Good Morning!

“Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to *do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.” 2 John 12

This is a lesson from 2 John. I can imagine that you have never had a lesson from this book before. It is one of the shortest books and therefore usually considered of minor importance. It has good theology, but nothing that cannot be found somewhere else. This idea is unfortunate.

What it does have is a personal connection between John and a Lady and her family from whom John is separated. Many letters in the New Testament express the idea of separation and longing to see someone. Paul in 1 Thess. 3:6, “we also long to see you.” Again in Phil. 4:1, “dear friends who I long to see…” and Rom. 15:23, “for many years I have desired to come to you.”

You may say that *all* the letters of the New Testament were born out the difficult separation of the writer from his audience. They were the live-stream of their day. All of them longed to be there in person to, “impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine” (Rom. 1:11-12). Isn’t this supposed to be what the church is about?

So here in 2 John we have the apostle thankful for the testimony of the lady and her family walking in truth. Truth is all the Gospel of Christ. She and her children are walking according to the doctrine of God. John immediately reminds them that we also walk in love. Doctrine without love is like studying bike riding in a book or watching it on a YouTube video but never getting on the bike. Doctrine both teaches love and it produces love.

What is needed with the successful marriage of doctrine and love, is to watch out for those who would deceive you. Interestingly, John says watch your love *because* of deceivers. Deceivers split good fellowships and even good families. When some are deceived and some not, the friction becomes enormous. They often don’t attack doctrine head on, but wrangle over issues that are not central to the Gospel. We are to “abide in the teaching of God.”

There were no inns or hotels like we think of. When traveling Christians came into town it was customary to have them stay in your home. Especially you with young children understand what problems it would be to have someone staying with you who was there only to cause dissent in the Church. Someone who entice the young and impressionable to veer off into some new idea that was not found in the Gospel of Christ. So John says simply, “Don’t let them in!”

This short letter expresses all the emotion felt in an Elder over his flock. Joy at their progress. Worry over those who would subtly attack them. And a longing to see them.

Who are you longing to see? Very few of us are practicing a strict adherence to social distancing. We are still seeing our children and grandchildren. We still see friends and most of us still work. Even if it is not from the quarantine there are people we long to see. There are those that distance separate us. Zoom, Facetime and a list of apts. mitigate that longing in that we can talk face to face with them. Still, we desire to see them face to face; to talk without any time constraints; to hug them without fear; and to just feel comfortable in their presence.

That is the nature of the Church. It is God’s design, but which we often have only in part. We hope to have that once more with all of you and then, “our joy may be made full.”

In Jesus Christ, the God who is always near…

Pastor EA