

## **Reasons Why the Son of God Came**

1 John 1:1-2:6

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Well, good morning all, and thank you for the opportunity to share with you the Word of God. Today, our sermon will come from 1 John, and we will look at some of the key ideas that the Apostle John illuminates for us in his first letter.

There are a few ways you can read this letter based on its content. For instance, many look at 1 John as a pastoral letter to his church, and that is very much true. You see, the language he uses is very familial, very communal, and you can sense an intimacy that is very apparent in his letter. In another way, you could read 1 John as an instructive letter. Many times, John expounds on the nature of the commandments and rehashes the significance of keeping them. For example, loving God and loving the brethren are key focus points for him. He commands us to keep away from idols when he concludes the letter. He gives practical advice on discernment and testing the spirits to see if they are of the spirit of truth or of the spirit of error.

Another case, which would complement the previous two readings, is that 1 John is an apologetic letter – apologetic meaning it's a defense of the Christian faith. Here, John offers a defense against heresies that are creeping into the church, turning away believers, and exposing false converts. From this angle, I would like to preach this morning on one of the key ideas that John presents in this letter to combat the heresy of Gnosticism and Docetism. On the other hand, I want to encourage all the believers here in the gospel truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I want to give you a very brief overview of 1 John so that we can understand the context of our talk this morning. From an apologetic standpoint, one of the main reasons John writes this letter is to combat false teachers, whom John calls antichrists. Now, these false teachers were denying the humanity of Christ. They were teaching sinless perfection and they were encouraging lawless living. One of the pervasive heresies of their time was Gnosticism. This heresy taught that salvation came through secret knowledge that only a select few could attain. It also taught that anything that was spirit was divinely good, and anything that was material, such as

earthly or flesh, was evil.

Because of this, the idea of God, who is spirit, becoming human was completely outrageous and ludicrous to the Gnostic. So, what some of the Gnostic Christians did was tweak the doctrine of the humanity of Christ, saying that Jesus only appeared to be human. He seemed to be human. That's the heresy of Docetism. They said that because they could not reconcile the dual humanity or dual nature of Christ – Him being God, Him being man. And so, they reduced Jesus to appear human or as a phantom of some sort.

Now, I think some of this vain philosophizing was done because they did not want to lose intellectual credibility with the world. If you know anything about the Roman Empire at that time or the Greek Empire before, intellectualism and schools of thought were a big thing back then. But John reminds us that we are not of the world. Our mind is renewed in Christ. Some, having itching ears, have turned aside to fables, denying the truth of the gospel.

If you say Jesus was not human or only appeared to be human, then serious questions will arise. Did Jesus really die on the cross if He appeared or seemed only human? Was it the ultimate sacrifice that He died on the cross for our sins? Does it make the gospel redundant? If we believe that Jesus only appeared to be human or a phantom, did He really die as a human on our behalf? Because He needed to be 100% man, 100% God.

The Apostle John sees through this subtle deceit of Gnostic influence infiltrating the church, and he is quick to address it. Gnosticism will take appealing concepts of many religions around them and incorporate it in their belief system. Within the Gnostic realm, Jesus was simply a cog in the machine of Gnostic belief. Whereas for us, Jesus is the centerpiece of the universe. So, you could understand the outrage when God, the God we worship, is taken and He is changed and fashioned by pagan imagination, by a competing world system or belief system.

So, how does John combat the rising problem impacting the church? Well, John makes it a central focus to reaffirm the humanity of Christ. The first three verses of 1 John 1 that Iggy read for us illustrate the depth of John's intimate connection with Jesus. If you want to look at 1 John 1, it says:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard

we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

John is saying here, "I have literally touched Him. He's not a phantom. He's a human. He's God. He's the God-man. I've seen Him. I've heard Him. I've touched Him, and now I'm declaring Him to you. And I cannot deny what I've experienced." That's what John is saying.

So John makes it a habit to reaffirm the humanity of Christ in the opening verses of 1 John. John also writes for us to keep on loving - to love God, to love each other, to love the truth. So there's an emphasis on love and truth going hand in hand. He also provides for us a grid of discernment to identify and mark out false teachers. And lastly, John gives us four reasons why the Son of God was manifested, or in other words, came in the flesh.

These four reasons, which are scattered throughout 1 John, will be the focus of our sermon today. So I'll just list for you the four reasons:

1. He came to destroy the works of the devil.
2. He came to be the propitiation for our sins.
3. He came that we might have life through Him.
4. He came to be the Savior of the world.

So let's begin with reason one: He came to destroy the works of the devil. If you flip over to 1 John 3:8, it reads:

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

One thing I want you to note is who the devil is. He is the father of those who sin. He is the author of sin. His will is bent on sinning. His will is bent on killing and destroying the legacy of Christ and the believers in Christ. His name comes from the Greek word "diabolos," which means false accuser, slanderer, seducer. He seduces many to sin through a facade of pleasure, but sin will always lead to ruin. James says, "sin, when it is finished, it brings forth death." Death is the wage for sin.

And notice with me what it says about those who sin: they are of the devil. This does not mean they are created in the image of the devil. No, they are created in the image of God. But the deciding factor is whether this person continually practices sin. "He who sins" is the same as saying "he who continues in sin is of the devil." The devil is not your father by design; he is your father because you imitate him. As the saying goes, "like father, like son." If you mimic your dad long enough, people will say you are your

father's son or you are your father's daughter. It's not so much how you look, but it's how you act.

In John 8:44, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees, calling them children of the devil. He says, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." The Pharisees wanted to destroy Christ. They wanted to silence Him. They even lied about Him. They slandered Him. And the judgment of Jesus was swift and just, calling them children of the wicked one. "You are behaving like the devil, and so you are of the devil."

A bad tree will bring forth bad fruit. First John tells us in a very clear way how to tell the difference between children of the devil and children of God. Number one: people who hate and have not love are of the devil. Love characterizes the Christian in every way. If there is continual hate and hatred for the things of God, then that is a clear sign. This hate can show itself through anger, profanity, unholiness, murder, and despising the commandments of God.

Number two: people who lie or deny Christ and do not side with the truth are of the devil. In this case, denying the humanity of Christ, denying Jesus' true nature, and denying that He truly came in the flesh. Number three: people who have no faith are of the devil. People who do not exercise faith walk in darkness. They are classified as children of disobedience. They have not come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And so, to be outside of Christ is to be in sin, and sin is of the devil.

What I like about John is that he is very black and white. There's no gray area with him. It's either this or that, and that just simplifies understanding. I want you to notice with me now what the works of the devil entail. There's probably an extensive list you could examine, but I will briefly focus on a few that explain the gravity of this text that we are looking at.

So firstly, we know that the devil is a deceiver. His job is to deceive people and nations. He whispers lies into the minds of men and women, turning them against the truth and against each other. His persuasive power is not something we should underestimate as Christians. The Bible teaches that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and also his deceitful workers can transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, uprooting the church and turning away many from sound teaching. These are the wolves Jesus warned us about.

Secondly, the devil is the tempter. He works to tempt you to sin. He fo-

cuses on your weaknesses and makes a play to seduce you to fulfill your desires outside the will of God. One of the best examples of this is seen in the temptation of Jesus in Luke 4, where the devil for 40 days tried to tempt the Son of God to sin. He tried to tempt Jesus to operate outside the will of God, the will of the Father. The devil tried to break His Trinitarian fellowship with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. That is what he does. He sows discord and destruction. But his tempting power is no match for the holy determination of Christ, which silenced him in the end. Jesus, firm in quoting the Scriptures, is the victory and the example we cling to.

Thirdly, the devil is a liar. He lies to leave many in darkness and without hope. Many have suffered and continue to suffer because of the devastating impact of lies. Jesus said he is a liar because there is no truth in him. Every fiber of beauty that adorned Lucifer before he sinned has all but disappeared, and he is now disfigured by the rotten lies he confides and communicates.

The lies that John refers to in his writings are in reference to the person of Jesus. 2 John 1:7 says, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." You see, he qualifies who an antichrist and a deceiver is. They are those who deny Jesus coming in the flesh. The antichrists of 1 John are lying about Jesus by denying His true nature, and these lies are fueled by the devil.

I also want you to note that the devil is a devourer. 1 Peter 5:8 says the devil roams about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. In the context of 1 Peter, to devour means to drink something whole, to gulp down entirely, to spare nothing. This is to fully consume in a swift manner without hesitation. This is what the devil does. He'll eat you up like a lion, not piecemeal but wholemeal. That's a pun, by the way.

Not only does he devour people, but he devours the seed. The parable of the sower talks about the sower going forth to sow the seed, which is the Word of God. Some of it fell on good ground, some on thorny ground, some on rocky ground, and some fell by the wayside. The Bible tells us that the seed that fell by the wayside was devoured by the birds of the air. When Jesus explains this parable, He says it's the wicked one, the devil, who comes and snatches away the seed sown in the heart. And the devil is able to do this because people do not understand the Word. He is quick to devour the seed before anything can take effect.

How many times have you tried to speak to someone about Jesus, only for interruptions to take place? How many times have you had gospel tracts stolen from you and thrown in the bin? I've heard stories where stacks of

gospel tracts have been stolen, chucked out, set on fire, where missionary homes have been raided to confiscate gospel literature, where nations deceived by the devil have all but closed their borders to the gospel. That is the work of the devil. That is him devouring the seed. That's what it looks like.

Finally, the devil is a destroyer. John 10:10 describes thieves and robbers who come to steal, kill, and destroy. In the context of the passage, Jesus was referring to the religious leaders of His time. They were the thieves. They were the robbers that were stealing, killing, destroying the sheepfold. And at the same time, these religious leaders were under the power of Satan, doing his work. Jesus says in John 8:41, "You do the deeds of your father." And of course, verse 44, "You are of your father the devil, and his desires you want to do."

You see, the devil is in the business of destroying lives, destroying churches, destroying relationships, destroying families, destroying fellowships. That's what he does. But how does the Son of God coming destroy the works of the devil? Well, in one sense, it's what Jesus did on the cross that defeated Satan. Satan's dominion has been loosened. The tight grip he had over the human race through sin has been broken.

The word "destroy" used in this verse is not talking about annihilating the devil. It's not talking about complete obliteration. The devil is still very much active in the world. What this verse is describing is the loosening of the devil's power and his influence. This is evident because the devil continues to tempt us. He continues to deceive and promote sin. But what Jesus did was take away the devil's power and influence. Jesus came to stop the cycle of sin and death that resulted from the works of the devil. And make no mistake, the devil will be destroyed once and for all, but not here, not yet.

The victory of Jesus is the forgiveness of sins. It is the removal of sin from the lives of those who trust Him as Savior and as Lord. The devil's power has been made redundant, and his works of deception, lies, and hate no longer condemn us. His works are powerless in this regard. And this hinges on our second point, reason number two: He came to be the propitiation for our sins.

If you flip over to Chapter 4, verse 10, it says, "He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now, the obvious question here is, what does propitiation mean? Well, propitiation means to appease or to make things right. It is to satisfy the wrath of God against sin. The song "In Christ Alone," which we sang, is one of the best contemporary hymns that captures the thought for us regarding propitiation.

For example, in the second verse, it says, "In Christ alone, who took on flesh," talking about His humanity, "fullness of God and helpless babe," divinity. "The gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save." Listen to this: "On the cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied." That's propitiation. "For every sin on Him was laid. Here in the death of Christ, I live. I live." That's the victory.

This second verse is Johannine theology summed up in a nutshell. God has every right to be displeased with us. He has every right to judge us, condemn us. He has every right to be angry with us. But His anger and displeasure is not like ours. Ours is tainted by sin. God's anger and displeasure is different. It's not flawed. It is holy. It is righteous in practice.

You see, the problem with today's Christians is we tend to emphasize the love of God more than His justice, more than His righteousness, more than His holiness, and His anger and His wrath. And to speak of God's wrath almost becomes foreign in Christian circles and in society in general because there is a growing lack of sound teaching, and people have compromised their biblical convictions.

This imbalance has resulted in the downplay of sin and coming judgment and good theology. You ask them what they mean by "God is love," and they'll rattle off a mantra like, "He cares for me. He loves me. He makes me feel good." I'm sure He does. But in the scope of the gospel, what 4:10 teaches us is His love means death and suffering on our behalf.

Having said that, the love of God is something special, isn't it? The amazing love of God is the motivation for our salvation. It is the catalyst. He loved us. That's what the verse says. He loved us and sent His Son to die in our place. That is why Jesus came, not only to break the power of Satan over us but to die in our place, to offer His life for ransom for many.

John 15:13 says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man may lay down his life for his friends." God is love, which not only describes His attribute, His nature, but it also reveals His actions: a life for a life. His love goes deeper because He died for His enemies. We were His enemies. We were under condemnation. We had the wrath of God lingering above our heads at one point. But Jesus took our place and appeased the wrath of God that was upon us. He died on the cross for our sins. That is the love of God emphasized through Jesus. Loving your enemies, dying for them, that is radical love. That's the love that's not of this world. That is what makes Christianity uniquely different from all the other religions. How many gods can you say have died in your place? Zero, except for one: Jesus.

One of the great benefits of being a child of God is that Christ becomes our advocate. 1 John 2:1 says, "If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He became our defense attorney before the Father when we sin. He mediates on our behalf. When we do sin, Jesus is there to defend us, as our sin has been exchanged for His righteousness. So when God looks at us, all He sees is the righteousness of God imputed to our account. Jesus has taken our sins. There's been the great exchange, as some would call it. This is only possible through Jesus. And Colossians tells us that our life is hidden with Christ in God. So when Satan comes to accuse us when we, as believers, sin, Jesus counters those charges laid against us because He has dealt with those sins. Satan, as the accuser of the brethren, has no claim against us, and those charges do not stick because Jesus has already dealt with it. This is the result of Christ destroying the works of the devil. It has rendered Satan powerless over us.

Although Christ was our substitute in death, the road did not end there. He rose again to become our intercessor, much like the Holy Spirit. Just as the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, Christ also intercedes for us as our advocate and high priest. Christ is not only our Savior, but He is our Lord Protector. The fact that Jesus is able to do all this means that we have a chance to live the abundant life. That takes me to our third reason why Jesus came: He came that we might live through Him. If you look at verse 9, the previous verse, it says, "In this the love of God was manifested towards us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." This means that we have new life in Christ. We are no longer our former selves in darkness and hate. 2 Corinthians 5:17, one of my favorite verses, says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. All things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new."

The Bible speaks of an important dichotomy, specifically in the book of Colossians, which Brother Josh is expounding for us at the moment. This dichotomy, or this contrast, is the old man versus the new man, or the old self versus the new self. The opportunity afforded to us as believers is that we have the ability, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, to live as a new creation. We have the capacity to put off certain sins like anger, malice, wrath, and blasphemy that characterized our old nature, and now we have the strength to put on the new man, which is characterized by true humility, meekness, longsuffering, forgiveness, and love.

When verse 9 says that we might live through Him, it means that all this is not possible without Jesus. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He grants us the capacity to do so, the ability to achieve it, the strength to complete it, and the wisdom to deny self. John 15:4-5 says, "Abide in Me,



and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

Jesus is the source of life, for in Him we live, we move, and we have our being. We cannot produce this new life without the Creator of new life. And sometimes we deceive ourselves, thinking we can change ourselves in our own strength, but that can never last, and it can never bring true joy, peace, or contentment, and it can never undo your sin or my sin or grant eternal life. True life is found in Jesus. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Any thought or act of self-sufficiency or self-salvation is not only a denial of the purpose of Christ, but it's a failure to understand yourself and a failure to understand God. Another aspect of this new life in Christ is that it is fruitful. Those who abide in Jesus will bear much fruit, and this fruit brings fullness of joy. Not only is it fullness of joy, but this fruit remains. Jesus says, "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

This is a call of the believer to live the gospel, to preach the gospel, and make disciples. That is why we are here. We are the light of the world, we are the salt of the earth, and the fruit of our labor is what matters in the end. It's not how much wealth you've accumulated, it's not what car you drive or how many houses you have. All that pales in comparison to the gospel and our future in eternity, does it not? So where should your treasures be?

Jesus says in Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The apple of your eye will be the direction of your life. That is to say, your desires dictate what you will pursue. If you pursue God, you will pursue all the things He loves, desires, and His will.

Jesus said in John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." This abundant life that Christ speaks of is free from judgment. It is free from fear. It does not allow thieves and robbers to break in and steal, for we are hidden in Christ. We are overcomers of the world. We are more than conquerors because God is faithful, and He is our advocate. Because of this, we have a confident life in Christ.

Living the abundant life is only possible if we live by faith and rest in His power, and sow the seed of the gospel. It is having a Christ-centered mind that sets affections on the things above, not on things of the earth, for they perish. Living a confident life in Christ is living the abundant life in Christ.

If we look at the word confidence for a moment, it means to trust or to confide. One of the ways this can be interpreted is "confide" from the Latin, which means "with faith" (con meaning "with," fide meaning "faith"). With faith, that's confidence. A confident life is one that is trusting and confiding in Christ. It is a life of obedience. It is a life with faith. And only then can you access the abundant life Jesus speaks of in John 10.

Be mindful that when Jesus speaks of the abundant life, it does not mean everything will be pain-free or smooth sailing. It does not mean that you will not suffer. The fact that you are living as a Christian means that you will suffer persecution. But the Bible says the joy of the Lord is your strength. Your prayer life is your strength. Praising God in the midst of these difficulties will renew your strength. God has equipped us with all that we need, and take comfort in this: God will never leave you nor forsake you.

1 John 2:25 says that God's promise for us is eternal life. This promise is found in knowing that Jesus is the Christ. He is the God-man that the Antichrist denies. Hold onto the truth of the gospel that God became man and died for our sins. This takes me to my final point, reason number four: He came to be the Savior of the world.

A few verses down in 1 John 4:14, it reads, "And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world." John is quick to reiterate his testimony again as an eyewitness of the Lord's ministry. He testifies that he has seen Him again with his own eyes. John is saying, "Do not doubt me for a moment, for I am not making this up. My testimony is my word. I have held Him. He is not a phantom. He is human."

The beauty of the gospel is knowing that Christ came to be the Savior of the world. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again bodily according to the Scriptures. Whether you are Jew or Gentile, the gospel does not racially discriminate. It is the life source of all who will believe. It does not matter whether you are young or old, rich or poor, black, white, smart, dumb, tall, or short. The gospel is for the world, and the Savior of the world is Jesus.

The Savior of the world is not some secret knowledge only given to a few, as the Gnostics would have you believe. But the Savior of the world is a person, the God-man Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us to go out into the high-ways and the byways. He tells us to go out into all the world and preach

the gospel. Preach it to every creature. Let's not be people who sow the gospel sparingly. The world is our mission field.

The doors beyond this community center separate us from our mission field. God has placed us here for a reason, and we must be obedient to His will as a church body. Be a gospel light in the Camden Valley area. Each of us has a story of salvation. We have all met with Jesus, and He has changed our lives. Your story is a story people need to hear. People need to see what the Savior has done, and it starts with you.

What is your story? How did you encounter Jesus? Where are you at now with Christ? What are you doing with Jesus now? These are questions we need to regularly ask ourselves as we examine ourselves. Jesus is not some esoteric, specialized knowledge. He is God, and He is very real. Our faith is not some unintelligible nonsense, as the world would have us believe. No, our faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Our faith does not complement the world. It does not accommodate the world. Our faith overcomes the world. Never forget that.

In conclusion, the Bible reminds us to be aware of false teachers and not be taken away by every wind of doctrine. John tells us to test the spirits, test what I say. I'm sure Josh would say the same thing: test what he says. The love of God is an invitation to experiencing the redemption of the gospel. It is the antidote to being estranged from God. He is an initiator. He seeks us out, not because we loved Him, but because He loved us first.

So, four reasons why the Son of God came are: to destroy the works of the devil, to be the propitiation for sins, to give us eternal life and life more abundant, and to be the Savior of the world. Friends, let us take comfort and build our confidence on these four reasons, because they empower us to walk in our faith, walk in obedience.

If you're here today and you don't know where you are with God, or you have never experienced a love of God, a love like this, then let me invite you to repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only then can you have this fruitful and intimate relationship with God. Jesus is the way, and don't settle for anything less. Amen.

Let's pray.