**SERMON 11/10/19**

**1ST JOHN 1:5-10, 2:24-26, 3:1-3, & 3:11-18**

Many years ago, it was the necessary to power ships with men pulling on the oars.

Prisoners of the state were put on a ship, chained to the oars.

One man would beat on a drum, and the men would row to the rhythm

          depending on conditions.

Another man held a lash and would whip anyone who

            was not rowing hard enough.

One day a king visited one of his slave ships.

He went below the decks, and began to talk to those who were chained to the oars.

He asked one man, "Why are you here?"

"Oh Sire," he said, "I don't know why I'm here.

             I was in a crowd when a crime was committed and when they arrested

             everybody, they got me, also. But I am innocent!"

The king went to another and asked. "Why are you here?"

"Oh, Sire, noble king, I have enemies who have lied about me,

           but I'm not really guilty.

           I'm the victim of false witnesses who have lied about me."

 The king went through the entire slave galley, and each one of them had some

          reason why he was innocent and should not be there.

Finally he came to one man, who said, "Sire, I'm here because I deserve to be here.

             I'm guilty. I've sinned. I'm receiving the just recompense for my sin.

             I've sinned against my God, I've sinned against my king,

             and now I'm paying the penalty for my sin."

 The king stopped and stared at the man for several long moments.

Then, with a slight smile he said, “You rascal, you scum, what are you doing here

among so many innocent honest men?”

Then he called the Guards and ordered them:

            “Release this man and get him out of here.”

When we confess what we have done, or neglected to do,

            we begin to experience the mercy and the forgiveness of the king.

It is only when we admit our sin that we can begin to leave the darkness and

walk in the light.

John wrote this letter to Christians who had begun to wander away

            from the true Gospel.

He wanted them to stop listening to people proclaiming false teachings,

          and urged them to remember what they had been taught,

          and live in the true light of God.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins.

He will lead us out of the darkness into his light.

When we walk in his light, and live in his love,

           we begin to experience the joy of the journey.

When missionaries Doug Meland and his wife moved into

           a village of Brazil's Fulnio Indians,

          he was referred to simply as "the white man."

The term was by no means complimentary, since other white men

         had exploited them, burned their homes, and robbed them of their lands.

After Doug and his wife learned the Fulnio language,

         and began to help the people with medicine,

         and in other ways, they began calling Doug, "the respectable white man."

When the Melands began adapting to some of the customs of the people,

         the Fulino gave Doug greater acceptance,

         and spoke of him as "the white Indian."

 One day, as Doug was washing the dirty, blood-caked foot

         of a very badly injured Fulnio boy,

         Doug overheard one bystander say to another:

         "Whoever heard of a white man washing an Indian's foot before?''

To the Fulnio Indians, the washing of feet was a very caring and humble gesture.

Shocked at the white man's actions, the Fulino Indians started saying,

           “Certainly, this man is from God!”

From that time on, whenever Doug went into an Indian home,

             it would be announced, "Here comes the man God sent us."

For the Fulino, Doug had gone from "White Man" to "God's Man,"

          simply by sharing with them the great love God has lavished on us.

Beliefs are judged by the actions they produce.

Incredible joy and purpose fills our lives when we obey God and walk in his light.

We experience satisfaction, purpose, peace, and joy,

            as we live a life doing what God wants us to do.

What we say matters, what we do makes a difference..

Over a period of several weeks a Pastor had the opportunity

            to have conversations with a young man, in his early 20's, named Matt.

Matt was really struggling with the question "Is God real?"

He picked up newspapers, and he switched on the TV.

He read reports of children being abused, and watched clips

         about suicide bombers in Iraq.

He heard about shootings in our schools where innocent lives are lost.

He pointed to 911, and the devastation of hurricane and tornadoes,

          and the wildfires in California, and the earthquakes in Peru and Japan.

He worried about the plight of the homeless, and of orphans in Africa and Honduras,

          and this young man repeatedly asked the Pastor:

          “Where is your God? Where is God in all this?”

And he came to the false conclusion that there must not be a God.

The Pastor constantly tried to show Matt he was looking in the wrong places.

God is not in the calamity, He's in the remedy.

He is in the thousands of people who gathered supplies and offered time

           following disasters, and provided muscle to rebuild.

He is in those who risked their lives to help someone in danger.

God is not in the calamity, He is the remedy.

The Pastor often discussed that while humanity was in the darkness of sin,

             a darkness darker than any cave could ever be,

             God provided a remedy by sending His son to take away our sins,

             and show us a whole new way of life, living in his love.

Gradually Matt began to look at things in a different light –

            God's own light.

He gradually began to see that following God's will, we become part of the remedy.

When he finally accepted God's existence, along with his love and forgiveness,

          Matt told the pastor he wanted to spend his life mending broken people,

          and removing pain, and offering healing words to those who suffer.

Matt had decided, with God's help and direction, to be part of the remedy.

He had finally discovered joy and peace in his journey.

God invites us out of the darkness into his light.

He wants us to live as children of light, to be the light of the world.

Letting God's light shine on us, and through us, will change us.

It will change our priorities, and it will change our behavior.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us,

             that we should be called children of God!

 Remember: We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,

          a people belonging to God, so we may declare the praises of him

         who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth and love.

When our faith is working through love,

           then we will find joy in our journey

AMEN