

## Sad, Not Surprised 1 John 3: 1-15

Two weeks ago, on Easter Sunday we looked at a small part of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Ephesus was an important city at the time, much like modern day New York City or Washington DC. A church was started there by a couple named Priscilla and Aquila, and it had grown considerably in size over the years. Yet there was a problem. False teaching had crept in and as a result many didn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus or for that matter their own resurrection. They didn't understand the why's of Easter. They didn't understand why Jesus came to earth, why He chose to die on the cross, why He rose from the dead, and why He chose the church to rise with Him. With no hope of a resurrection, with no hope of life after death, they were living for the present, rather than for the future. The church was becoming indistinguishable from the world. Confined to a Roman prison and unable to be with them in person, he wrote to the church to help them and us answer the whys of Easter.

Why did Jesus come to earth? To bring eternal life. Why did Jesus have to die? To show us the effects of sin. Why did Jesus rise from the dead? To prove He is God, the One with the authority to forgive sin. Which leaves us with one more why. Why did Jesus choose you and I to rise with Him? Let us never forget that Jesus wasn't the only one who was raised from the dead that first Easter Sunday. Why did Jesus choose you and I and the other saints of the church to rise with Him? The answer is found in Ephesians 2: 4-10. He chose us to be part of His resurrection because He loves us. He loves us so much that he made us alive when we were dead in our sins. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. He saved us from something, namely death and hell, for something, to show the world His love. It is not only our privilege but our responsibility.

Which brings us to the words of the apostle John. Don't be surprised brothers and sisters that the world hates you. Those words were written more than 2000 years ago, yet they are still so very appropriate for the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. **We shouldn't be surprised that world hates us for who we are, children of God.**

We are not surprised, but we are sad. Nobody wants to be hated. Nobody likes to be hated. Yet it is something we will endure as we live our lives for Jesus. In fact, that is why we are here this morning. We overcome the hate of the world by celebrating Jesus resurrection and our resurrection. We overcome the hate of the world by inviting others to join us in choosing life and communion over death and separation. Let me say it another way. *The purpose of the church is to introduce a world that hates us for who we are to a Jesus who loves them as they are.* Hate must not stop us from bringing the love of Christ to those without hope.

One reason the world hates us is because they don't know us. They don't know what we know: that God's grace and the Holy Spirit can help us overcome sin, that servanthood can help us overcome selfishness, that our certain hope of resurrection in Christ can overcome desperation and helplessness. Perhaps the reason the world does not know us is because we haven't done a very good job of showing them who Jesus is and the whys of Easter that Paul talks so much about in Ephesians.

They don't know that God so loved the world that He sent His Son Jesus into the world to bring eternal life. They don't know that God so loved the world that His Jesus had to die for its sins. They don't know that Jesus is the Son of God, the only One with the authority to forgive sin. They don't know that Jesus rose from the dead to bring life and hope to a world without either. **The world does not know us because they do not know Jesus.**

Perhaps another reason the world doesn't know us is that we have lost our identity as God's children. At times, we look and act no different than those outside of the church doors. We demand to be served rather than serve, we tend to forget that we are sinful people in need of a Savior, we seem to forget that Jesus has chosen us to share in His resurrection, which means there is so much more to life than the here and now. We don't understand what it means to be set apart, called to holy living. The problem is that the church is quickly becoming indistinguishable from the world. If the church is just like the rest of the world, why would the world need the church?

John reminds us of the glorious truth that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. We were created in love to bring love and hope to lost and broken people. What we do with that love is up to us. Like the rest of the world, **we can choose to follow Jesus, or we can choose to follow someone or something else.** It has been said that we can choose our friends, but not our families. That is partially true. We have no say in choosing our parents, our grandparents or any other family member. However, we do have a choice when it comes to choosing to become part of God's heavenly family. We can choose to be children of God or we can choose to be part of the other family, the one we see and hear so much about every day. We can choose to fall in with love our brothers and sisters in Christ, or we can choose to fall in love with the world. We can choose to be like Him.