

WELCOME 4th October 2020 – 18 Pentecost '20 A

Jude 1:17-25

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. Offering. Communion. We'll clean everything afterwards so you don't have to ;-)

As we move into this week...

Dollars & diamonds. Artwork & antiques. Identities, jewelry, collectibles...all are vulnerable as counterfeits, fakes, knock-offs can flood the market & fool the unwary. It's easy to end up w/ a cheap imitation of the real thing. We know: every good & valuable thing can be imitated...BUT **EVERY** imitation (even the good ones) fails to deliver what they promise.

Jude cautions us; that happens with the Gospel too. So Jude, who knew the *REAL* thing & spent time at the feet of Jesus who *IS* the real thing, knew a counterfeit when he spotted the fakery slipping into the church, & called out those who peddled a poor copy of the real Good News. There's no substitute for real & Jude reminds us that anything less than the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ will leave you confused & hopeless in despair...in a world that will tear you apart.

Jude passionately declares it is *ALWAYS* the right time & *ALWAYS* the right place to defend the truth of the Gospel...to cling to & proclaim the real assurance & real hope found in Jesus Christ. When someone tries to pass off fake joy, bogus hope, counterfeit love or imitation peace; followers of Jesus are able to say "Not for me...only **God** is able to keep you from falling away & bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to **him** who alone is God, our

Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, & authority are his before all time, & in the present, & beyond all time!"

Maybe there is no better time than right now...no better place than where you live your trust in Jesus every day...to grow that certainty in your own life & then offer that assurance to someone you know...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:

Lord Jesus, we come as we are to become what you mean us to be. We come afraid, weary; full of questions & disappointments lingering from the week behind us. We know you alone can make us whole & set us free. We bring our plans & dream, our joys & sorrows to be touched by your grace & held in your love. We thank you for mercy that reaches out, patience that waits our return, love that welcomes & transforms. We trust you to recreate us according to your deign knowing your desires are always for our good. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen.

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

FAITH CHAT:

1. How do you keep yourself in the love of God?
2. What sort of assurance does your trust in Jesus bring you? Can you share that in 1 minute or less?

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

BIBLES

Prayer at the end of the sermon

Let's pray with that in mind: **Lord Jesus, whatever you ask, whatever it takes, whatever you require of us...More of you, less of me each day. Make your presence real and powerful not for my sake, but for those who do not yet trust your saving love. We pray in your name...Amen.**

18 Pentecost '20 A – FAITH MATTERS: WHAT YOU DO

Frank Abignale Jr is renown as one of the most successful bank robbers & con artists in western history. Over & above crime bosses, bush rangers, & arms dealers...Frank scored all his big \$\$ hits w/o killing anyone before his 21st birthday Across the US & parts of the world during the 1950's, Frank didn't just forge checks, he forged lives. He successfully masqueraded as a Dr, lawyer & co-pilot for Pan Am Airways all w/ proper forged documentation & accessories. When the FBI finally arrested Abignale he was given a 12 yr sentence. But after 5 years in prison, he was released into the employ of the US gov't as a specialist in forgery/fraud prevention... served in that capacity for about 40 years then started his own firm specializing in corporate fraud prevention. Well...he was an expert! The movie Catch Me if you Can starring Tom Hanks & Leonardo DiCaprio told Frank's story & during the filming he was asked, "What's the best way to spot a forgery?" Who would know better than Frank? "By studying the authentic & knowing it better than the back of your hand."

As Jude concludes his letter to followers of Jesus who are confronted with the crisis of forged faith infiltrating their disciple community...he offers the same wise counsel...become so familiar with the authentic that the fake sticks out like a sore thumb. That's as true today as it was when Jude wrote...about 40 years after Jesus died/rose/ascended. In fact, just before he died 8 years ago...Charles Colson, jailed for his role in the Watergate scandal & founder of Prison Fellowship noted: Most Christians do not understand what they believe, why they believe it, & why it matters More than simply memorizing a few verses or facts or Catechism details...What is it that you profess as "gospel?" Why that? Why do you care? Does it change anything about you...how you go through your day?...engage other people? If Faith matters... How? Colson used to stop some of his post-prison speaking engagements & just ask "What is Christianity anyway?" Just let that sit...reflect on the videos we've been watching... Jude

You see Jude, in 25 verses, gives us the essence of who we are as disciples of Jesus, what we profess in the face of the falsehoods & fakes of this world pretending to be the Gospel, **AND** what we do for as long as we're alive to maintain our footing in the good news of God's immense love for us revealed through Jesus Christ crucified – risen & ruling over all things in grace/mercy/love/peace...

Just to catch up...how does Jude answer that question & what's at stake in us as we live out our answer? 1st - *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/me. 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 the good news that in Christ nothing separates us from the Father...ever.

Then...& even given that certainty, there are those who will always muck stuff up & go astray & try to take others along for the ride to oblivion: *Dear friends, 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.* There will always be assaults of our faith & on the faithful but in the midst of the tests trials & troubles coming against us Jude speaks w/ prophetic authority & certainty: *Behold! The Lord is coming with countless thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on the people of the world. He will convict every person of all the ungodly things they have done & for all the insults that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* This world & its attacks against God's people will not last forever. God's presence/protection/final deliverance are assured so we live now as people w/ confident hope in God's ultimate victory.

But given that...Jude...I gotta get up & go to work tomorrow... school... service club...Dr ...family reunion...TV...boof head next door...What do I do? 1st – Don't be shocked... surprised...caught off guard. *But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted. They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires.* It isn't new! From the Garden there have been attacks on the people God has showered w/ his love & care. Don't be surprised...From forever there have been folks whose only interest is in tearing stuff down so they can dance on the rubble...In fact, be ready for it. Paul would say to his dear friends in Ephesus: *"So guard yourselves & God's people. Feed & shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood — over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some men from your own group will rise up & distort the truth in order to draw a following."* – Acts 20:28-30 Don't be shocked...surprised...caught off guard...guard yourself...better yet...

But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, & await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love. That's an interesting sentence in the Gk...the command is at the end & really all the other verbs are participles... assumes on-going action not once & done. Another way to read that...*But you dear friends **keep yourselves safe in God's love** by building each other up in your most*

holy faith, praying in the power of the Holy Spirit, & waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ who will bring you to eternal life.” The goal... Keep yourselves constantly aware of God’s love for you – that’s the only safe place in the universe – free from assault? No...but SAFE from complete annihilation that’s going to hammer those who would draw you away from the Father. Keep yourselves constantly aware of God’s love for you because *THAT LOVE* has the power to raise you from the dead. God’s love unleashed in & saturating your life has the power to transform you from dead in sin to alive in & for Jesus Christ - from enemy to friend & child of God – from overwhelmed by temptation to victorious against it. From despondent & despairing to joyful & hopeful...confused & aimless to focused & purposeful. Only way to know that is to live it

How? *by building each other up in your most holy faith* Are you w/ someone regularly marinating your life in Scripture? Are you connected w/ someone w/ whom you pray & read the Bible? Do you hook up w/ us during our Zoom Studies? Do you link regularly w/ a small group? If not...let’s change that for your wellbeing. If you rely on me to teach you the Bible & teach you how to be a Christian, & you think this is enough & you take no initiative to get alongside someone else during the week to build each other up, your relationship w/ Jesus will be unhealthy. I am at my strongest each week at 12noon on Wednesday. Why? That’s about the time Josh says ‘Amen’ when he finishes praying for me. I have just been replenished by the Spirit that gets up on me like water from a fire hose. If you haven’t got that going on...we need to address that somehow.

Notice these are all plural nouns...We can’t follow Jesus effectively alone. We are responsible to walk in Christ together. Our purpose as church is to keep ourselves in the love of Christ. To hold onto each other for dear life so that no one goes off the deep end. One of my great joys during this ridiculously elongated lockdown season is that I hear over & over again of folks who are working the phone, keeping in contact w/ each other, catching up for coffee & little visits...just making sure we’re all ok...you **ARE** LWF to someone else...I thank you for doing it well...*Now, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, & let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, & you will overflow with thankfulness.* – Col 2:6-7

Praying in the power of the Holy Spirit doesn’t necessarily mean praying in spiritual tongues (it might but not necessarily)...but it **DOES MEAN** praying that the Spirit will guide your praying & your living so that Christ is grown to maturity in you & seen clearly in your words & deeds. And if the Spirit says you need to do a specific thing...**DO IT**. Our obedience is an affirmation of our love for Jesus/symptom of salvation: because

He calls/loves/keeps me, I want to live for Him & when the Spirit says, talk to that person, call so-n-so, ask X out for coffee...have Y over for dinner...YES is the only possible response *Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ who will bring you to eternal life* simply means we cling to the promise that Jesus is coming back, & those who have trusted Him as Saviour & Lord will live w/ Him forever! We live knowing the end of the story is already written & we’re in it. The best antidote to false teaching is continually be growing in the truth.

The necessary logical outworking of being built up in faith...intentional approach to those who are at risk of being lost forever. *You must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives. Dear brothers & sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently & humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.* – Gal 6:1 As folks who know what’s in store at the end of the age: joy & love in the Father’s presence forever or pain & despair w/o end...We have no excuse for silence. It’s risky reaching toward those who are perishing, but we don’t do that apart from the Spirit that lives w/in us, the Saviour who has joined us to the mighty power of his resurrection, or the Father who calls/loves/keeps us. We show mercy to rescue not from some place of pride or superiority but as a sinner who has been rescued & reclaimed by the same gracious gift of the life/death/rez of Jesus Christ. We are never responsible for knowing more than the actual gospel: Through Jesus crucified risen ruling God reclaims the world to himself & reunites all things in his love just as he planned from the very beginning. But we never move away from that. And you know what else never moves, varies, changes:

All glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away & will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to him who alone is God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, & authority are his before all time, & in the present, & beyond all time! Amen. Throughout all of this, our assurance/hope is not in our ability to hold on to God, but in God holding on to us. Although we have every reason to doubt ourselves, we have every reason to rely on the One in whose love we are kept. Here, in the middle of the danger that we too could stumble, is the assurance God is able to keep us from stumbling. We have assurance God is guarding us.

Maybe there is no better time than right now...no better place than where you live your trust in Jesus every day...to grow that certainty in your own life & then offer that assurance to someone you know... Let’s pray with that in mind: