



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

17 - 22 MAY 2021

INTRODUCTION

This week, in the run-up to Pentecost, we conclude our readings from 1 John. As usual the Thoughts are based mainly on the text in bold type.

MONDAY - 1 John 2:18-29

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour. As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. 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 by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth. ²² **Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.** ²³ **No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also.** ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ And this is what he has promised us, eternal life.

²⁶ I write these things to you concerning those who would deceive you. ²⁷ As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming.

²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him.

Thought for the day

There seems to have been a specific, and probably worrying, incident in the church to which John was writing, which resulted in schism, with some people leaving. They are described harshly as antichrists (v18) and liars (v22). It seems that the underlying argument had to do with the status of Jesus, probably in relation to God (v22-23). John wants to build up those who remain - they were anointed, they have knowledge (v20), they know what is true (v21), and they have held to the Gospel they received 'from the beginning' (v24). For him this is a matter over which there can be no compromise since eternal truths are at stake. There are plenty of issues on which Christians disagree; how do we decide which ones are serious enough to make us or others break with their former friends?

TUESDAY - 1 John 3:1-10

¹ See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² **Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.** ³ And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴ Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in him sins; no one who

sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. ¹⁰ The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters.

Thought for the day

One of the results of faith in Jesus is that Christians are likely to be treated in the same way that he was (v1): 'He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him' (John 1:11). For the time being we, his followers, are his children (see John 1:12); when he returns in person we will still be like him, whatever precisely that will be, and will see him as he is (v2). Of course when John was writing his letter Jesus' return was expected soon. 2000 years later it is more difficult to hold on to the imminence of that expectation, but whether we read this passage literally or metaphorically, it remains our status as God's children and the certainty of sharing, one day, in Jesus' return which should be our encouragement.

WEDNESDAY - 1 John 3:11-24

¹¹ For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³ Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. ¹⁶ We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷ How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

¹⁸ Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹ And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; ²² and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

²³ And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴ All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Thought for the day

Here we return to Jesus' 'new commandment' of John 13:34: love one another (v11,23). Such love is inseparable from belief in Jesus (v23) with the inevitable result that those who follow him will 'abide in him' and he in them (v24). We are probably familiar with this idea, for example from John 15:5-7, part of the True Vine passage. Perhaps we are over-familiar with it and no longer recognise how radical and extraordinary it is. Today would be a good day to savour its promise of a mutual embrace and intimate relationship with our Lord and Saviour.

THURSDAY - 1 John 4:1-6

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for 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 from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.** And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world. ⁴ Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Thought for the day

From the earliest days of the Old Testament, God has never set out to trick his people. Throughout human history he has been faithful. So we have a simple test for the spirits that may come to us bidden or unbidden, maybe as thoughts, dreams, or simply vague ideas. If they go with the grain of belief in Jesus, they are from God; if they go against the grain, then they are not from him (v2-3). This seems straightforward, but it may be easier to state as a principle than to put into practice - and this difficulty may have been the reason for the rift in the congregation we read about on Monday (2:18-23).

FRIDAY - 1 John 4:7-21

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ **God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so 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 atoning sacrifice for our sins.** ¹¹ **Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.** ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶ So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹ The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Thought for the day

God is love (v8,16) - perhaps this is all we need to know. George Herbert undoubtedly knew it - in his poetry he often used 'Love' instead of 'God'. And in this passage John continues his own exploration of what this identity of meaning implies. Verses 9 and 10, for example, are a restatement of the more familiar John 3:16 and, with verse 11, stress that any love we feel and show is only a pale reflection of God's love for us. And there is a sting in the tail of this passage: we delude ourselves if we claim to love God but don't demonstrate his kind of love to other people (v20-21). How often we need to be reminded of that!

SATURDAY - 1 John 5:1-21

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ **For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome,** ⁴ **for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.** ⁵ **Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ There are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree. ⁹ If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. ¹⁰ Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

¹⁴ And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. ¹⁶ If you see your brother or sister committing what is not a mortal sin, you will ask, and God will give life to such a one—to those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin that is mortal; I do not say that you should pray about that. ¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not mortal.

¹⁸ We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them. ¹⁹ We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

²¹ Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Thought for the day

Faith in Jesus is all that is needed to overcome (conquer) the world, standing as always in this letter for opposition to God (v4-5). Paul uses similar language in Romans 8:34-38 which ends 'nothing ... will be able to separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'. In the final section of his letter John returns to the subject of sin and its effects (v16-18), finishing with what seems at first sight a strange reference to idols (v21). Although it is an unusual way to finish a letter (see any of Paul's for a more conventional approach), it is probably a coded summary of much that has gone before. Idolatry was the people's recurring sin in the OT, their affront to the holiness of God; and in the NT period turning from idols was a good way of describing Christian conversion. In this sense 'idol' stands for much the same as world or sin, two constant themes of this letter. More prosaically, what idols do we need to keep ourselves from?

JRE / 12.4.21