

WELCOME 20th September 2020 – 16 Pentecost '20 A

Jude 1:1-4

Welcome again this morning! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you experience God's grace in abundance this brief time together. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups & other important information about our ministry.

We're continuing with our adapted worship...so as usual there are Group Study/Discussion resources available & maybe already in your hands. *If you're on-line I trust you'll make your way through the songs we've linked to this morning. We're also in the Guide Hall so you're experiencing here what we're experiencing there. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you & those you've gathered in your homes into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into the city to share what God has done for you.*

Remember all the great things we need to do to keep each other as safe as we can in this unending season of "the virus." Hand sanitizer. Masks. Sign in. Distance. We'll clean everything afterwards so you don't have to ;-)

As we move into this week...

Jude...A man of few words. But every word: powerful, pointed, penetrating & purposeful. Jude recognizes the urgency of the moment on the battlefield of this world. He knows some things **ARE** worth fighting for. Some hills **ARE** to be died on In this short, often overlooked letter, Jude passionately declares it is **ALWAYS** the right time & **ALWAYS** the right place to defend the truth of the Gospel. Maybe there is no greater time than right now...no greater place than where you live your trust in Jesus every day...because now like always Faith Matters.

We'll explore & experience that together...Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God of grace & glory, come & be known to us in our gathering. Be present in our songs & prayers. From the busy & confusing places of life receive us & revive us. Surround us with your love, fill us with your peace, & move us by your Spirit. In all we do, from this point into this week, give us strength & courage to share our trust in you in real ways in real life to the real people all around us. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen.

Let's sing & the we'll hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. What does it mean to you to be "called" by God?
2. Are there times when your faith in Jesus is at odds with a common attitude in the world?

VIDEO CLIP IMMEDIATELY AFTER FAITH CHAT – "THIS IS WHY" - SET IT UP SO IT MAKES SENSE

BIBLES

16 Pentecost '20 A – FAITH MATTERS: WHAT YOU HAVE

VIDEO CLIP IMMEDIATELY AFTER FAITH CHAT – “THIS IS WHY” - SET IT UP SO IT MAKES SENSE

I was in a Bible study w/ a group of pastors this week...Ex 3, Moses' call to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt toward the freedom of the land God promised their ancestors. *One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness & came to Sinai, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."* Now w/ going into everything we discussed...the 1st question our convenor threw at us...What was Moses thinking before God showed up? We don't really know the answer ...but it's a great question: Seriously...you know Moses' backstory...Set adrift to die in the Nile...rescued by Pharaoh's daughter...raised in the palace (w/ every privilege) intervened b/t an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave kills the Egyptian...intervened b/t 2 fighting Hebrews & unmasked as a killer...flees to Midian & now...*One day...* What was Moses thinking before God showed up?

I can speculate about **that** answer...**BUT** I have a better idea about Jude & what he's been thinking. How...Jude tells us: *This letter is from Jude, a **slave** of Jesus Christ & a brother of James.* The word Jude uses there implies a bondservant ...someone who has “sold themselves to someone to honour a debt they cannot repay.” Let that sit for a minute...sold themselves to honour a debt they cannot repay. That was the nature of much 1st century slavery...You'd sell yourself as payment for a debt when the \$\$ ran out. Over time...you might work yourself into freedom. Very common. But Jude knows **his debt** is un-repayable...it's a lifelong attachment to Jesus Christ under *His* Lordship/Ownership because Jude has been bought/paid for in a way he can never repay. What's more...Jude isn't looking for an escape clause...his place in Christ is secure & he wouldn't give that up for anything

Jude knows firsthand what Peter says is true: *For you know God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. It was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.* - 1 Pet 1:18-19 & Paul: *You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price.* - 1 Cor 6:20 Jude's very identity – his understanding of who he is as a person is inseparable from Jesus...His identity, worth, dignity, value are found solely in Christ crucified, risen ruling...The video we watched...young Kate there may not have used the words, “Hi I'm Kate. I'm a slave of Jesus,” but that's what she meant. She & Jude see the world through the same eyes.

NT is filled w/ that understanding...*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself for me.* – Gal 2:20 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, & your real life is hidden w/ Christ in God. – Col 3:1-3 Your/my identity, worth, dignity, value are found solely in Christ crucified, risen, ruling over us.

But wait there's more: *This letter is from Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ & a **brother of James.*** What's special about James? He's the half-brother of Jesus; which makes Jude the half-brother of Jesus...(Mk 6/Mt 13) Jn 7 tells us all we need to know about Jesus' brothers “...soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, & Jesus' brothers said to him, ‘Leave here & go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! You can't become famous if you hide like this!...’ For **even his brothers didn't believe in him.**” – Jn 7:2-5 What changed? Easter. The resurrection. Death's defeat. Hell's overthrow The evidence that every word their older brother said was true, every promise he made fulfilled. The miracles weren't a circus sideshow but the first signs of God's restoration & rule of love & shalom & joy right before their eyes. But Jude doesn't trade on his Divine Big Brother's name. AND neither does James...he writes: *This letter is from James, a **slave** of God & of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Both Jude **AND** James make clear that our spiritual identity is not found in our family bloodlines but in the blood Jesus shed to make us his own...to bring us home to the Father in love. Our spiritual identity: that we have been bought & paid for by the costly sacrifice of Jesus to set us free from sin/death/devil is the defining fact of our lives...the thing that makes us who we are & sets us apart for the life we are designed to live bearing God's restored image – living in His presence – carrying out Christ's mission to the world...that all might know & live in Christ.

But it gets more exciting: *I am writing to all who have been **called** by God the Father, who **loves** you & **keeps** you **safe** in the care of Jesus Christ.* Called...loved...kept safe...that's you: *Even before he made the world, God loved us & chose us in Christ to be holy & without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.* - Eph 1:4-5 *God the Father knew you & chose you long ago, & his Spirit has made you holy.* – 1 Pet 1:2 *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, & they follow me. I give them eternal life, & they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me...* - Jn 10:27-28 *I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my*

Father's will that all who see his Son & believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day. – Jn 6:38-40 Called...loved...kept safe...that's you.

Called...loved...kept safe...I know in this "season of the virus" when so much just isn't how it ought to be or in those times when absolutely nothing goes the way we hope/pray it will...It's hard to believe that. It's hard to believe there's purpose for our lives – meaning to this existence – any sense we are safe/protected/held secure – feel more forgotten than loved I get it, but I also know my feelings, my perceptions are dicey at best...untrustworthy most days & unpredictable w/ changing circumstance. But Called...loved...kept safe...**THAT** I can trust & rely on & live from...

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again into a living hope, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure & undefiled, beyond the reach of change & decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. – 1 Pet 1:3-5 Called...loved...kept safe...

My past forgiven. My present secure. My future assured. Then Jude writes...

May God give you more & more mercy, peace, & love. If God were to ask, What would you like today my dear child? I could read you my journal & tell you what I daily ask for...not always those gifts. I ask for healing, peace, assurance, right house... space for us...panic to end...None of those are wrong or necessarily bad...I even ask for God's wisdom because I get to stand here every week & offer His Word & His promises & His good news...But Jude assures me I don't ever have to ask for more stuff, more power, more prestige, more influence, more significance, more status, more money, more things...He encourages me to ask for those gifts God is sure to give to those whom he has called, whom he loves, whom he keeps safe in Jesus Christ...more of God's mercy, more of God's peace, more of God's love. Jude tells me he's asking for God to give me more of **HIMSELF**...to display more of his character in & through me...to make **HIMSELF** real & evident through me to an unbelieving world all around me...& to **ME** in my moments of unbelief/distress/fear/sadness...so I remain faithful.

But in the midst of what's becoming a joyous celebration of what we have been given by the Father Jude stops: *I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people.* They were not only under threat from the pagan world around them; they were facing a threat of even greater dimension: Xns who were warping the good news to suit their own selfish purposes & leading people astray. The specifics of the fakery are not hard to

unravel...Paul/John fight the same thing: You're saved you can do what you want now. You're loved that means not accountable to God's Word. Jesus was a great guy, a superior teacher, but not the final authority...sovereign. You can take on other wise teachers too in addition to him & the gospel is really about being nice & tolerant of others. **Bah!**

Jude is insistent...God's grace is not a license to keep on sinning - living as if we're still in charge of our lives. If we trust Jesus Christ to be Saviour, he must also be Lord or he is neither. But if he is **BOTH**, then His life becomes ours & our life becomes His...for his purpose & his glory & his mission & his harvest. He's in control. He calls the shots every day. God's grace liberates us from the slavery of our old life & equips us how to walk in step w/ the Holy Spirit who lives in us. *Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died & were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. – Rom 6:2-4*

Jude passionately declares it is **ALWAYS** the right time & **ALWAYS** the right place to defend the truth of the Gospel. To declare with clarity & boldness...We are bought & paid for, rescued from sin death & the devil by the sacrificial death & triumphant resurrection of Jesus. In Jesus, God comes personally to us, to rescue & renew all things by Christ's life, death & resurrection. Through Jesus God reclaims the world to himself & reunites all things in his love just as he planned from the very beginning...and you are part of his plan. We are called, loved & kept safe by God to reveal his saving grace to the world & invite others to trust that good news. And God wants more than anything to bring into our lives more of **HIS** life... more mercy, more peace, more love... to make **HIMSELF** real & evident through me to an unbelieving world all around me...& to **ME** in my moments of unbelief/distress/fear/sadness...so I remain faithful...

Let's pray with that in mind: **Lord Jesus take over. Take all of me & all that I have for your kingdom. You alone are my hope, my future, my security, my peace & my joy. Use my life so that many among my acquaintances in this city and beyond may be drawn to you to worship you as their King. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.**