

Sermon: Reasons for Proclamation

Text: [I John 1:1-4 ESV](#)

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Introduction: What is it we need to tell others? - well, the truth, and the truth about Jesus. You may have noticed that the four gospels were written generally to tell of Jesus' birth (incarnation), his early life, the ministry of Jesus, and his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. They were written to help instill faith in future generations. Listen to John's purpose for writing his gospel: [John 20:30-31 ESV](#) ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Early in the Church's history there came false teachers and heresies that were negatively impacting a correct understanding of the Gospel. The N.T. letters were written before the Gospels. Many of these epistles (letters) were written to correct false teaching and therefore false living. One such attempt is by Paul in his letter to the Galatians who were being confused about Law and grace: [Galatians 1:6-8 ESV](#) ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

This letter is written about 55 C.E. about 25 years (or a generation) after the Church was established.

Our writer, John - under the influence of the Holy Spirit, wrote [I, II, III John](#) in the 90s toward the end of the 1st century in another effort to correct the false teachings that were negatively impacting believers in Jesus. What is called "Gnosticism" was impacting the church with its teaching that "spirit" is good and matter or flesh is evil. Also influencing the church was a teaching called "docetism" that basically said Jesus only seemed to be human and that post-resurrection appearances were not real in a physical sense. One story to illustrate this from the *Acts of John* (pseudepigrapha) was that when Jesus walked on the sand he did not leave "footprints."

The Bible talks about "the beginning." We hear it in the first book of the Bible. [Genesis 1:1 ESV](#) ¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. John writes in his Gospel: [John 1:1 ESV](#) ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And then in our text, in yet another prologue, John writes: [I John 1:1a](#) That which was from the beginning,

Where each of these phrases may be saying something different, one aspect is the same - Jesus! And God's purposes have always been about fellowship with His creation and His Church for whom Jesus died. What Jesus said, what John witnessed, is important as it relates to the word of life (eternal life), fellowship that is both vertical and horizontal, and the privilege given to us to proclaim the Good News that results in joy for those who accept God's terms.

I like what Ray Stedman has described here with regards to our text: "The short book known as **I John** re-proclaims the message of John's gospel in a changed context. The gospel of *John* recognized that both Jesus' followers and his foes agreed that he was human, but not everyone could see God's work being revealed in him. So the gospel emphasized the divine side of his nature. **I John**, however, speaks to a context in which some had taken that emphasis too far, and saw Jesus only in spiritual terms. So the epistle emphasizes Jesus' humanity...**I John** focuses on the embodied (incarnational) word of God, and calls for an embodied faith."

Let's read our text: **I John 1:1-4 ESV** ¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we **looked upon** and have **touched** with our hands, concerning the word of life— ² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and **proclaim** to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we **proclaim** also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our[a] joy may be complete.

Footnotes: [a] **I John 1:4** Some manuscripts *your*

John in his writings is known for his themes of love, and here there is no difference. There can be no greater love than to live and share God's love with others. These 4 verses we are looking at today are one sentence in the Greek text. And the first verb is the word "proclaim" in **verses 2 and 3**.

The word (απαγγελλομεν) means "to report, to declare, to report w. reference to the source from which a message comes (Brooke). The word 'to witness, to testify' (μαρτυρω) is a word of experience and this word 'to declare' indicates the authority of commission (Stott) and both words emphasize that the message rests on eyewitnesses (Bultmann). **Verse 2** forms a parenthesis which the writer inserted to make clear beyond all possibility of mistake that the life to which John bears witness was revealed by God in the historical person of Jesus (Marshall)."

Today, we want to explore together the reasons John gives us for proclaiming the best news ever.

I. The Gospel Comes through a First-Hand Witness.

A. John experienced Jesus.

John heard, saw, looked upon, touched, and experienced Jesus' message.

When John says he heard Jesus in the past, he is conveying here that this is still affecting him. He was never the same after hearing the voice of God and what he had to say. This is not craziness like someone who hears voices, but John heard "the voice." He was in Jesus' physical presence, sat at his feet like Martha (the sister of Lazarus) and not unlike Saul who heard the voice of Jesus on the road to Damascus. We, today, hear the word of God through the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes a preacher, teacher, or friend may speak God's word to you to help you experience Jesus.

After many of Jesus' followers were leaving him because of a difficult teaching we hear this: **John 6:67-69 ESV** ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

This phrase "we have seen" comes from a Greek word (ὄραω) that again talks about a past event of seeing something that has had a lasting result. Just one of many things this might relate to would be the time Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, and was in the company of Moses and Elijah, and his face shone like the sun (the glory of God).

John 1:14 ESV ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 ESV ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God,[a] who is at the Father's side,[b] he has made him known.

Footnotes: [a] John 1:18 Or the only One, who is God; some manuscripts the only Son
[b] John 1:18 Greek in the bosom of the Father

I John 4:12 ESV ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

God was seen in Jesus, and God can be seen in us by the way we love others!

The word “gazed” (θεωομαι) means “to look at or behold. The verb expresses the calm, intent, continuous contemplation of an object which remains before the spectator (Westcott).” - Rienecker, p. 784

It is where we get our word “theatre.”

John had touched Jesus -

Luke 24:39 ESV ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Jesus was no phantom. He was fully God and fully human (man).

B. Christians must share Jesus with others.

As Christians, if we accept the Gospel, these words of life become first-hand for us, and then must be, “out of love,” shared with others. We are obligated to proclaim what we have heard, seen and touched to help save others from spiritual death and eternal punishment.

II. The Gospel Can Create Eternal Life.

(If received, accepted and internalized)

Medicine and medical treatment are of no value to a person who refuses to listen to those who know what is best for them.

At the end of **verse 1** is the phrase “the word of life.”

A. The “word of life” is true (perfect).

because its source is God

Proverbs 30:5a ESV ⁵ Every word of God proves true (*is flawless*, NIV);

Psalm 18:30ab ESV ³⁰ This God—his way is perfect;[a] the word of the Lord proves true (*is flawless*, NIV);

Footnotes: [a] Psalm 18:30 Or blameless

There is nothing defective about “the word of life” or “the Word of God.” The New Testament has a parable in Mark’s gospel that helps here. **Mark 4:26-29 ESV** ²⁶ And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The seed is interpreted to be the “Word of God.” Given a receptive soil, a harvest is assured and gathered for the farmer. Earlier in [Mark 4](#), though, the harvest is contingent on the condition or receptiveness of the soil. Maybe your heart is hard or you are more interested in this world than the Kingdom of God. How you accept or reject the seed, which is God’s word, is up to you.

In [verse 2](#) the text says in essence:

B. “The” life was revealed to Christians before us.

Q. How was it revealed to them?

A. by God, and now it is revealed to us through the Bible and other Christian witnesses.

Eternal life was made manifest...It was made known to us. Jesus was the 1st century’s look at who God was. [John 14:6-11 ESV](#) ⁶Jesus said to him (*Thomas*), “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.[a] From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. **Footnotes:** [a] [John 14:7](#) Or If you know me, you will know my Father also, or If you have known me, you will know my Father also.

Eternal life was seen. Just think of all the Christian people who have had an impact on your life. We are obligated as followers to help bring generations behind us into the family of God. We need to have a similar attitude to Paul as he asked church members to follow his example. [I Corinthians 11:1 ESV](#) ¹ Be imitators of (*follow*, NIV) me, as I am of Christ.

[Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV](#) ¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

This accepted revelation requires we testify of our experiences with God’s Word.

It requires we proclaim (tell you about) the eternal life we experience, so that:

III. The Gospel Results in Fellowship.

Fellowship. “The word indicates the setting aside of private interest and desires and the joining in w. another or others for common purposes.” - Rienecker, p. 785

It is the idea of sharing, communion, partaking and participation with others...

We are to be loving God and loving others so we always do what is best for them. “True (genuine) Christianity is an experience rooted in relationship -- with God and with other believers.” - Steven Cole

Fellowship is certainly:

A. With God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ

It even makes us co-heirs with Christ and He becomes our brother, and God, our Father. We have only two choices for fathers in this world. It is either God who is identified as Truth or the devil who is a liar and the father of lies. God makes the most sense as a companion through this world and as an escort into the next.

We also enjoy fellowship

B. With other Christians

This commitment to the Gospel and Jesus creates and puts us into another family - a human one like us. So fellowship is vertical firstly and then becomes a horizontal relationship than deepens with the years. The benefit of fellowship to the Christian life is immeasurable and invaluable. We look to our fellow travelers for encouragement, support and help in this endeavor. Unless you are physically unable to attend the various meetings of the church family, or in solitary confinement, a person is going to do poorly in their growth as a Christian.

Conclusion: There can be joy for the proclaimer of the Gospel message when someone they have witnessed to accepts Jesus as their Savior. There is joy for the person who has walked away from Death to accept eternal life. There is a spiritual healing!

The Apostle John toward the end of his life was the last surviving apostle, but still took great joy in his vocation for himself and the Church. Listen to what he says later:

II John v. 4 ESV **4 I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.**

III John v. 4 ESV **4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.**

John Piper has often pointed out, we cannot glorify God properly unless we enjoy Him thoroughly. A. W. Pink has said: “Now this joy is not to be regarded as a luxury, but rather as a spiritual necessity. We are obligated (and blessed) to be glad in God.”

In the 1st century Church and by the 2nd or 3rd generation of Christians, many had lost their excitement, passion and joy for the Christian walk. Church had become habit, empty ritual and routine - not expectant. We can hear the problems coming by listening in on Scripture.

Matthew 24:12 ESV ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. - **sound familiar?**

And to the church in Ephesus, John wrote: **Revelation 2:4 ESV** ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Being holy and a part of God's family is not just being different, but being fully committed to God's purposes. **Illus.** Saginaw, MI hospital Mission Statement and an employee said: "well, it's not my mission statement." Apathy (I don't care) and even hate can develop against those who would try to speak and live the truth.

Jesus praying to God says: **John 17:14 ESV** ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

James Boice sums up (The Epistles of John [Zondervan], p. 30), This then is the way in which the gospel has come to us and must be passed on. The apostles bore witness to what they had seen and heard of Jesus, proclaimed it authoritatively on His commission, and finally preserved it in the writings which have since become our New Testament. Today, believers are to take these sacred writings, and having through them entered into the experience of the apostles, carefully duplicate and proclaim the message of Christ to the world.

Many people believe in a Jesus of their own imagination and have an emotional experience that they call being "born again." But when their problems are not all magically solved, or they go through difficult trials, they conclude that "Jesus didn't work," and they go back to the world. The problem is, they didn't believe in the Jesus revealed by the apostles in the New Testament. Their experience was not that of true fellowship with God and with others who know God. And so any witness about their supposed conversion is lost when they abandon the faith. It's likely that they never experienced true Christianity. They may have only responded to an emotional sales pitch and were converted by the personality of the speaker rather than the Person who is The Word of God!

True Christianity is essentially Jesus Christ—revealed in Scripture, experienced in new life and fellowship, and proclaimed with joy. Make sure that you've got the real deal! Life was not perfect for Paul who was in prison near the end of his life, but he could still proclaim to the church: **Philippians 4:4 ESV** ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice (farewell).