

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
January 26, 2014**

**1 John 2:3-11**

**Shining Light on the Command**

- 1. Do you know Jesus?**
- 2. John's Message to those who say "I know him."**
- 3. How can we be sure we know Jesus?**

**Hymns: 79 (v. 1-4) – 81 – 79 (v.5)**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Do you know Jesus? It seems like such a simple question. A silly question. A question we don't even have to think about. Do you know Jesus? Of course! Through the words of Genesis, you know Jesus as the One who was promised since the fall into sin. Through the words of the prophets, you know Jesus as the One who was pointed to time and time again, the One who people looked for and longed for. You know Jesus as the Son of God, who humbled himself to be born of a woman in a manger. You know Jesus as the great Prophet who revealed himself to the world through powerful words, miraculous works and perfect obedience. You know Jesus as the Lamb who willingly shed his blood to be the sacrifice. Do you know Jesus? To that simple question, we have a resounding answer. Yes! Yes! We know Jesus. We know all about Jesus.

Today, in his first letter, the apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the disciple who arguably knew the man Jesus better than anyone, has a message directed precisely at those who would say that they know Jesus. If you want to claim to know Jesus, we don't need to go down the list and count how many facts you know about Jesus to prove it. Instead John issues this challenge for those who would say that they know Jesus: Let's look at your life. This is what John writes: **"We know that we have come to know Jesus if we obey his commands."** What John is really saying is that if you want to have confidence in knowing Jesus, look at how you live compared to what he commanded. For people who would all very quickly and easily say that we know Jesus, that challenge presented by John of looking at our lives creates a little uneasiness, doesn't it?

That feeling only gets more uncomfortable as John expands on his opening thought, **"The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."**<sup>5</sup> **But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:**<sup>6</sup> **Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."** For people with guilty consciences; for people who know how often they don't obey God's commands; for people who know that they do not come close to walking as Jesus did; those words cause an uncomfortable feeling because it sure seems like John is calling each one of us here today who would confidently say that we know Jesus, a liar.

We might be comfortable in what we "know" about Jesus but if "knowing" Jesus as John defines it means walking as Jesus did, who of us wayward walkers could be confident at all about our relationship with Jesus? John's words here, as we look at them, certainly have a way of casting doubt upon our hearts and placing an unattainable burden of obedience upon our actions.

Is that what John was trying to do as he writes to his "dear children", the title he gives to his readers in the opening verse of chapter 2 (2:1)? Was he trying to show his readers that their lives don't measure up? Was he trying to cause them to doubt their relationships with Jesus? Was he trying to put an impossible life of obedience in front of them? As we continue reading, we see that the answer is both "Yes" and "No."

John admits that he wants us to see the uncertainty created by our own obedience as he continues writing to us in verse 7: **"Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard."** With his words on obedience and his proclamations of what we must do to have confidence, John was repeating the demands of God that were spoken to Adam and Eve in the Garden; the commandments that were carved into tablets of stone on the mountain; the laws that have been written on the hearts of people in every age. The call for obedience to God's will is not something that is new. Obedience as the way to a relationship with God is as old as the world itself.

And that demand for obedience has always been given by God to show mankind how far off they are from "knowing" God. If we look at John's words today through the scope of the old command and what we "must" do to have a relationship with God, then they should cause doubt and discomfort; they should feel like a burden because that was God's intent for the old command.

Yet, as John speaks of an old command to obey, he also says, **“Yet I am writing you a new command.”** John was not speaking deceptively when he spoke about obedience in verses 3-6. God still wants it from his people; that decree to obey his commands will not change. God wants those who claim to know Jesus to also walk as Jesus did. So, we must ask, what exactly is new about this old command?

What is new is the way that people who truly know Jesus look at those commands. John says, **“I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.”** The truth of this new command, the truth of what God expects from his people can only be seen through Jesus, the Light of the world. Those who know Jesus are able to see that this new command that appears to be filled with the same burdens and strict calls for obedience has changed in one glaring way.

Jesus has kept every one of those commands. Jesus has met God’s demand for obedience. Jesus has satisfied God’s need for perfection. For those who know Jesus and what he has done, he brings clarifying light to the commands of God that are still there in front of us in Scripture.

Through Jesus, those commands are no longer a burden, but a blessing. Through Jesus, those laws are no longer a curb that threatens punishment at every wayward turn, but a guide that shows us where to safely travel. Through Jesus, those calls for obedience do not come harshly from a judging God, instead they come as caring words from a loving Father. The commands from God have not changed. BUT, Jesus has made it so that the commands of God can be seen in a new light. That is what John means when he says, “The truth of this new command is seen in Jesus.”

John says, also, that its truth is also seen in us. Jesus has taken away the doubts that come from our disobedience, he has freed us from the guilt, he has removed the burdens, but he has not taken our responsibility to obey. God still wants his people to follow his commands, he still wants them to listen to what he decrees, he still wants them to obey. However, there are no more “musts” or “shalls” or even “shoulds.” That is the old. In place of the old, there is now opportunity and ability and privilege. There is obedience done out of love and thanks and willingness. There is faithfulness to God’s commands that is “want to” not “have to.” When obedience comes in those ways, we, ourselves, show the truth of this new command; we actually shine light on the beauty of the commands that God gives in his Word. The commands that we willingly and gladly follow

become a testimony to the world about the restored relationship between a perfect God and his people.

Because of Jesus, we can look at the commands of God in a whole new way. Through his work, we have been freed to obey. Through his Spirit, we have been empowered to obey. Through Jesus, we can strive to obey each new day.

For a Christian, it is so very easy to get comfortable in “knowing” Jesus and to rest on that knowledge that we have spent our lives building up. Today, John presents a challenge to those who know Jesus. In addition to the words of your mouth, and the knowledge of your heart and head, let your life also show others that you know Jesus and what he has done for you. Jesus has given us the light. It ensures that the darkness of sin never remains. It ensures that people can tell who we are. It ensures that we know exactly why we strive to obey. Jesus has given us a new command. Let its truth be seen in your life. Amen.