

SUMMARY OF JUDE
AUGUST 7, 2011
(read Jude 17-23)

I used to kid Mike about the length of his sermons, and I would tell him that I was going to get up in the middle of church some day and declare I was going to get a haircut, and when he asked me why I didn't get one before church, I would say I didn't NEED one before church. But then he would come back with that line about sermonettes being for Christianettes. Well, I don't think I'm a Christianette, but I'm probably still a preacherette, so I beg your mercy if I don't go an hour this morning. Suffice it to say if you have lunch plans, you should be in good shape.

I told Jon that I would take the service this morning...I'm sure he doesn't mind the break and I know he had a very busy week. But mostly, I felt somewhat compelled to follow up on some of the things I said in camp when we started this study, especially in light of all the things that have transpired since then. Certainly, none of us were at all aware of the life-changing events that were playing out. We knew that Mike was too sick to be with us, which meant we knew that he was very sick...we knew what it would take to keep him away.

But as it turns out, and certainly NOT coincidentally, many of the things that were being brought out were things that in retrospect, in hindsight, were very timely. And it is not coincidental, or irony or kismet or anything else, except the hand of the Almighty God at work on Ferndale Church... at work I believe for our ultimate good.

If you recall from church camp, for those of you who were there, we talked about the need to “have each others backs” and to “circle the wagons” against the insidious attacks of false teachers, mockers, evil doers carrying out Satan's agenda. And that has certainly played out as we have had to scramble to put ourselves back in order, re-organize, re-evaluate everything and everyone. Every task needing done, every members role in picking up those tasks. We have had to have people step

up and take on new or expanded responsibilities.

And while it has been a time of great challenge, it has also been a time of great opportunity and a time of people filling many if not all of those roles. But it also a time of great vulnerability. Knowing how Satan works, it is opportunity for him as well-opportunity to do exactly what Jude described...sneak in unnoticed because our guard is down, because we are weak in the sorrow of our loss; Opportunity we need to be wary of because as we see from Jude he is far more likely, far more effective at sneaking in, creeping, worming his way in. It's what he does best, it is what is most effective against the church, and it is the way we are the most vulnerable to.

I used the analogy of circling the wagons-if you are familiar with the old west, you know that's what the settlers would do when they were attacked. They would make an unbroken circle where they were all on guard from every angle. I said that's what we had to do to keep the evil influences out of our little wagon train. What I didn't know then was that we would be required to do that without the man who we always relied on to see the attacks coming...the man who was always miles ahead of us in seeing what may be coming...seeing some dynamic going on that might impact us and know where it was likely to lead...the man who always exhorted us to "hold the line", don't allow the circle to break, knew which ones of us were more likely to be a weak link in that particular attack...the man who saw the enemy's strategy and knew how to counter-attack and defend.

In the old westerns, there was always an attack, but there was always Roy Rogers or Audie Murphy or John Wayne to lead the defense. Well, our John Wayne is gone...God called him home, but before He did, he made sure that he had trained us well- he gave us that PhD in Bible scholarship, he trained us by his life. Most of all he trained us to rely, not on him, though we still did too much of the time, but on Christ. He exhorted us just like Jude exhorted HIS beloved...that first and foremost, we are enabled because we are GOD'S beloved!

So, with that as the framework, I wanted to close out our study of Jude

with this summary, focusing primarily on what Jude exhorted HIS hearers to do and by extension what we must exhort one another to do. These exhortations are more or less the application points...the things we can go out and act on. Up through verse 16, Jude has established the need for his readers to contend earnestly for the faith, first with reminders of God's righteous condemnation of the ungodly in vs. 5-7. Then secondly with a very vivid depiction of the ungodly men who have crept in unnoticed (vs. 9-16, 19).

Now in verses 17-23, Jude provides a series of exhortations designed to make sure that they stand strong in the faith, the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

I mentioned this during my session in camp and we talked about it in adult Sunday School a couple of weeks ago and then I touched on it again a minute ago...throughout this book, Jude addresses his readers as "beloved". Strong's Exhaustive Concordance lists the word as agapetos (from the root which we are familiar with-Agape) and defines it as dearly beloved, to have affection for. For comparison's sake, the term is mentioned several other places in Scripture:

- ✦ By Paul in Romans 12:19**
- ✦ In Hebrews 6:9**
- ✦ In I Peter 2:11**
- ✦ In I John 4:1,7,11**

It describes those addressed as being dear or precious to the one saying it. As I mentioned earlier, these hearers are dear to Jude because he has an affinity for them, he has a history with them, a direct, face to face relationship with them. But way beyond that, they are loved by Jude because they are loved by God. That, to a Christian, supersedes and surpasses any other reason to love or for that matter, conversely, not to love one of God's people. We are compelled to love one another because He first loved us.

And because of that love, Jude does what? Does he tell them to join hands and sing Kumbaya? Does he tell them what wonderful little people they are by their own lovable natures? No, he warns them, challenges

them, exhorts them, even chastises them a bit in order to protect them. He tells them what they NEED to hear, not what they WANT to hear. I love my children, but I'm sure there were times they didn't feel like that was love they were getting from me. I'm sure it felt like something else altogether. Much of what we have to do to protect our children, to warn them, to correct them isn't always pleasant, but it is necessary. Because they are my beloved children, I do whatever it takes to enable them, to warn them of things they may not see for themselves.

You may recall if you were at camp, I publicly challenged myself as one of your shepherds, if I truly loved you? Are you beloved to me? Are you dear, precious? Yes you are, so I am going to warn you... with the same warnings and exhortations that Jude warned his beloved with. So let's look together at these exhortations to the beloved and see how they applied to them then and to us now.

The first exhortation designed to keep them from stumbling is to: Remember the words spoken before. (v. 17-18) Remember first of all, who spoke them. They were the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, duly appointed and sent out by Jesus himself. To heed them is to heed the Lord Himself (Jn.13:20). These apostles were not speaking on their own accord or on their own authority. They were assigned and empowered to speak on behalf of Jesus. And then, remember what they said. That there would be mockers in the last times. That they would walk according to their own ungodly lusts as described in Jude and other Scripture, such as 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 4:3,4).

Today, we have to remember what they wrote. This implies diligent study of the word of God on our part. We have mentioned that this is even more important now in our situation. We took too many liberties with Mike's gift and devotion to scholarship and we got away with it, because he was so strong in that regard. I would go so far as to say we were even unfair to him at times, because his study would have been even deeper, more enriched had we always done our due diligence and gave back to him from our own study. To do that now would be even more unfair to Jon and with less frequency but greater risk, unfair to me. And it would

be even more to our collective detriment.

The second exhortation: Build yourself up in the most holy faith (v. 20). To build yourself up suggests growth. It is not enough- maybe not even possible- to build yourself up and attain some level of growth in the faith and then stagnate. We must continue to build upon it, as Peter suggested “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). I believe it is entirely possible if not certain that a failure to grow will ensure and guarantee you will shrink back, erode.

To build yourselves up suggests personal accountability. Your brothers, leaders, etc. can exhort, encourage, reason, argue-take whatever means they can to facilitate, but it still rests on each one of us individually to accept and act on.

The “most Holy Faith” is the same “faith once for all delivered”. It is the belief, the hope, the doctrine once delivered. Now having been delivered, it is for us to build upon, to be kept in, preserved in.

So, the first two exhortations are: 1) Remember the words spoken before, and 2) Build yourselves up in the most Holy Faith. These two things require diligence in studying, remembering the words; building yourself up in the faith given you. These are inward exhortations...they require us to do something internally. The third exhortation goes in a different direction:

Pray in the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is an absolutely necessary component in the formula for righteousness. Through the Word of God, God speaks to us; through prayer, we speak to God. Study and Scholarship are not all that is needed in contending for the faith...demons know the Scriptures. James tells us “You believe there is one God. You do well. Demons know the Scriptures and tremble.

So what is meant by praying “in the Spirit”? Neither Jude nor Paul elaborates- Paul uses the same expression in Eph. 6:18. Paul does, however, use the expression “walking in the Spirit” in Galatians 5, which

in context, implies living according to the Spirit as outlined in the word of God, within the parameters of Scripture. It could well mean that praying in the Spirit is comparable...praying in accordance to what we know is consistent with the Word. This exhortation requires us to look upward.

Next, in verse 21, we are exhorted to “keep yourselves in the love of God.” Again we see the need for personal responsibility. We are called upon to keep ourselves.

The word for “keep” is the same as “preserved” in Jude. The Greek word is tereo (tay-reh-o), which means “to watch, guard from loss or injury by keeping the eye upon.”

So we see, as we have seen so often before, the multi-faceted layers of God's working in us. We are preserved, and we being preserved as we do our part in preserving or keeping ourselves. As Peter said in I Peter 1:5, “We are kept by the power of God through faith. It is God's power being wielded by our faith, faith He gave us, delivered once and for all. It is ours to utilize or not. We have the responsibility to put His power to work, into action, through faith.

Then we see the importance of being kept in God's love. Jesus taught that keeping His commandments is key to abiding in God's love. It is how we will be loved by our Father and by the Son (John 14:21- He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves Me, will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. John 15: 9-10-As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.) It is also, as we read on, how we love each other. (Jn. 15:11-12- These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you (be “preserved” in you), and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.

So, to Bible Study and prayer, we must add the actual application of

God's word and obedience to His commandments, which are not burdensome. And that will manifest itself in the love of God, His Son and His people.

And then, just to keep us humble and from becoming legalistic or thinking that we somehow deserve and have earned our salvation, we get the fifth exhortation:

Look for the mercy of our God.

As we do all these other exhortations, we can certainly rest assured in knowing that we can, in fact, look forward to the mercy of our God. And make no mistake, mercy is required. As we have studied in Romans 6, eternal life is not earned, but graciously given in Christ. We are saved, not by works of righteousness, but according to mercy, that we might become heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.

And then the final exhortation in vs. 22-23:

Be compassionate, with fear.

First we must remember that in order to keep ourselves, we must be compassionate on others. Scripture tells us that mercy will only be given to the merciful. This should come natural to us if we truly recognize the depth of what was required to show mercy to us. As Mike said so often we are to grace others as we have been graced. The grace we have been so richly given compels us to pay it forward. And we do all this with urgency, knowing that the times are wicked and the days are short. God has work that He will get done, and we have the marvelous opportunity to have Him do it through us.

And finally note that this exhortation points us in even a different direction... outward. So these exhortations point us in three directions: Inward as we remember and study and do the work to keep ourselves; upward as we pray to our Father in the Spirit; and outward as we have compassion on our brothers and sisters in Christ and on the world around us. Failure to leave out any of these directions allows a venue for other things, other teaching, other false teachers to creep in.

In closing it is my hope and prayer that these words of Jude to his beloved serve as a guide for us today. Imagine the blessedness of a body in which every member is heeding these exhortations! Imagine the blessedness of seeing everyone in this congregation receiving the mercy of the Lord on that coming day. Beloved, are you keeping yourselves in the love of God today by keeping His commandments?