



TOUCH POINT

All in One and One in All – Touchpoint for May 8, 2024

1 John 5:9-13 (NRSVUE)

⁹ If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. ¹⁰ Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Peace to you in the name of the Mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.

Well, if this isn't a set of divisive scriptures on face value, then I don't know what is! I can hear a chorus of Christian nationalists saying, "Hallelujah! Some people will not have life after death. It's right there in black and blue!"

As I reflect on this passage in 1 John, let me make clear my bias. The way I interpret these verses is through a filter of universal life and love for all humanity, lived out by those who are aware of their oneness with God and those who have not yet come to that awareness.

This passage states, 'if you don't believe in the Son of God, then you don't have eternal life!' Believe what – what Jesus says, or that he is God? 1 John 5:9 says to believe in the testimony and witness of God... that what Jesus spoke and the life he lived was from the source of all life and love... that the two were one, as we are one with Jesus and we are all one with God. This was Jesus' message! So to follow his instruction is to show that we come from the source of all life and love.

This scripture is best read in the context of the 4th and 5th chapters together. Here is William Barclay's interpretation of 1 John 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love has its source in God, and everyone who loves has God as the source of his birth and knows God. He who does not love has not come to know God."

When we love, we draw from the source of love. When we live from the source of all life and love, we live in the eternal source of all life eternal. We can become more aware of the truth of our source of love and life. When our thoughts are in line with this truth, we experience the eternal life in the eternal now.

'Eternal' obviously means no beginning and no end. 'Life' used here is the Greek *zoe*, which means the vitality of life, animated in the now. Therefore, 'eternal life' is the forever and infinite vitality of life in the now.

Love has its source in God, because God is love. To love one another, means the source of love I offer the world, is also from God. If love is too much a burden to engage for me, then I have not come to know God, the source of all the love I have access. How can I understand a command to love my enemies, when I am not aware of the source of all love? Love would in some cases be a heavy burden because on our own, we have a limited capacity for love.

The command to love is not too heavy a burden, because we are one with God in love. Just as a child is born into family love, they are also born into divine love.

The story of rebirth in 1 John 4:7 through Chapter 5 is that of being born into divine family (love) and biological family (love shared). As human beings we forget our connection to others as human beings, fellow sons and daughters of God. We can rebirth this awareness through a personal surrendered remembering. We remember we do not love alone, but with and from the source of all love.

Clearly, God is being referred to as the parent to all. Jesus is Son, and we are children of God. We are born from the source of all love and life, as is Jesus. Its vitality is animated in loving the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and loving others as we love ourselves. Whoever does this experiences life eternal.

This life has chosen all. Not all have come to know this *zoe* beyond themselves, nevertheless they have it. My sister pointed out the offensiveness of saying, so and so needs God. To say God *is not* in something God is in, or God *is in* something God is not in, is the very definition of blasphemy.

If only *some* are chosen, and I, for example, was called out of my loving family as some sort of privilege to witness their demise, I may choose my family over this kind of God. No, I would *for sure* choose my family. I would rather carry the burden of disbelief, if the alternative were a God that is distant, discriminatory, and not *zoe*.

And don't give me the spin that they didn't choose to believe therefore, it was out of God's hands. The scripture last week said, "You did not choose me, I chose you." Likewise, we did not choose to be born into this world, we just were. We came in not of our own choosing, stared into our mother's face and said, "Who are you, and what just happened?"

Some like to use the words 'born again' a lot. Do we choose to be born spiritually? As with physical birth, no! If physical birth is referenced when being born again is mentioned, wouldn't it stand to reason that we also cannot choose to be born into the Divine family of God's infinite and eternal love and life? We just *are*. To be spiritually born again is to open our spiritual eyes and stare into the face of God and ask, "Who are you and what just happened?" It's a spiritual awakening of connection and identity.

I see an all-encompassing love in a universal family of humanity belonging, as proclaimed in scripture. I have seen it play out in all the abandoned, parentless, disenfranchised clients I have ever walked with. They are all unknowingly seeking the home and family they have never known in this world. They cannot, once again, be birthed into a biological family that is loving, but they are often awakened by the *zoe* of God, and the belonging that is even greater than human expression in a biological family. As grievous and as traumatizing as it is, to be born into unloving environments, all people long for the deep love of connection that longs for *them*. The orphaned seeker is simply looking for a tangible form of love. In other words, looking for love in all the wrong places.

If this kind of universal love seems like a burden?

Check out verses 3 - 4 in Chapter 5: "For this is the love of God that we should keep his commandments; and his commandments are not heavy because everything that is born of God conquers the world."

Ours is a response to the love that we awaken to. The love we were born into. So though difficult, it is not too heavy.

It reminds me of the familiar story of the boy carrying his brother, who was unable to walk, to school. A man asked him, "Do you carry your brother to school every day?" "Yes sir," the boy answered. "That's a heavy burden for you," said the man. The boy responded, "He's no burden, he's my brother."

Our minds and declarations cannot change this ineffable, infinite love. The best we can do is to embody this love. As the Bible says, those who have reconciled this intrinsic love, experience *zoe* in the heart and present. This what Jesus preached. Those who do not believe in this love that resides in all humanity make Jesus a liar, because he embodied this all-encompassing love, and commanded us to embody it as well. Those who believe they have the final say on all matters – no matter the harm or immorality – yet proclaim belief in Jesus, make Jesus a liar, because Jesus deferred all strength and capacity to love from the source, and guided all to this source, not to himself.

There was once a man who carried the weight of humanity on his shoulders. Should someone shout, “Do you do this every day?” He might answer, “Seems like it.” The voice responds, “That’s a heavy burden.” The man has the final word and responds, “They’re no burden. They’re my brothers and sisters.”

Amen.

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

Calm Me, Lord

(Margaret Rizza)

Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm.
Still me Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease.
Enfold me Lord, in your peace.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Come Drink of Living Water

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Come drink of living water. Never thirst again.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Monastery Choir of St. John of San Francisco)

Benediction

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

(National Lutheran Choir, feat. Peter C. Lutkin)

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord lift his countenance upon you... And give you peace...
The Lord make his face to shine upon you... And be gracious unto you...
The Lord be gracious unto you. Amen.