

Victorious Love

Listening to the Apostle of Love

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Bible Text: 1 John 4:1-6

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Two years ago in 2012 at the summer Olympics in London, a young man from Noblesville, Indiana participated in the 10m platform diving event. David Boudia, a faithful member of this church, barely advanced initially from the preliminary competitions to make the semi finals. He finished third in the semifinals which propelled him on to the final competition, by a mere .3 percentage points difference between he and his nearest competitor, Qiu Bo from China, he won the gold medal. This is David, many of you know him. There was one victory. The victory was exclusive. Qiu Bo, even though he was only .3% different, did not get the gold. Not everybody wins the gold. By the very nature of Olympic Games or I might say any games, there must be a winner and if I'm politically correct, I will say a non-winner otherwise known as a, you want to say the word, loser. I know we don't like that word. Victory is exclusive to the victor.

Almost as internationally significant as the Olympics was my recent participation in a local Sprint triathlon. Almost. I came in 32nd out of 42. I was not the victor. I was the loser. Part of the reason was that I was dead last in the pool. It was a nice relaxing swim when you're the only one in the pool at the end. I blame my failure on my third grade swimming teacher who was mean and I took one lesson and I never went back and I was scarred until the last two years where I'm trying to swim again. So maybe next year, maybe the victor, maybe not. We'll see. Games or sporting events, boardgames, any other kind of games that have really no eternal significance do reflect the reality of eternal significance that there is a victor ultimately. There will be a universal victor in the end. We've been singing this morning about Christ in the end. We've been talking about the future, God reigning on the throne. There will be a culmination where there will be one victory.

This morning we will study God's victorious love in 1 John 4:1-6. We are continuing our study in the book of 1 John and John has been called the apostle of love. Since our focus this year is on "Loving Our Neighbors," the pastoral staff thought it was good for us to go through his writings contained in the book of 1 John. To help us all better understand the precise passage that I'm going to be talking to you about today, I know some of you are already turning to 1 John, don't go there. Go to Acts chapter 20 just a moment. That is on page 107 in the back section of the New Testament in the Bible in the chair in front of you. Why should we start in Acts 20 versus 1 John? Well, Bible scholars tend to think

that John was most likely writing to believers in and around the city of Ephesus when he wrote his passage or his writings, so John was writing to most likely a group of believers called the Ephesians. Twenty years earlier, the Apostle Paul ministered in and among the pastors there, 20 years earlier. Acts 20:18 is his final exhortation to the pastors around the Ephesus churches, the Ephesian people, the pastors there. Acts 20:18, here is what the word of God says, "And when they," the elders of Ephesus, "had come to him," Paul, "he said to them, 'You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.'" Verse 25, "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face." Paul was about to set his sights on Jerusalem and go there and he would end up being captive for preaching the Gospel and then he would go to Rome as a prisoner. He believes that this is the last time that he's going to see these dear Ephesian people. Verse 26, "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. Basically, I have told you all that I needed to in regarding the truth of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you," even among your own selves. He's talking to the group of the Ephesian pastors, from your own ranks will rise, "not sparing the flock, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Verse 32, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified," because Paul recognizes something was about to happen over the next decades to this church to sift them and to determine who really are the faithful ones over time and even some among their pastors might be numbered among those who would not be truly of the kingdom of God.

So what we have in Acts 20 is Paul's warning for what the believers in Ephesus would face in the future: false teachers are rising. So we're about to go to John, what we have in John is John's encouragement to the believers after something significant has happened in the last two decades. The false teachers had apparently come and caused problems and left. Let's see that and let's see if we can see it a little bit more clearly in the text of 1 John. Now if you will, please turn over to 1 John and we're going to start just with a few passages here before we land in chapter 4. So look at chapter 1, verse 1. That is on page 185 of the Bible in the chair in front of you in the back section. John starts his epistle with words we have studied before, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands." This would have been a different story if John had only said something like this, "Well, we heard a bunch of stories out there and we hope they are true." John says, "No, no, no. It's not just that we heard them, we saw God's salvation. We have touched God's salvation. This is real, folks." This is real and he's writing to the remnant who is left in the congregation after certain people have departed. John is writing to the sheep about

someone who was real, just as real as you seeing and hearing me and touching me if you reached out today and touched me.

Please turn over now to 1 John 2:18 and 19. "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared." I know when you say this, when you hear these words "antichrist," your mind goes to a confusing morass of the future where you don't fully understand the future times and there is an antichrist coming that will rise up. You say, "I don't get all of that." That is fine. That is not all that John has in mind and probably not primarily what he has in mind. He has primarily in mind the antichrists that are here in your midst now. Yes, there will be a final future one that takes on the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ returns and wipes it all out but right now he's not talking about that, he's talking about the antichrists among us now. Verse 19, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown," it would be shown, God was doing something to show "who really is of God."

Please turn now to chapter 3. Pastor Viars took us through this last week. Chapter 3, verse 10, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious." By the way, how many families are there? You have children of God and children of the devil. How many families are there? You say, there are not children and grandchildren of dust and although we have children, there are two ultimately spiritual families and there are only two: children of God or children of the devil.

With that in mind, turn to 1 John 5:19. I hear those pages turning. Good work on your Bible following, reading, studying skills this morning. 1 John 5:19. This is John's last exhortation. "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." And then there is this last statement that seems out of place. I mean, did he forget just a few line's that he had written and then decided to add it in? "Little children, keep away from idols." What does that have to do with anything? It seems like he lost his train of thought and just had an ADHD moment where he went off to something. What is this? It does apply and you'll see how it applies in just a moment.

Here is what has apparently happened, what has most likely happened to the church or churches around Ephesus is this: this was the very, very real first and very, very real painful, hurtful church split. Those who went out from the church seem to have deceived many and took many from the congregation with them. Those who led this church split apparently taught differently than the Apostle Paul or the Apostle John primarily on all that Jesus said he was and then they didn't follow him and they did not manifest the type of love that he showed as well. Though John is writing to those who remained and as a grandpa, as a father figure, as a good shepherd, he is assuring them, "You have overcome."

With that in mind, please look at 1 John 4:1-6. This is our primary text today. "My little children," he doesn't start that way but he said that throughout the entire text so far as the grandpa, fatherly figure, the Apostle John,

1 Little children, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh [those words are significant] is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We [the apostles, the ones who have heard, seen, touched the salvation of God] we are from God; he who knows God listens to us [who have seen, touched, felt the salvation of God]; he who is not from God does not listen to us [the apostles]. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 John 4:1-6 this morning contains three implications of God's victorious love for us to grasp and we've got to get our hands and our heads and our hearts around these implications. The first implication of God's victorious love is this: there is one real war between two kingdoms occurring on earth for your souls. Hear me on this: there is one. How many? You say it, "There is one," real war between two kingdoms occurring on earth for your souls. Victory does it not, imply a contest? You talk about Olympic games, board games and all that is fun but it has no eternal significance but there is a conflict in this world that also implies a winner and a loser that has eternal significance. There is a worldwide conflict occurring that goes beyond the conflict between you and your spouse, you and your children, you and your roommate if you're a college student, you and your parents, you and your teachers, USA and Russia. There is a worldwide conflict that goes beyond anything like that. All of those conflicts exist because of this one conflict that is raging in reality. The one battle concerns the knowledge of God and knowing him. Truth. The kingdom of God. The one battle that is raging concerns the knowledge of God and knowing him and the kingdom of God.

We see this in John if we have eyes to see. Throughout the epistle, John has said things like this, "By this we know that we know him because you know him. He who is born of God and knows God. These things are written so that you might," say the word, "know." In our passage today, "By this you," say the word, "know the Spirit of God and he who knows God listens." There is a cosmic battle going on regarding the truth about God and knowing him. Precisely that battle is about what people believe about God, also known as religion. In one real sense, all of the conflicts in the world are caused by religion, the battle of the knowledge of God. You may say, "Brent, I didn't like it when my teacher at college said that religion was the source of all conflicts." I say to you, "Well, your teacher was right." You're right, religion is the source of all conflicts because religion is about the knowledge of God and that is precisely the pivot point of all of the battle. "But my

teacher also said this, if religion is the source of all conflict and we don't want conflict, then what should we do?" What should we do? Get rid of religion. Problem solved, right? No. Even the assertion that there is no God, if you end up saying get rid of religion and you assert there is no God, what is that? That is asserting knowledge about God and if you're asserting knowledge about God, then what does that make what you just assert? A religion. You don't get rid of it.

You may say, "Brent, all of this is like too philosophical. Get onto something practical." Okay. Raise your hand if you're in an inhabitant of this created earth? Are you an inhabitant? Okay, Corbin you're not raising your hand. Either you're asleep or? Guys, creation screams that there is a God. It screams the knowledge of God. You cannot escape the knowledge of God. You cannot. Say "you cannot." So you cannot ultimately say that there will not be religion and you cannot escape some form of religion, either truth or error. You cannot. When China tried to wipe out religion in its communistic, atheistic with Mao Tse Tung years ago, decades ago, guess what has happened now? China has been the most fertile ground for Christianity and will soon eclipse all other nations in the amount of Christians there. Win one for God there. Every corner of the world is touched by conflict and inherently touched by religion. The battle of the knowledge of God or truth is raging and the one war against the true knowledge of God.

The war exists because, B: it is sourced in the opposition of the true knowledge of God from Satan. Error. The kingdom of Satan. Our passage started off in a very strange way. The passage says, "do not believe every spirit." This is peculiar. What is he talking about? Are we going to have to do like Ghost Buster eradication kind of thing in the church house? What do we need to do? Well, we're not talking about ghosts. You say, "What are we talking about?" Well, let's keep reading. The passage goes on to say, "test the spirits because many false prophets have arisen." Okay, there is something I can understand: false prophets. Prophets are teachers. What do those kinds of teachers teach about? God and the knowledge of God so we're talking about teachings. Teachings from teachers, the prophets. Folks, here is what we need to understand: since the serpent in Genesis 3 said to Eve, "Has God really said?" and began to question the knowledge of God and God's word, the battle between truth and error has been raging and the source behind the serpent in Genesis 3 is Satan who opposes God and the true knowledge of God and is the source behind all error in this world. Say "all." Even the source behind Israel's idolatry that they got so enamored with and they struggled in the Old Testament. Please hear this in Deuteronomy 32:16, "They made Him jealous with strange gods." We understand that to be the stone statues. These idols. Idols are nothing. They are statues but what lies behind the teachings? "With abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to," what? They sacrificed in front of the idols. What were they actually sacrificing to? You say it, "demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known."

The source behind all religions that are not based upon the true knowledge of God as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ is Satanic. 1 Timothy 4:1 says this, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." I'm about to say something that is not

politically correct and if I were in the Levant right now, I would be beheaded for what I'm about to say: the source behind heretical strands of Christianity is Satan. The source behind atheism is Satan. The source behind Buddhism is Satan. The source behind Judaism as manifested by the Pharisees is Satan. The source behind yes, Islam, is Satan. The source behind Hinduism is Satan. The source behind secular humanism is Satan. The source behind American materialism is Satan. The source behind psychologies that teach different views of man than the Bible does is Satan. The source behind evolution, yes, evolution that teaches a different origin of man is Satan. 1 John 5:21, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols," the end passage there. Why did he summarize all of his writing by saying guard against idols as almost an afterthought? Because everything that is not sourced in Jesus Christ the one true knowledge of God, is error and is sourced in idolatry and is of Satan.

Folks, there is true knowledge of God and the Apostle Paul said also that part of his role as a believer and as a messenger of God was doing this, 2 Corinthians 10:5, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive." Every thought. What do we think on? What is the truth that we meditate on? It has to be in line with the knowledge of God or else it is in line with the devil. Anything contrary to the true knowledge of God is of Satan. Remember, how many families are there? Please tell me? I didn't say this. I did say it but I didn't originate this. How many families are there? Two. I understand this is not politically correct but please hear me: political correctness will not save you. It will destroy you and send you on your way to hell. Truth is exclusive. There is only one truth just like victory, there is only one gold.

There is one battle and that battle also has no neutral ground. If I got my facts right, Switzerland was neutral in both world wars, right? At least in the second one, I don't know about the first one but I think I'm right. They were never invaded or attacked by the Allies or the Axis powers. Can you imagine if Switzerland had declared, "Hey, we're on the side of the Allies." They would have an onslaught of enemies with the Axis. If they had declared that they were with the Axis, they would have an onslaught of enemies with the Allies. In the spiritual world, there is no spiritual Switzerland. Do you hear me? There is no spiritual Switzerland despite what you might think. You may say, "Satan, you know, I'm not really Satan's enemy or God's enemy, I'm just a spiritual Switzerland. I'm kind of undecided right now and I don't know where I am. I am not against God. He seems to like to be a good guy. You know, Satan doesn't seem to be like a good guy but I'm really not of him either." If you think that and that is error scripturally, where is that from? You said it, not me. The Scriptures give us no spiritual Switzerland and if we believe that we can be spiritually neutral, then we are in error.

Folks, we are born into this world, into the kingdom of darkness, into Satan's kingdom. We are destined and on the path to destruction because we're living in our pride just like Satan, living for our own interests and not God's. We were created to live for God's interest and not our own and we have chosen our own way and our fathers have chosen their own ways and that's why we are like them. We were born into the kingdom of Satan first and we had one very, very powerful enemy. Who was that? One very, very, very

powerful enemy. If we're in a kingdom of Satan, who would be our enemy? We are kind of on his side at that moment in time, God. I know you may not be thinking this way but here is what it's like: imagine for just a moment that you are an animal trapped in a flood. The flood came and you made your way to a high platform and the flood is about to kind of sweep you away to destruction and there is a rescue man that is coming along and he makes his way across the raging river and is trying to rescue you, beast like dog or cat or whatever it would be. Because you view him as an enemy, you fear him in some way. You don't know that he's actually trying to rescue you and you claw him and you bite him but he is actually in reality not your enemy but you believe he is your enemy and he's actually trying to deliver you. When we are in the kingdom of Satan, when we were born, we had one enemy. He is powerful but he is good. He is good and he is trying to rescue you. The moment you are converted to Jesus Christ and are in the kingdom of God, guess what? Just like Switzerland, if you move over to the different side, you have an onslaught of enemies now. Satan is powerful but he is not good. The world is powerful but it is not good. Your flesh is powerful but it is not good either. "Greater is ultimately he that is in you than he that is in the world." What all of this means is this: all gods are not the same. Say "not." All roads do not lead to the same destination. Say "not." Everyone does not just have a little portion of the truth that they are going to lead them to God. It doesn't work that way. "Brent, you've gone too far. You are saying that the true knowledge of God is exclusive. Really?" Yes. That is what I'm saying because that is what Scripture says. Qiu Bo did not get the gold medal and the true knowledge of God is exclusive.

The second implication of this passage this morning is this: there are many real tests. Folks, there are many real tests that force every soul to regularly choose and to force every soul to reveal whose side they are on. The congregation to which John was speaking apparently had gone through one of those difficult times and remember, Paul had warned the church that wolves would come in among them and even raise up among their own rank and the center of the conflict concerned the person and work of Jesus Christ. Today, the heart of religious battles always concern the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the pivot point of truth and of recorded history. Just think about this: history is measured by BC and A.D. He is the pivot point and he is the pivot point of all knowledge about God as well.

So you will be tested by your knowledge of him, your acceptance of him. In the Ephesians congregation, some apparently started believing other philosophies about who Jesus was and not believing all that Jesus Christ had said that he was. Furthermore, these wolves did not manifest the kind of love that Jesus Christ manifested and they apparently caused a hurtful, hard, painful division among the ranks of this congregation. The apostle of love, John, was writing to his sheep, "Little children, I want to assure you, you who remain," trying to help them. You can imagine if you will, just a moment, use your sanctified imaginations to kind of wonder what questions the congregation was asking. Things like this: "But grandpa, Apostle John, we don't fully understand. We are confused. This conflict has really been hard and hurtful. How do we know that we really are of God? What if we are really like them and deceived? I really don't know. God, maybe we are deceived also." Hear John's words again, 1 John 4:2, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." And

you are doing that. You have remained. You are not forsaking that. "Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." They did not believe all that Jesus said he was, therefore they didn't follow him. "This is the spirit of the antichrist," not of some neutral Switzerland, of the antichrist, of Satan, "of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God," the ones who remain are from God, "little children, and have overcome," you have remained, "because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." They went out from us because they were not of us. You have overcome. You have remained. You are hanging on there. You are believing all that Jesus Christ said he was. "By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

John's congregation faced a test from God to determine to which kingdom did they actually belong. Paul warned them of this 20 years earlier and those that remained stood fast in the belief about Jesus. John said, "You have overcome. You have remained true and you have loved like your Savior Jesus has loved. In the midst of these trials, you have persevered because Christ indeed is in you." Do you recognize, Faith family, that the true King, God and his Son Jesus Christ is orchestrating daily tests? Weekly tests? Monthly tests? Every day, the trials that we face? To confirm, to reveal, to refine your beliefs in the true knowledge of God and to reveal who has the true knowledge of God. Just because you are here at church does not mean that you are in the kingdom of God. Tests, trials, reveal over time which King you serve and you will have many and multiple trials but they are not forever. God orchestrates them to reveal who is your sovereign.

God has recently given me an example that was very tender for me in regard to this truth. Thank you, many of you who prayed and sent cards when I lost my father in August. God gave me some very tender moments in the last days with my dad and I want to share one of them with you that goes along with what happened here. My dad was a pharmacist. He loved ministering to people. He loved serving his customers with excellent customer care. That is what he thrived on. During his last days of his illness which he had been diagnosed with a lung disease ten years earlier and his last two months, July and August, the lung disease tended to accelerate and render him more quickly unable to do what he loved to do. He couldn't even go to the nursing homes anymore and minister and care for the customers he had there by helping them with their medicines. He could barely walk from the bedroom to the bathroom without gasping for breath even though he was on oxygen, the full amount 24/7.

The second day that I was there, when I got there to my home and I knew that things were not that great, my dad collapsed in pain and at that moment in time I thought it was mostly physical pain and so we kind of drugged him up with morphine and all this kind of stuff. He became lethargic really quickly. You have to understand something about pharmacists and doctors: I don't think they always like to take the medicines they prescribe. Dad was so terrified of getting on morphine and high powered pain medicines because he did not want to in the end of his life become addicted to high-powered pain medicines. So he wasn't managing his pain well. As I began to kind of figure this out, I began to manage his pain a little bit and not give him high doses but just enough to take the edge off his pain and keep him alert. When he was alert, he began to talk to me and I will cherish these moments because I didn't think I would have the opportunity to really

pastor my dad ever. He was my dad. He pastors me. But I got a chance to pastor him. He said, "Brent, I think the pain that I was facing the other day certainly was heavy but I had more emotional pain, I believe." He said something like, "I've lost my purpose. This has taken such a quick turn and I can't do what I love doing and ministering and serving people." My dad was a believing man. He wasn't a deep man; he doesn't have a PhD in the Old Testament like his son does but that's okay. He had a simple faith. I said, "Dad, you always have a purpose as a child of God. Even if all that you can do to love God and to love your wife today is fold those towels, you know, when mom comes and dumps all the towels on the couch, you can fold them for her. If your oxygen cord can reach there, we'll make it reach there. You can do that. Dad, you can also love mom by doing those dishes." He said, "But Brent, the oxygen cord doesn't reach the kitchen." I fixed that, by the way. He said, "Brent, I need to think about what you are saying."

So the next day, I got up and as I normally did, I checked on my dad. Over the night, I did not know if he had lived through the night so I checked on him to see if he was still alive in the morning. I found him on his knees and this is the moment I remember about my dad. He was on his knees praying and he had not fallen. He was on his knees praying and he arose and he said, "Brent, I made a decision. Every day that the Lord gives me breath," notice the term he used because he was struggling with breath, "every day that the Lord gives me breath, I will live for God and I will love others." What more sweet moment should I have with my dad at the end of his life. From that day on, my dad was like running around all the house as much as a man tethered to oxygen could run around but he was doing the dishes for mom, he was folding those towels to the degree that he could. I called him the day before he died and he was just as happy as a lark. Mom had said to me, "Brent, it doesn't seem like anything's wrong with dad anymore," within realism there. But the next day his body gave out. I believe God gave him one final test to reveal at least to all of us, whose side dad was on. "With my remaining breath, I will serve the Lord and love him," and his strength was from Jesus Christ. That's how I want to persevere in my life and overcome. Is that where you will and be with the victor?

The third implication is that there is only one victor, Jesus Christ. There is only one victor. Say "one." Why? Jesus Christ is the culmination, the manifestation, the perfect representation of the true knowledge of God and truth. He wins in the end, therefore Jesus Christ wins in the end. All the world will subject themselves to Jesus Christ one way as a subject matter of the King, meaning that you are in his kingdom, or as an enemy of the King, meaning that you are not and you have confirmed yourself in the kingdom of Satan. Jesus Christ is the true knowledge of God. God's Son, Jesus Christ is the perfect manifestation of the knowledge of God. Jesus as the Son of God was the exact representation of God and throughout John, John has been saying, "God is love. God is love. God is love." What is the knowledge of God about? God is love and Jesus Christ represented that knowledge perfectly in the way that he lived and died for you in his love. The character, the love of God, manifested in Jesus Christ as opposed to the self-absorption, the prideful way of Satan which will not win. Jesus Christ and God's salvation and love will win. And he is the victor, Jesus Christ. Thus, if that is the case and it is, there is only one test of victory and here's the tests: it is the persevering conviction, the internal belief, not just a head knowledge, but Jesus Christ come in the flesh. All of

those words are significant. Jesus means God's salvation. God came down to save. Christ, the anointed promised one from Genesis 3, the one, the seed of the woman that would crush the head of the serpent, has really, indeed, truly come. John the apostle has seen, heard, touched him. So God's salvation, the promised one that would overcome Satan has really come. Do you believe that is the crux of the victory? Jesus Christ has rendered powerless the two weapons of Satan: sin and its enslaving guilt and its consequence is death. Jesus Christ rendered those things impotent for those who would choose to believe. He alone is the standard of victory and the confession of victory. Do you know him? That will be the only thing that matters, Faith family. Nothing else will and you cannot be a spiritual Switzerland.

So folks, today there are some in our midst I know because there always are, wheat and tares, those of the kingdom of God and those of the kingdom of Satan. I don't know who all is which. Test and trials over time will reveal, do you know Jesus Christ. If you don't, he is the measure of victory. You need to know him this day and there will be nothing greater than pastors here helping you to come to know the one who will win the victory, who has won the victory, and you will be with him. Let me say this also in regard to what pastor Dustin Folden said: folks, we're coming into a season where it's a holiday season. Thanksgiving is coming. We know this. We talk about this and the Living Nativity. This is the perfect season to begin to think about: will I be a proclaimer of the true knowledge of God as manifested in Jesus Christ? And even as we think it's not too early to start thinking about the Living Nativity. Now, Pastor Folden said, "I encourage you to sign up." I want to do more than that. I want to insist. There is a war out there between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, correct? God is one and as John was also saying, not the apostle but the pastor, the pastor was saying as he was quoting that Satan has put a veil over the nations. You have a part in sharing the true knowledge of God. In one part, just one part that we can do corporately together is through the holidays, proclaim the true knowledge of God. So here's what I want you to do, will you do this today? Let's not come back week after week and say, "Okay, we've got 200 slots left in the Living Nativity. 100 left in the Living Nativity. 50, do I hear 25 left?" Folks, you know we do this every year. If you don't know what we are talking about, go online and look at the Living Nativity video and let's get this handled today so that we can get about the business of not trying to administrate all of this but get about the business of making sure we are inviting people and preparing well so that we can proclaim the true knowledge of God to a world that is blinded by Satan. That's what we need. So will you do this: will you fill that form out today or tonight and drop it in the box or go online? Will you do it? Will you do it? Try it. Try doing it. I'm not going to ask you to respond to me because I might make you a liar or something like that. We don't want to do that. Will you do it? Consider it strongly.

If I really believe all that who Jesus said he was, I will follow him and that means following in his way of victory which means his way of love. If you really believe that, then there is the last evidence here, the implication. There is one way of life in the kingdom of God. One way of life in the kingdom of God in contrast to the kingdom of Satan: growing love like Jesus Christ. If you really believe all that Jesus said he was and his way of victory was love, if you believe that, your way of victory and life will be

sacrificial love toward others. Are you knowing your Savior and Lord and growing in that? That is our theme this year. Folks, there is a war. There will be tests to show really and truly who is on which side. I didn't say that quite right. And there is only one victor. That is the reality of what this passage teaches.

Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for this passage. Thank you for not being politically correct with us or else we would be on our way to hell. Help us, Father, to take the truth of your word, the loving merciful truth, and giving us the knowledge of your Son that we might be saved. Help us to evaluate where we are each and every day. When the test and the trials come, may you be working in our lives to show us that greater is he that is in us, Christ, than he that is in the world because the world is passing away and will not win. Thank you, Father. In Christ's name. Amen.