

## 2 John 7-13

"What is our Distraction?"

Today we wrap up the short book of 2 John with the last end of the letter. In this section of the letter the main focus is on the rejection of false teachers. False teachers were present in the early Christian communities. These false teachers would say things about Christ or about the disciples that would distract them from the true Gospel and message of Jesus Christ. These false teachers were usually set on glorifying themselves and not Christ. John wanted to put an end to the false teachers that were infecting the early Christian communities.

When we discussed 1 John we came across a similar passage and spent some time diving into the false teachers. The false teachers in 1 John were basically the same people in 2 John. They simply hadn't gotten the message with the first letter and the community still struggled with them by the time the 2nd letter came around. When we looked more at the false teachers of 1 John, we looked more at people. People today are still trying to distract us from the true gospel and are set on glorifying themselves. We have to remain vigilant that the Gospel is not tainted by people who seek their own gain. We must be focused on Christ and allow the Gospel to flow from his presence and teachings in the scriptures.

Today what I would like to do is to focus on false teachers that actually come in the form of distractions. I believe we face many distractions that like the false teachers cause us to think of ourselves first and not the gospel. As a congregation, we can get distracted from sharing the gospel to the world because we end up focused on the wrong things. We can end up being the false teachers that 2 John is against if we are not careful. That is why we must keep our distractions in check and remain fully focused on Christ in all that we do.

Today as a handout I gave you a draft brochure of the church and what we have worked on in our vision process and the possibilities of new ideas that we can work towards in the church. Again, it is a draft document, with some grammatical errors and it isn't quite set on the page correctly, but I wanted to give you a picture of where we are going and what that can look like on paper. Sometimes for us to understand where we are going we have to take an honest look and see that before in writing.

At the beginning of the service, I said that I left off an important statement from the brochure. Did any of you find what I left off? I left off the mission statement of the church. I wanted to see if anyone noticed the absence of such a statement that we had worked hard to produce. The reason we have a mission statement is to keep us focused on the gospel and to keep us focused on the mission of the church of prayerfully sharing the light of Christ.

There are many distractions that as a church we can encounter. We can get bogged down in programs that seem to drain energy. We can get bogged down in some ministry programs that are not fruitful. We can get bogged down in lacking a direction of ministry for the church. These are all real distractions that we can face in the life of the church. We have Christ and the scriptures as our guide however, in guiding us to make sure that we aren't bogged down. We can turn to Christ and be accountable to the scriptures that what we are doing is in accordance to what we believe.

To give some background on how this mission statement plays a role in keeping us free from distractions, I offer a quick explanation. We dived into several scriptures, ranging from Matthew to Revelation to understand what the church is supposed to be focused on. There are many examples throughout the bible of what the community of believers is suppose to do. After working for a while, the vision process determined that this mission statement, of prayerfully

sharing the light of Christ, best embodied what we as a church can do for Christ in accordance with the scriptures.

Having such a focus gives us the ability to do two things for Christ's church. The first thing that it gives us the ability to do is to arrange our ministry programs in such a way that all that we do is prayerfully sharing the light of Christ. We can put our energies to the best use possible and not have to worry about doing programs because they are a program. An example of this will be the small group structure that I will propose tomorrow night and the structure that I put under the discipleship heading. I believe that we can prayerfully share the light of Christ in small community settings, and deeper our relationship with God together. It keeps us focused on Christ, so we are not bogged down by distractions.

Having a mission statement also gives us the ability to do another thing, something that I have a hard time doing myself when it comes to ministry. That thing is the ability to say no. The ability to say no is something that churches often have difficulty doing. When we have an idea on doing something for the church if it does not line up with our mission of prayerfully sharing the light of Christ and it would be something that would take a massive amount of resources, then we can say no with confidence that we are being good stewards of time and of resources. Being able to say no allows to remain focused on sharing the Gospel and keeps us free of distractions.

With such an ability to say no, it is needed that I make this distinction. It does not mean that every idea that comes our way will we say no to. It means that we will have to prayerfully consider it. We will need to keep the desire to innovate ideas of sharing the light of Christ. But we have the freedom and ability to keep focused on our mission.

2 John 8-10 states that "Watch yourselves so that you don't lose what we've worked for but instead receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far does not continue in the teaching about Christ does not have God. Whoever continues in this teaching has both the Father and the Son." I believe this passage reminds us to keep focused on what we are to do in our work. We have worked hard as a congregation to reach this point in our lives. We have worked hard to keep the Gospel at the center of what we do that it would be a complete shame to lose our focus and not share the gospel in our work. We have to keep free of distractions and false teachings in order to prayerfully share the light of Christ.

Distractions are the result of a fallen world. We live in a world that wants us to reject the Gospel of Christ. We live in a world that wants us to remain focused on ourselves and not on Christ and our neighbors. The early Christians lived in a world where the focus was on yourself and not on Christ. The Roman empire was focused on the emperor and personal gain, not on God. We live in a world was not unlike the world of the early Christians. We have to be vigilant in keeping our focus on Christ because we risk becoming like the world.

I am a believer that being a Christian is counter-cultural. I believe in being a Christian community is counter-cultural. I believe in being distraction-free is counter-cultural. It is so easy to turn to media, be it the TV or internet and find things there that want us to improve only us. We live in a world that does not want us to be focused on sharing the Gospel. Our consumerist society wants to be focused on the goal of getting more and more stuff instead of giving more and more of ourselves.

As a church we face these challenges, which is why it is of the utmost importance that we conduct ourselves in such a way that is focused on prayerfully sharing the light of Christ. It would be too easy to stay on the path of ease and let the world destroy all that we have worked

for. John saw the work of the false teachers and distractions in the community and told the community that they must work to be focused on Christ. The words of John are very real for us today, in the 21st century, just like they were in the 1st century.

I say these things because I love Christ and I want to keep the focus of my life on sharing the gospel. There are many people in this congregation who have been here a long time, who have given much to the community and to Christ. I say all that I have said in the past, all that I have said today, and all that I will say in the future because I love Christ and I want to honor the commitment and dedication this congregation has towards Christ and his church. It is my goal to work hard so that we can remain focused on the Gospel and that all that we have worked for in the past has not been in vain. We have to keep focused on Christ.

The world wants us to fail. The evil of this world wants us to fail. The world does not want us to see the day when all will live in the light of Christ, because we are for Christ and not the world. John wanted to the early community to remain focused on Christ so that they may have eternal life and the abundant life that comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. We have to remain vigilant in keeping ourselves free of distractions, so that the world may see the light of Christ.

Today I charge us with keeping our community focused on Christ and focused on the Gospel that Christ spent his life sharing while he was on this earth. I charge us with keeping ourselves free of distractions so that we can prayerfully share the light of Christ to the world. I pray that we will do this together, as one body before God and honor God in all that we do. We have been given much in this life, we have worked for much in this life. May we never forget the love of Christ and the work Christ did for us, so that we may live life distraction free and surrounded by the love of God. Amen.