

“This Is Life”: 1 John, Prelude
Text: 1 John 1:1-4
9.16.18



Reflection Questions for Personal Use or in a Group Context... (please consider the teaching notes prior to consideration of the reflection questions)

We will discover that John’s letter will consistently address a number of questions and reinforce a selection of themes:

“When does life begin?”

“Are there signs of life?”

“What’s love got to do with it?”

“How are others experiencing Jesus as a result of my experience of Jesus?”

“How would you describe what it means to have life?”

“Why is it important that John and others heard, saw, and touched Jesus, and didn’t just relate a story someone else told?”

“How does the beginning verse in this letter compare to the beginning verse in the gospel according to John? “(John 1:1)

“Can you describe a time when a community of Christ-followers expressed love for you which made Jesus more attractive?”

Teaching Notes...

In order for this series of reflections to become ‘transformative’, you have to be willing to consider the possibility that your current approach to life might actually be limiting your possibilities, and you must be unwilling to settle for anything less than life with an eternal quality to it.

The writer, many conservative scholars believe, is John. He is, perhaps, the youngest of all of the disciples (likely a teen when he met and began following Jesus). He and his brother James formed the tandem known as ***“The Sons of Thunder”***.

Maybe having mellowed in his old age, but more importantly, having been transformed, he identifies himself as *“the one Jesus loves”*. Far from being arrogant or competitive, it was a life-orienting conviction.

John seems to suggest that there is life “as we know it” and a life as we should be experiencing it.

There is the life that we “know”. It is simply what “is”; what we are presently experiencing. Eventually, something will challenge the validity of such an approach and you will either succumb to the status-quo... the gospel according to Popeye: *“I am what I am and that’s all that I am”*, or, you will risk surrender and learn to trust another way of life.

“He is the word of life. This one who is life itself...” (1:1-2)

As Christians, we contend that every human creature has an innate yearning for the fullest experience of God, ourselves, and others in a way that is in keeping with Creative-design--- a way that makes us feel most alive.

This **yearning**, this **hunger**, this **desire**--- however you choose to describe it, can easily be **neglected or ignored**, but it never goes away. Most of our pursuits are simply efforts at fending-off the ache.

It seems that while God was *“knitting us together in our mother’s wombs”* (Psalm 139)--- in his own thought-filled and complex way--- he knit something of himself into us; subliminal messages from God that are embedded in our hearts which are easily missed because they are so subtle, yet so persistent.

Most of our life is spent “re-routing” our longing for God.

It is spent channeling our desires into our careers, our families, our image, our financial future. The author of Ecclesiastes calls it, *“life under the sun”* (1:3). It is life confined to our senses; to our own abilities and our limited point of view. No story, no God-speaking, God-acting. No God-interference. No one to whom I am accountable and no one for whom I am responsible. It is me and my own random experiences and my own interpretations of those experiences.

On the other hand, if I see “under the sun”, indicators of another reality, then I will attempt to discover how that reality addresses my desires and how can I can bring that reality to bear on my waking, eating, sleeping, working life.

Life... we define it in various. We have yet to reach a consensus on a biological definition and we seem even further from being able to define life beyond all our voluntary and involuntary movements.

Physiologically, we argue about when it begins. We all know that there is more to living/life than our heart-beat and cell reproduction. It's "more than".

"Life is self-organizing chemistry which reproduces itself and passes on its evolved characteristics, encoded in DNA."

Dr. Harry Fuchs

Concise. Factual. Un-satisfactory. We as humans simply do not do well when our lives seem to lack meaning and significance. When we feel full, but unsatisfied.

John suggests that every human creature experiences a heart-beating, lung-breathing, cell-dividing kind of existence, but relatively few actually experience "life". It's the contrast between a "**human being**" and "**being human**".

"life"... (Gr. zoe) the absolute fullness of life, real and genuine, belonging uniquely to God that he shares with us.

"Eternal" is more of a quality/condition of life than a duration.

It seems an unfortunate choice of because when we hear "eternal life", we are projected, mentally, away from here to some disembodied afterlife.

"Eternal life" is John's description for the kind of life made available only to us in relationship with Jesus. It was the word chosen to express our experience if we were to choose to live right here and right now as if the future had arrived.

John has had a full-sensory experience of the love of God as embodied in Jesus.

John is not forging some theological argument, but is simply offering us what he has experienced. Teaching, preaching, miracles, healings... even the crucifixion--- John was there for the whole thing. *What captivates his imagination and captures his heart?* The love of Jesus. His conclusion about God, based on Jesus' 3-D representation of him? *"God is love"* (4:16).

Not simply that God *"has"* love or even that God *"loves"*, but that God IS love. It's his very essence. It's what makes God, God! Since this is his nature, there will always be one irrevocable truth: God is always, stubbornly and purposefully loving us.

Purposefully... *"Live a life of love"* (Ephesians 5:2) [walk in love, let love be your guide, mostly what God does is love you, MSG]

"We know that we have passed from death to life..." 1 John 3:14

This theme of life and death has been part of our story from the beginning. Death, as the unresponsiveness and lack of God-consciousness. Cut off from God. Cut off from life.

Death is our “pre-existing condition” (Romans 6:23: not necessarily punitive, just consequential). Eternal life necessitates a “passing”; a “transition”; a movement from “death to life”. Each of us is confronted with a choice: to remain in all that leaves us unconscious of and unresponsive to, God, or cross into life.

Transformation is the process by which God re-directs our passions toward himself, so that we are now pursuing the right things.

At the absolute core of our faith is the mysterious conviction that God stepped into the human experience in the person of Jesus... life itself.

The “other” is no longer ambiguous and fuzzy. He is personal. Knowable. Available. Loveable. Jesus is what God looks like. Any contradictions that arise between our image of God and how he is represented in Jesus, must be radically dismissed.

What this also means is that good faith can never come unhitched from relationship.

God has spoken in Jesus and now speaks to others through those who have witnessed him. This is at the very core of our vision statement:

Woodinville Alliance Church... a community where every person discovers who they really are in Christ, experiences his goodness, and shares this life-changing encounter with their world so that others might value and choose Jesus for themselves.

This will never simply be about what you “know about God”. It will be about your “knowledge of God”. So, people are to be able to describe their experience, as such: *I know Jesus because I have been with _____. I saw him/her. I heard him/her. I touched him/her. God is love!*