

This Is How We Know

July 24, 2022

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. Services are presented on YouTube, Facebook and our website one week following recording. This week's message is titled "This Is How We Know." Thank you to Dave, Ed, Rhonda, Glynnis and Paul for being involved in the video. The scripture reading is First John 5:2-5. Paul's message begins with audio clips from a BBC Radio four podcast called More or Less. There are episode links in the video description.

Welcome & Announcements

Welcome. We're glad you're with us. Our numbers are down with our summer crowd. We are thankful for your presence and we have a number of announcements. Birthdays. This is the second year in a row. I've been here at this for my particular birthday. We are thankful for birthdays. What can I say? Keep them coming. Oh, Singspiration. July 31st at Camp Omagh, an upcoming event. Job opportunities. A church building cleaner. Speak to Adam about your interest in that if you are so interested. And Great Lakes Christian High School is looking for a math/business teacher and part time cook. It's not is. Not you know, this is not the same person as maybe two or even more. I'm not sure. Alicia and Justin Dauner will be with us the first couple of weeks of August, and we look forward to their visit. Andy and Tammy have moved to Kyiv -- from Kyiv to England and there-- Max Britain and Zac are still in the Ukraine. So our prayers are still for the people in Ukraine.

A number of prayer requests. Marie's sister Cora passed away last week and we're we're glad that you got to visit before that. Brenda's funeral was last week on Wednesday. And we our prayers go out to her family. Mike's friends Roy and Sydney-- Sydney was diagnosed with cancer. And Roy has a two year prognosis. And Mike will be visiting with him, I think, in Kentucky next week. Let's go to God in prayer at this time, Father, we do thank you for blessing us in so many ways and for your spirit and your light in our lives. We pray for understanding and wisdom to be able to shine with your grace. And we appreciate and value recognize your presence in our lives, particularly here now as we assemble to praise you all and be with Marie and with Britain, Max and Zac. Brenda Griffin's family and Mike's friends, Sydney and Roy. And there are so many others that are not here that we pray for their health and well-being, for their safety, and we pray that we may all be lifting you up in our lives as we assemble here this morning. So a prayer in Christ's Name, Amen.

[ahem] We're gathered here because God is God and we are his. Psalm 19, the first four verses the heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of His hands, and day after day they pour forth speech. Night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth. Their words to the ends of the world. And we see that every day. Hopefully we're able to experience the hour of creation and feel some sense of awareness of the Creator himself around us and in us. The Spirit of God is everywhere. His grace surrounds us here and now, and we give thanks to Him for every gift, especially for his son. Jesus Christ.

Communion

Good morning, [Good morning]. I'm going to start out by reading from Matthew 27, starting in verse 35, they crucified him and then divided his clothes among them by throwing dice. After that, they sat there and watched him. Above his head, they put the written notice of the accusation against him This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Then they crucified two bandits with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left. People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus. You were going to tear down the temple and build it back up in three days. Save yourself if you're God's son, come on down from the cross. In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the elders made fun of him. He saved others, but he cannot save himself.

Isn't he the king of the Israel? If he will come down off the cross now, we will believe in him. He trusts in God and claims to be God's son. Well, then, let us see if God wants to save him now. Even the bandits who had been crucified with him insulted him in the same way. And then we move over to Luke 23:39 and it says one of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at him, which I with me think would mean continue to hurl insults at him. Aren't you the Messiah? Save

yourself and us. The other one, however, rebuked him, saying, Don't you fear God? You receive the same sentence he did. Ours, however, is only right because we are getting what we deserve for what we did. But he has done no wrong and he said to Jesus, Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King, and I don't know if any of you've ever had anybody say this to you, but I've had people say this to me Your God wouldn't want the likes of me. And I think that that scripture's proof that our God would like would want the likes of you no matter who you are, no matter what you've done.

Back 22 years ago, Chad and Bonnie gave me the best Christmas present they've ever given me. They gave me this Bible. And there's some people in this congregation who are sitting in the front row who think that I really should get rid of this Bible and get a new one. But I'm determined to hang on to it because it's the Bible I've been reading for 22 years, and it's the Bible that I've got a lot- lot of things underlined in. And it's a Bible. I've got a lot of little comments in the margin. And if I'm looking for a particular scripture, I might not remember what chapter it's in or what verse it's in, or even what book it's in. But I know what page it's on. I know approximately where it is and what side. Like, I know it's right there on that side of the page. I might just have to flip a few pages, but I'll find it because I have it in my memory where it is on the page. So, so this dear old Bible, it's now 22 years old and is held together by tape. It still goes with me. But anyway, in that Bible there's a lot of wisdom and it's my goal in life to follow that. And it's my goal in life to live as Christ would want me to live and to try and and learn from that wisdom and follow that wisdom. But that's not what saves me. What saves me happened on the cross.

And why do I follow it then? Why don't I say 'I'm saved by grace? So do whatever I want, will.' I've been married to Ed for a long, long time and there's a lot of things that I know about him now, and there's a lot of things that I know that are important to him. And I try and do what's important to him, not because of what he's going to do in return, but because I love him and I want to I just I just want to express my love by doing the kinds of things that I know are going to be what he would want. And it's exactly the same with this book. I know what's in this book and I know based what's in this book. I kind of have an idea of what God would want of me. And so I, I do it out of love for him. I don't do it because of my salvation. My salvation has been covered on the cross. It has nothing to do with what I do or what I say. And even though I do that, I'm no different than the man on the cross than the thief on the cross. Because there's nothing I, I fall so, so short of who I should be. And and I'm closer to the thief on the cross than I am to what God wants of me. And so, I don't know, that's kind of my thinking on why do we take this bread and why do we take this wine? We take it because we want to remember or the great gift that he gave to us. And it has my life has nothing to do with the gift I'm giving to him. My gift is not just a little bonus, I guess, but it's awfully little anyway. Thank you.

Dear God in heaven. Thank you so much for sending Jesus. And thank you so much for- for giving him up for us sent and thank you for for his death and thank you so much for his resurrection and for the hope that we have because of that. And thank you for your continuous love for us, even though we are so flawed. And, you know, we pray that that this week is that you will fill us with your spirit. And we pray that we will we will all love you and do our best to love you and to to let your spirit shine through us rather than our own spirits in Jesus name. Amen.

Reading

This scripture reading is from first John five verses 2 to 5. This is how we know that we love the children of God. And I've got to say, as I you know, sometimes, you know, sometimes when you read the Bible, you read it and it's like, yeah, I know this was so I kind of thought about this. It's like, Yeah, I know this one. I know this one really well, but somehow it kind of jumped out at me this time when I read this. This is not it doesn't say this is how we know that we love God. This version says this is how we know that we love the children of God. Oh, that's like you guys. That's like my family, all that. Okay, so I'm going to read that and reframe that and hopefully that kind of this isn't just like a reading. This is, oh, a reading to get us thinking and prepared for our message.

This is how we know that we love the children of God by loving God and carrying out His commands in fact, this is love for God to keep His commands and his commands are not burdensome for everyone. Born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Message

Two clips from BBC Four's more or less stats program over the pond. The world is full of strange and confusing facts. Some like the two audio clips, weird facts that are confusing, annoying. If you're trying to learn French or measure things in feudal England, they are, however, mostly harmless. The world is also full of misleading. Ideas are downright lies. Those are often very harmful. Our topic today is this is how we know. I came across this Joshua Passage recently and thought it was entitled Expressed An Eternal Truth About Life in Faith. Joshua 312, five. Early in the morning. Joshua And all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan where they camped before crossing over. After three days, the officers went throughout the camp giving orders to the people. When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, your God and the Leviticus priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go since you have never been this way before. But to keep a distance, about 2000 cubits between you and the earth do not go near it, Joshua told the people. Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow. The Lord will do amazing things among you.

God gives instructions to the Israelites about how He will lead them. Why? Because they have never been this way before. The promise is that following God will result in amazing things being done among them. Whilst this is a specific historical event, it is Israeli history. I think it could apply to my and our journeys of faith today just as much. None of us have been to tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, etc. And with this very confusing and challenging world we all live in, both militias and the random life events, it can be very difficult to have confidence in our faith journeys and our straight and I know struggle with heightened anxiety as a result of my cancer diagnosis. Things that once minorly bothered me have become much bigger things to deal with. It is all too easy to be stuck in the mental downward spiral and harder to snap out of the self-defeating cycle. I've not been this way before in life. I've not been this way before in faith. How do I have confidence in my faith journey?

Today I'm going to share with you how I have confidence in Christ. This is how I know. Perhaps you struggle with having confidence and faith. If not, great, but perhaps this might be useful later in life. We're looking at First John today. First John is unique in that there is a repeated there are repeated sayings that go something like this is how you know, or if statements or variations on them are conditional statements that give us some sort of test and result or outcome, I find these helpful because they give me touch points, decision points, measuring points to check my own faith journey in what against what first John describes. And while these tests can be quite challenging because they don't leave a lot of room for error or wiggle room, I approach them with the rest of the gospel in mind, namely that if I'm trying honestly within the bounds of Christianity, there is no place for shame. As First John three says, If my heart that my heart doesn't always line up with God's, but I don't need to worry because God is greater than my heart.

So with that in mind, let's jump into first John, first chapter and well, first chapter eight through ten. If you claim to be without sin, we receive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess persons, he is faithful and just and will forgive us. Our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. The first passage might seem odd. One to include given my issues with confidence, it doesn't on first read sound very confidence building. We need to claim arson. We need to confess our sins. Doesn't this just reinforce our unworthiness? Well, yes, because we're unworthy. One of the great lies of our world is that our worthiness is enough. It isn't. We need God. And as promised, here, God will forgive and purify us. He is just if we're honest about our unworthiness, the confidence in this text is not found in me, but rather God. That is our very reassuring thing, because God is the faithful one. Unfortunately, Paul is not always faithful. This is the statement that is sometimes hard to accept, though I am unworthy on my own, but made worthy in God through Christ. It's also hard to put into practice. Confession is a thing that should happen more regularly than it does. Perhaps it does for you, but in my experience we tend to shy away from it. There needs to be a right time, place, method, etc. but it needs to happen. What would a healthy confession Christian and church community look like? One that honestly in community confronts their unwillingness but also rejects unworthiness but also rejoices in God's faithfulness that faithful forgiveness and purification. This text suggests that we can't have one without the other.

I've had the pleasure of attending several celebrate recovery sessions in Texas at a friend's group. One of the things they do, at least down there, I don't know if it's practiced everywhere, is they have a short worship time. And when each

person who participates in the worship gets up and leads a prayer, leads a song, etc., the first thing they do when they get up is kind of like the AA thing they say, Hi, I'm Paul. I struggle with anxiety, but through the love of Christ I am made whole or something similar in recognition of my sin. Confession of it, but also prays that through Christ that sin has already been removed. Now this is a rather public way of confession and maybe not the best method for most people in most situations. But what would an effective, appropriate method of confession be for us individually and corporately? The next three passages come from the second chapter of First John and we will read them all together first. John two, three, three, six. We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands, whoever says I know him but does not do what he commands is a liar. And the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in Him. Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did verses nine through 11. Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother and sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going because the darkness has blinded them. And then 15 through 17 do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the father is not in them. For everything in the world. The lust of the eyes, the pride of life comes not from the father, but from the world. The world and its desires will pass away. But whoever does the will of God lives forever.

The first passage tells us that we can know that we have come to know God known God. Our love of God is complete and that we live in God. If we follow His commands, He then clarifies what that looks like. Lives like Jesus. What does it mean to live like Jesus? Well, the fullest expression of that we'll discuss later, but suffice it to say that our lives must be focused not on me, but rather on each other. I know it's cliché. It's really old cliché now. What, 90's? Years old, as you know. A decade ago? Maybe no more than that, but it really is. WWJD, what would Jesus do? I know that well-meaning Christians can disagree about what Jesus would do in any given situation, but perhaps the first good step step to make that our standard of action. If Jesus did not sin, then by definition He followed. He followed God's commands. And so if we live like him, we have come to know God. Our love of God is made complete and we live in God. Well, we'll look back on this more. But the second passage in chapter two here, John, begins the big point of the book or one of the main points. Love specifically love for each other. In this text, he says that anyone who claims to be in the light or Christian but doesn't love those or love those around them, is actually still in the darkness. Rather, the Christian who loves is in the light, not stumbling through the darkness as we'll see over and over in this book. Treating each other in love is not an add on to Christianity. It's not an expansion pack or an extra trim level. Rather, it is core to what it means to be Christian. There's no lariat Christian or King Ranch Christian or High Country Christian.

Now my offhand list and knowledge of truck trim levels has been exhausted. There's only the basic best trim model there is. Loving Christian. To not love is to still be in darkness, versus to love is to be in the light. What are the scriptural references can you think of for light and darkness? Well, one that comes to mind for me is the gospel of John. Darkness is the sin of the world that Jesus himself is the light and pushes back against that darkness. That is the seriousness of love, the level of seriousness of loving each other. It is the great struggle between darkness and light, sin and Jesus himself. The third passage that we're highlighting in the second chapter. First, John answers the question Who wants to live forever? No, it isn't experimental drugs or nanites or something, something sci fi. Rather, it is doing the will of God as defined as letting the desires of the world pass away. It is so easy to get caught up in the desires of the world. They're so shiny. They're so pretty. Like some of them are even mostly good. But in reality, what the text says they will pass away.

We are not to love the world, even our own lives. Whereas the previous passage tells us that what we're supposed to love, this passage just tells us what we're not supposed to love. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life are all what I want. They're all me focusing on me. I want. I deserve these things. God says that is not the way to eternal life. The second chapter of First John. We learn that we must live like Jesus, love each other, and not love the world. I would argue that each one of these points to the other two loving, like living, like Jesus means loving each other and not loving the world. Loving each other means living like Jesus and not loving the world and not loving the world means living like Jesus and loving each other. It's a continuous circle. What would it look like to put these three statements in

practice for us? What would it look like to live more like Jesus in our daily lives? What would it look like to love each other more in our daily lives? And what would it look like to love the world less in our daily lives?

In John Chapter three, we have three more scriptures. Again, I'll read them together. John 3:10. First, John 3:10. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother or sister. First John 3:16. By the way, I love whoever came up with the Scripture chapters and verses. I love how John 3:16 is really good and I love how first. John 3:16 is really good. It's a good one. You get double, double the effect for the same amount of memorization of numbers three. First, John 3:16. This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay our lives down for our brothers and sisters. And then 19 through 24, this is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence. If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts and He knows everything. Dear friends of our hearts do not condemn us. We have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask. Because we keep his. We keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command to believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us, the one who keeps God's commands lives in Him and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us. We know it by the spirit he gave us.

In verse ten, John tells us that we can tell who is of God and who is of the devil by their actions. On the positive side, that is on God's side, it is doing right. On the negative side, that is the devil's side. It is by not loving each other. Now we see this reinforced in verse 16. What does it mean to love each other by following Jesus's example? That is to the fullest human possibility available to us by giving up of our own lives. There's two ways, I think, to think about this, and I think they're both true. The first is the final sense of actually ending my life for someone else, as in what Jesus did for us on the cross. The other is the more sustained way of laying down my life, as in under prioritizing it in favor of others in my daily life, as what Jesus did in His daily life. Both ways of thinking about this, about how we love each other, are true. Am I prepared to love others? Each of you, if it required my literal life in the ultimate sense, am I prepared to love others? Each of you as I live my life, constantly giving it up for you and those others around me every day versus 19 to 24 gives us two more. This is how we know. And this is this is his command statements. There's too much in this passage to say, as is true of all of these passages, but suffice it to say that we know we belong to the truth by keeping the command to believe in Jesus and to love each other. This has been reinforced by the fact that we know it, by the spirit he gave us. In doing this, we live in God and He lives in us. In this passage we have, we have in this passage, we have faith in Jesus. And then appropriate action associated with that faith to love each other as He's already highlighted, and continue to and continue to be belief in Jesus and loving each other is connected and required in faith.

Does anyone remember the five acts of the Gospel? Anyone remember hearing that growing up? I did. They were part of the many five, five itemized lists of things. I think they may have been slightly different depending on where you were and what area you grew up in. But I don't require any of them, including the loving each other part. John here is making the case that loving each other is central to the gospel. Loving each other. As defined by Jesus himself in life and death. As the fourth chapter of First John will show us. Loving each other is not optional. This is what I would say. John is doubling down verses seven through 12. Dear friends. Let us love one another. For love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us. He sent his one only son to this world that we might live through him. This is love. Not that we loved God, but he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. Down to 17. This is how love is made complete among us. So that we have confidence in the day of judgment in this world. We are like Jesus. 21. And this is. And He has given us this command. Anyone who loves God must also love their brother or sister.

John tells us that we should love each other because fundamentally love comes from God and God is love. Further, if we love each other, then we are born of God and know God. And the opposite is also true. If we don't love each other, we don't know God. He then describes how God is love and how love comes from God in that He loved us first and sent his son as a sacrifice for us all. We saw in Chapter three from love from Jesus perspective, this is love from God's perspective. As John says, we love each other because we follow God's example here. Just as in chapter three, we love

each other because we follow Jesus example here. The promise is that if we love each other, then God lives in us. Then, as if to hammer point the point home, as I'm doing today, John says, This is how we have confidence in the day of judgment, by having love made complete among us. We do this by being like Jesus. To love is to be like Jesus and results in confidence. To be like Jesus is to love and results in confidence. And to have confidence is to live like Jesus and to love. Verse 21 is the extra swing of the metaphorical hammer. You thought John was done, but nope. The, the nail's not in all the way yet. That's the last of construction metaphors. The command we are given is to love each other. But more than that, there is a hidden. This is how we know. Doesn't say that in so many words. This is the command. If we love each other and this is how we know God.

I started out talking about uncertainty in life in random things like numbers and measurements, but also serious things in life, like the Israelites of Joshua's time. We haven't been this way before. We need to follow God and remember the promise. God will do amazing things among us if. We follow. First, John shows me and hopefully you. This is how I know in my faith journey. If I focus on belief in Jesus loving each other, then I know I am following God. Whatever else may be going on, he can then lead me into the unknown and I can have confidence again, regardless of what goes on. What would it look like for you to have this confidence? What would it look like to believe in Jesus, as John describes it? And first, John, by loving each other to the fullest human extent possible. Every day. Every moment. And ultimately, in the end, what would our church community look like if our belief, if our love, if our confidence was to fill our presence?

How would that affect you personally? How would that affect your testimony to those around you? I'll leave you with one final passage from the fifth chapter of First John. We've already heard it, thank you, Glynnis. You know the love of Jesus. And may you pass that love on to those around you. First, John, five, two through five. This is how we know that we love the children of God by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God to keep his commands and his commands are not burdensome for everyone. Born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that overcame, overcome the world. Even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes in Jesus believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Song Leader

I like to thank Paul for a very thoughtful sermon today. I believe very strongly that there are some passages in the Scriptures that are more important than others, and the instruction to love God and to love each other. It involves a lifetime of struggle as to how to do that. And we get hints some places in the Scriptures that will help us with that. But that really is the goal. I when I woke up on Monday this week, I could have never imagined how my day was going to turn out because I got a call from Marcia and Mark, Brenda Griffin's children, whom that they wanted to talk to me. Okay. I'll be happy to talk to you. So they came to the house and that's when they asked me to conduct a funeral for Brenda.

So when I think about the sermon that Paul has preached today, some things come to mind about Brenda. She was a very extremely loving person, and what made her loving was that she was forgiving. So no matter who you were and no matter what you did, she had the capacity to forgive you. But not only that, it came out that she was a person who actually solicited forgiveness. She she wanted to make sure that she was right with people and she would ask for forgiveness to be forgiven for the things that she has done, said so we can look in Scripture and we can see these instructions, love God and love love each other. But it's helpful to have role models around us because we all struggle with that, with that process of trying to to be those loving people. I have I have said I used to say to my students, you know, if if at my funeral, it could be said he loved Rhonda, that would be enough. That would be enough. But by extension, by practicing on her, I ask practice. And you folks. Not perfectly, but I try.

Closing

I'd like to thank those who participated. Paul for his message, and Ed and Glynnis and Rhonda for their insightful remarks. The book of First John-- read it, read the whole thing. It's full of assurance and confidence. The word 'know' I underlined in my Bible 105 verses in the book. 32 times the word 'know' is used. Again, confidence and assurance like to conclude our gathering or our meeting. Not in prayer, but with one thought from first John three verse one How great is

the love the father has lavished upon us that we should be called children of God? And that is what we are. Think about it. And then a little piece of scripture from Galatians that has struck me. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love. Go express your faith.

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