

## July 31, 2022: Continue life in Christ with God!

Dear Listeners,

In the verses we reflected on last week (1 John 2: 15-17), John concluded by saying, “the world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” This reality and truth motivate John, then, to pose that the last hour has already come. John’s unique expression of ‘the last hour’ indicates that there is a special urgency to step up the alertness that’s required in the last days (or at the end of the age)! It’s John’s alarm signal, and he knows that his readers agree with him. John’s expression doesn’t indicate that it’s five-to-twelve or so, but he alerts his readers to the fact that the signs of the time are apparent! The last phase is here and the time is short, the time of Jesus’ impending return that is! Therefore, John expresses this urgency as well when he writes, “And now, dear children, continue in Him!”

John is writing, dear listener, to those who have believed the gospel of God’s justice and righteousness in Christ (1 John 2: 29), and who repented and returned to God in Christ. They may and must now rest in Christ and rest from their evil works; yet, they cannot become complacent. Many antichrists have come! These are not Gentiles who don’t know God works and are living in unbelief; they are people who know Christ and His work, but who have taken a position against (anti!) the revelation about Him. They maintained their own wrong thoughts over against the truth of God’s Word. That’s the situation in the last hour, the last point on God’s program. So, when John writes, “and now, dear children,” then we know what this “now” entails: it’s in the time of the resistance of the evil one, the rebellion of the antichrists, and when there are the powers that are at work in the children of disobedience.

Yes, dear listeners, and even though John wrote his epistle nearly two thousand years ago, in the mean time the gospel has gone into the world and reached almost all nations; yes, today still, it’s being rejected and resisted. Thankfully, as John could assure his addressees, so we may be confident today as well, the Holy Spirit won’t leave His church but will continue to lead her into all the truth, as Christ has promised. He brings the old truth to life again and again! Hence, the call mentioned by John repeatedly to continue in Christ! “Continue in Him,” this may be an expression that’s difficult to understand for people who are not familiar with the language of the Bible. How can you remain in someone who is light years away from us: the Lord Jesus is in heaven while we’re on earth? We confess in the church that according to His human nature Christ is no longer on earth, but in His divinity, majesty, grace and Spirit He is at no time absent from us!

“Continue in Him,” dear listener, that means that we are called to live in this communion with Him, to exercise this relationship with Him, and to practise the newness of life in Him, in our thinking, our actions, our walk and talk, at home, at work, etc. We need to maintain this bond of faith and communion first of all by seeking Him in prayer. We also need to take time for personal Bible study and meditation, searching the Scriptures that speak of God, of Christ! That’s most important to John when he writes, “dear children, this is the last hour:” whatever God has revealed in His Word is being contradicted today or twisted and distorted. That’s why it’s so important today as well, today still, that we continue to go to church and listen to the proclamation of the gospel!

Without Him, that is Christ and His Word, dear listeners, we cannot do anything! That's become very clear in our time. Without Him there is no rest and no peace but fear and anxiety and unrest. Many are fleeing into the rest or the peace of drugs, yet they come out of it in fear! Continue in Him, in His Word, in His service, in His kingdom and church, and continue to find rest and peace and comfort in His Word! As long as that intimate bond with Christ is there! The purpose of John's appeal to continue in Christ is our state and condition on the day of Christ's appearance. He will come on the clouds to judge the living and the dead. Then every eye will see Him! That may be difficult to imagine, yet for us today that's not as hard to imagine as it has been in past times. As child I often thought, 'how can that be,' yet today with the modern media, with the TV and with the various hand-held devices, in our global village, anything that happens anywhere in the world can instantly be seen everywhere else in the world, projected on screens or what have you!

John speaks about His appearing and His coming, and he uses an image for it which was common in his days: the appearing of the Caesar. When the Caesar from Rome would make an appearance in Alexandria or Antioch or Ephesus or Corinth, this coming would be announced as a gospel message. His coming would be prepared long in advance and was longed for intensely and celebrated cheerfully! That's how the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ should be and may be for those who are in Christ! John speaks of two possibilities when He comes: we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming; or, implicitly, we will be ashamed, anticipating condemnation when he comes. We will appear before a Judge, dear listeners, who knows everything and from whom nothing escapes! Would it be possible to long for His appearing, because we would be standing in His sight confident and unashamed?

Well, dear listener, hear then John's assurance that we remain in Him when we do what is right! John assumes that we know that the Lord Jesus is righteous. In 2:1, already, John had called Him the Righteous One, our Advocate before the Father. Then we will know also, John says, that every one who does what is right remains in Him! He has been born of Him! Believers owe their righteousness to Him; whatever they do that's right they do in Him. It's very important, indeed, that we do His will and that it should be our joy to do so! No, then we don't boast in ourselves, but we boast in Him of whom we are born, without whom we cannot do a thing! He gives us life and to Him we owe all that we have and do! So, can we long for Christ's appearing and await His coming with joy?

Yes, dear listeners, we can when we have our life in Christ! When we now live in communion with Christ, we will receive this confidence before His judgment seat. The we won't need to look at our sins any longer but we will be bale to testify of Christ and all His merits and benefits! That way we confess Him here against all antichristian forces and teachings, against all those who deny Him His divinity and humanity, so we will confess Him in the presence of our heavenly Father! Then we will also know our Saviour to be there for us, God incarnate, to help and to hold us! Continue, therefore, in Him! And hence, heed His call today as it is coming to you through the voice of the church!