

July 24, 2022: Love and future with God

Dear Listeners,

What great riches we have seen so far in John's first epistle! In Christ we share in communion with God; by faith in Christ, we share in His light, life, and love! He also showed us the newness of life in Christ when we walk in the light. Then you're on your way to eternal life! John also showed that the sins, into which believers continue to fall, do not prevent them from continuing in the light. Everyone sins, John writes, but when we fall into sin and confess our sin, Christ will cleanse us from all sins! Indeed, what great riches that is: the sins we commit against our will, which we confess, cannot undo the communion with God! Then we hear John warn his readers too, though: don't lose these riches! That's possible, you know, that you lose your riches! How? Well, when you love the world! That's why John places us before the question this time: Do you love God or do you love the world [1 John 2: 15-17]? When God's love in Christ is the source of your life, of your love, you cannot love the world! So, you'll have to choose between the world with all that attracts us in it, and God, our heavenly Father!

Although John spoke very positively about the riches believers have by faith in Christ, no one is immune for the temptations of the world; especially those who live in God's light aren't! Then John poses that we may not love both, God and the world! That's impossible, he shows. The way an object cannot be a circle and a square at the same time, so the love for God and world are mutually exclusive. In his epistle, James also writes the same to his readers [4:4], "Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend with the world becomes an enemy of God!" Both epistles show us that when we love God, we must put Him first in our life! Hence, we have to choose between God and the world!

Then with the 'world', dear listener, John means the world that lives without God, which is in the grip of the evil one. The world does what Satan wants and gives in to the desires that live in man's heart. Do not love this world, and John uses the same word again, *agape*, the giving love, the sacrificial love that we see in Christ. Don't seek fellowship in it, and don't become attached to it, or give priority to the things of the world. This, too, is contrary to the love of the Law, against the true love for God and the neighbour! Our love for our heavenly Father and His love for us cannot go together with a love for the world. As believer you share in His love; then you cannot let your eyes drift away to the things of the world and all that's happening there. You can't stand with one leg in the household of the heavenly Father, the church, and with the other in the world. When the love of the Father is in us, we have to ask ourselves: am I still choosing for the Father, or am I letting my priorities slip, because the world does have so many attractions to offer?!

When it's that important, dear listeners, we better understand clearly what John has in mind with his admonition. John doesn't mean the world of creation, for instance, John also told us that God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son to save. No, John articulates very clearly what he means with the world that we should not love; he summarizes it in these three aspects: the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does; i.e. its sensuality, its materialism, and its self-glorification; or to put it simply and clearly: its sex, money, and

power! Clearly, John has in mind the sinful desires, the cravings that aren't worked in us by God, by His Spirit, but by our sinful nature. He has in mind everything that draws us away from God the Father, for whom we live again and in whom we live! Father's love isn't the source of such desires! Then John only mentions the desires of the eyes and not of the hand or the stomach. We see the influence and effect on all our desires via the TV, the movies, the computer games, and the Internet. The violence you see in the streets is learned from the movies, the violent computer games, and the like. Just think of the influence the modern media have had on the sexual lives of people.

We have to choose, dear listener, we must not love the world because the world has no future. "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever!" The world and its desires are temporary; it's useless to live your life with things that are passing, as Psalm 1 expresses so clearly: the wicked are mere chaff that gusts of wind will blow away! The world and its rebellious system and existence have the seed of death and decay in it; hence, we must realize that choosing for it, our riches and eternal life are at stake! The enjoyment of earthly pleasures and material well-being is short endured; hence, if you have to choose between a bit of worldly joy and eternal life, the choice should not be difficult.

No, dear listeners, the choice isn't hard but the fight to stay with the choice is! The one who does the will of God, however, remains forever! John echoes Jesus' words: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." The believer who does God's will lives again as God has willed from the beginning; it had eternity built into it, as it were! Such a believer lives in communion with God and so partakes of eternity, eternal life! The believers have that life in Jesus Christ, His eternal Son, who did God's will perfectly! By faith in Him, He lives in them and they are in Him. Eternal life, Christ, His Spirit, has taken hold of them and shapes them; they are of a different world, from the Father's world, from the will-of-God world! They know that they will be like Him when He appears through whom they belong to this world, this world of Father's love! That's the future for everyone who believes and finds life outside of himself in Jesus Christ!

God is love, dear listener, and His steadfast love that is life! The world does not know this love; hence, you won't find life there. There the source of life is not; hence, don't be led or guided or attracted by the desires of the world. World conformity is a matter of the short term and it is a dead-end road. Hence, live of the love of the Father, and live for the future of the life in the Father, for the world of the Father abides forever! Believers in Christ are here to stay, for by His power He takes us along to the new world in order to inherit every treasure and every pleasure that you have in Him! Choose for Christ! Choose for His kingdom and world! Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself from all that belongs to the world! Why? Because of the love of the Father, for that is true life, real communion, now and forever! What promising life in the light of God's Word and in the love of Christ this is, dear listeners! It's this new life, this new command, that comes to you in the gospel as proclaimed via this voice of the church!