

Davidson College Presbyterian Church
Davidson, North Carolina
5th Sunday of Easter - Youth Sunday
April 29, 2018
Sam Tarry
"See, Serve, and Trust"
1 John 4:17-21

Often times we struggle to understand what we are called to do as children of God. We want to volunteer as much as we can, but high schoolers have to get good grades, and adults, unfortunately, have to pay the bills. Sometimes we are left asking ourselves, "Am I doing enough?" or "Am I becoming an ideal child of God?" These questions, however, are not bad things. I believe that sooner or later everyone questions their faith or what they are supposed to do as a result of their faith. Questions are good; questions are the reason we read and talk about the Bible, because whether they are easy to see or not, the Bible contains many answers to the many different questions that we have.

When John wrote to the early Christians, I believe he was telling them what they are called to do as children of God. I think that John tells his congregation that they are called as His children to see, serve, and trust God. First, John wants his congregation to see that God lives in and around us all the time, both in good times and bad. In addition, John wants his congregation to serve God as much as possible through physical service and by simply loving others. Finally, John wants his people to trust in God and believe that He is there without any physical evidence to prove it; God is love, and God gave us His love so that we may live without fear and use it to get ourselves through most anything.

Noticing God is hard; I know I often struggle to see God in certain places. Yes, I see God's beauty on sunny days out on the lake, or on chilly mornings in the mountains, but sometimes I almost can't see God. During terrible times, like most recently during Hurricane Harvey, it's hard to see where God's love is. However, I have noticed that when there is tragedy, God's love, through human beings responding to tragedy, comes in fast. After Hurricane Harvey, an entire nation united to help the people of Houston, from schools sending simple supplies like water, to single celebrities raising millions of dollars to help. God's love, through the Holy Spirit living in us and using us as His hands and feet on this earth, came in fast behind that terrible time. I believe that John was calling his congregation to see God in times of beauty and in love, when we often take things for granted, and in times of tragedy. God's love is always there, and as John puts it, "God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

Just as seeing God can be hard sometimes, serving God can be difficult, too. Life ends up getting in the way most of the time. That's why when John says, "Love comes from God," I think he is telling us that God gave us love as a way of serving him. Loving others is something that we are all taught early on. Treating others as we would like to be treated is a lesson that is near the core of our belief, but how often do we actually practice it? Everyone is guilty of judging quickly or assuming something of someone, and I believe that when God gave us love as a way to serve, He was, in part, just telling us to be nice, to be kind and compassionate. Now I know this seems simple, but as all of you know, genuinely nice people are often hard to come by. But I believe that those few genuinely kind people, who never say a bad word about anyone, are the people carrying out God's plan through love. They may not necessarily be the ones going to every service day or going to worship anytime it's available, but they are the people who, when it comes down to it, are simply just as kind and considerate as they can be. When God gave us love, He wanted us to use it to serve him by

loving others. I think this is what John wanted his congregation to understand: that love is a greater power than anything in the world. Since God gave us love, why not use it as the best way to serve Him?

Finally, John tells his congregation to trust in God's love and to have no fear, as "perfect love drives out fear." We should trust that God is always with us and that, as John writes, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." I believe John was trying to say what Pastor Lib McGregor-Simmons was always saying to us in her benediction response: that we should, "Live as free people" because Jesus died for our sins. We should trust in the forgiveness of our sins so we can live without fear and be free to love one another. We should practice being content through love. If we love those around us, like family and friends, worries should not translate into fears. By not fearing small things that make us nervous or even big things like judgement day, we are trusting that God forgives us, that he is there watching over us, filling us with his Holy Spirit and helping us through our lives, always.

God is love, God gave us love, and God wants us to trust in His love. By writing about these three key points, John teaches us about an incredibly important subject to understand: what are we really called to do as servants of God? By seeing, serving, and trusting god, we ourselves will be free to show God's love to others. We should use God's perfect love to carry out what he wants us to do, and in return, we often get to experience that love from those around us. I have been blessed by my time here at Davidson College Presbyterian Church, learning and experiencing this perfect love from role models including John Beeken, Robert Alexander, Lib McGregor-Simmons, Matt Wiggins, and many more. In addition to my parents and grandparents, these are the people who have taught me that love is the most powerful thing that God ever gave us, because it has the power to change lives forever, as it has mine. With renewed confidence, let us pass on God's love to one another. Amen.

Wiley Reddick
"Unconditional Faith"
Acts 8:26-40

This past year, for the first time in my life, I found myself making a choice that would not only affect me for the next four years but for a lifetime. You can probably guess that the journey I am referring to is the college application process. When I first began, the possibilities felt overwhelming. I wondered how I would ever make the best choice. How would I find the right college? Recognizing my need for guidance, my grandmother, Ann Simpson, offered me great words of wisdom, "God will always lead us in the right direction, so long as we do the legwork." What I took from that was that I had to do everything that I could to open all possibilities, which included researching the schools, visiting, and, finally, applying. This work was all that I had to do, the rest of the journey was then in God's hands, which was a great relief to me. In our lives, we as people often find ourselves in periods of uncertainty, times when we simply do not know what course of action to follow with all circumstances considered. In the time I have spent so far as a child of God, I have learned that I must always have faith that God will guide me in the right direction, as long as I do the work.

This idea is proven to be true not only in our lives but the story of Philip in Acts 8:26-40. Going about his daily life, Philip was suddenly approached by an angel of the lord who said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." As he started out on his journey, he came across the treasurer of Ethiopia, who had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was on his way back home. As Philip approached the treasurer, he heard him reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The man was having trouble

understanding what he was reading, and Philip inquired about this apparent lack of comprehension. The treasurer retorted, "How can I learn unless someone instructs me?" Philip jumped at the opportunity and enlightened the man with the good news of Jesus. Philip was then snatched by the Spirit of the Lord and brought to Azotus where he began preaching the Good News. He listened to God and put into action what he had heard.

In this story Philip acted in a way that reflected his faith that God was watching over him and had his back 100%. As a Jewish man, it was uncommon for him to converse with foreigners so openly. Despite some unease he may have felt about the situation, he knew that his course of action was right, he had unconditional faith in God, and he did the legwork.

In our journeys as children of God, like Philip, we are called to inspire other people to have faith that God is always watching over us. When I look out into this congregation today, I see the faces of many people who answered that call and served to inspire me through experiences I have had growing up in DCPC. I can recall many amazing experiences, which I am grateful for.

I remember choir practices when I strained to keep the right tone even though my voice was changing.

I remember the bright flicker of the flame as I slowly made my way down the aisle as an acolyte, and the relief that I felt when I made it to the altar without it going out.

I remember conversations over meals with guests at Room in the Inn.

I remember singing and dancing to energizer songs while attending the Montreat Youth Conference.

I remember the delicious taste of the fried chicken at congregational picnics.

I remember the feeling of so many hands on my shoulders during the ceremony when I was installed as a deacon.

I recognize that a lot of individuals worked to create these experiences for me. They had unconditional faith that they were doing what God was calling them to do, and I believe they were right. These experiences shaped and helped me to develop my own faith, which I have now learned to rely on in times of uncertainty. This fall, I'll again be taking that faith with me when I set foot on the campus of Sewanee, The University of the South. Although that day will mark the end of the journey to find the right college, I know that it will also mark the beginning of another journey, one which I will not be alone on.