Apostle Paul in Romans (13:11-12) also warns us. "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

It's always the last hour before eternity for each of us. So what do we need to do or not do? John tells us in plain language. Recognize, Remember, Remain.

First, we need to **recognize the enemy**. In verse 22 John calls the enemy a liar. How do they lie? They deny Jesus is the Christ. The

antichrist are the ones who deny the Father and the Son. Antichrists – plural, don't accept that Jesus incarnated – was fully human and fully God. They don't accept the Almighty has ethical / moral standards. In the context of First John, that's what John is saying. He's not focused on The big anti-christ. He's focused on all the people who join in with the Devil. Those false teachers.

The word antichrist only occurs in John's letters in the New Testament. But it's an idea as old as religion itself. The word can mean – against, or in place of, and often both. It can mean the opponent of Jesus, or the one who tries to put them self in the place of Christ. The first meaning is open opposition. The second meaning is often harder to spot, as these persons usually subtly try to take Jesus' place. The simplest way to think of this is, Christ is the incarnation of God and goodness. Antichrist is a description of the devil, with his evil ideas and actions that want to take the place of Jesus and God.

John is telling us – recognize people who are tied in with The antichrist – like those who left the church in Ephesus – Verse 19. "They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us."

But he's also focused on the attitudes and actions of liars and people working against Jesus and the values of Jesus. John is focused on people with false beliefs, immoral actions, and heretical teachings. John is focused on the power and attractiveness of falsehood.

He's saying what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians. (3:17-18) "Join with others in following my example, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ."

A few years ago, an African American friend, a conference minister, got the director of MDS, Mennonite Disaster Service, to go with him and visit some neighborhoods of Philadelphia. Toward the end of the visit, Ertell turned to Kevin and asked – “Aren’t these disaster zones?” Kevin agreed. The antichrist is at work as much on individuals as she is on people groups and societies.

We could say the same as we look around the world. There are many many people doing the destructive work of The Antichrist. There are false preachers within the church. Others are causing misery, destruction and death in many many ways. Violence comes in all kinds of forms – including government policies, racism, economic methods, and simply with our tongues. Sometimes it’s easy to call out – like the treatment of the Rohingya people, or the idolatry about guns in the United States. Other times it’s subtle & confusing – but we sense evil is occurring.

Because it is the last hour we must recognize the enemy, resist him and fight, by standing firm in the faith, as we name the evil danger. We must recognize that this is a battle of the mind – of attitudes, as much as evil deeds. There is growing awareness that technology and the media can shape us in ways we aren’t aware of – that manipulate us in directions and ideas we aren’t aware of, as well as false alternative facts. We dare not be passive, but must be alert, recognize and attack evil when and where it occurs, with God’s help.

Scripture reminds us, “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” (Eph. 6:10-11)

John asks us in this last hour to recognize the enemy, & second, **remember we are united**. One of the purposes of First John is to offer assurance to believers. So John tells us, “You

know the truth Jesus Christ. You have an anointing from the Holy One. We were anointed by the Holy Spirit when we surrendered to Christ. What this amounts to is that we are united with Christ and with each other. We have knowledge.” Plus four times in these few verses John let’s his readers know, we abide with the proper relationship and right theology with Jesus.

Tonto and the Lone Ranger were riding through a canyon together when all of a sudden both sides were filled with Native American warriors on horses, dressed for battle. The Lone Ranger turned to Tonto and asked, "What are we going to do?" Tonto replied, "What you mean 'we,' Whiteman?"

This doesn’t sound like much of relationship, does it? There isn’t much unity of thought and action. But John reminds his readers and us, “Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he has promised us, eternal life. (2:24-25)

John was writing, not to communicate fresh knowledge, but to bring into active and decisive use the knowledge which his readers already possessed. The greatest Christian defense we have may be simply to remember what we already know. Very often, what we need is not a new truth, or new idea. Instead we simply need to put into practice the truth we already know.

It’s a simple fact of the Christian life that things would be different at once if we would only more fully put into practice what we already knew. Another way to say it is, we have light enough to walk by, if we fully use it. So let’s remember our abiding, our unitedness in Christ and all it means for every part of our lives, love God in Christ and love one another. Keep growing together in Jesus.

What do we do in the last hour, which can be any time for each of us? John tells us to Recognize the enemy. Remember we are united together. Third, **Remain in Christ.**

John assures us, (Verses 27 & 28) “The anointing you received from Jesus, abides, remains in you. You do not need anyone to teach you. His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit, not a lie, - just as it has taught you, abide, remain in him. Dear children, continue, remain in him, so that when Jesus appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.” Twice John uses the word "remain," as in we must remain in Christ. He also says, "continue in Him."

According to a 1974 newspaper item, Leo Fortier had rung the bell of his church in Three Rivers, Quebec, every Sunday for 52 years. That's quite a record of faithfulness. It's called sticking with the job, doing the work, staying the course.

The Apostle Paul testifies, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (II Ti 4:7-8)

How many Christians can say today, “I have fought the good fight. I have kept the faith?” To be able to say this, we recognize and respond to the enemy. We remember we are united with each other and with Jesus. And we work to remain in Christ. These tasks are possible because of the work Jesus has done for us and in us. Because of the experiential knowledge we have from abiding with the light of the world. The master lie, the lie of all lies of this world is to deny that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus is the Christ. But with our faith & experience we know better.