

**Sermon Series: “New Testament Postcards”–Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—1/20/2008**

**Title: “Never a Discouraging Word”**

**Text: 3 John**

**Intro.: Ills.: Deceptive Beauty**

**Theme:** One of the most loving things that we can do when Christ lives within our hearts is to serve as an encourager of others as they strive to live out their faith in Jesus.

***Intentionally encourage others because of Jesus (Print 3 John vss. 1-3)***

- Celebrate who they are in Christ
  1. Remind them of the state of grace in which they stand (blessed) and encourage them to rejoice in it
    - a. **“dear friend (beloved)” 3 John vs. 2, 5, 11** more than affectionate greeting but a grace reality in Christ
    - b. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits. Psalm 103: 2*
  2. It is easy to find the deficiency in another’s sin-fallen condition, this side of heaven
    - a. **Ills.: It is all in your perspective**
  3. Yet, God has chosen in his Son, Jesus, to be at work in us to do his work
    - a. *I am confident of this that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus. Phil. 1: 6*
    - b. Make it your goal to point out **the God-strength rather than the human-weakness** in another
- Commend them as a special creation and re-creation in Christ (**Print 3 John vss. 2-4**)
  1. Important to touch every aspect of their existence, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual with word/action
  2. *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thes. 5:23*
- Coach the walk of faith in the Truth (Christ) (**Print 3 John vss. 5-6**)
  1. Take note of the godly behavior of faith (*love of strangers*)
    - a. *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Heb 13:2*
  2. Reinforce good behavior and conduct (*proves you belong to God*)
- Challenge stagnated growth with an encouragement to go deeper in their faith (**Print 3 John vs 7-8**)
  1. Envision God’s potential in them and paint the picture of what it looks like
  2. *I pray that you...may be able to comprehend with all the saints the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ. Eph 3: 18*

***Differentiate godly critique from cruel criticism (Print 3 John vss. 5-11)***

- *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Ephes. 4:29*
- Finding teachable moments even out of a bad example
  1. John was dealing with Diotrephes who was more interested in teaching the truth than in grounding it in love
    - a. **Ills.: Implied comment**
  2. Confront selfish one-upmanship with the servanthood of Christ (*loves to be in charge – vs. 9*)
    - a. *It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant. Matt 20:26*
  3. Distinguish godliness as recognizable from evil when words and actions match (*gossiping maliciously vs. 10a*)
    - a. **Ills.: The Cure for gossip**
    - b. *Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 1 John 3:18*
  4. Contrast when something stands in the way of obvious righteousness (*refuse to welcome the brothers. . even tries to stop others who want to accept them. vs. 10b, 11*)

***The art of godly encouragement (Print 3 John vss. 12-14)***

- Share the good word spoken (*Everyone...has good things to say about Demetrius vs. 12a*)

1. Find gracious ways to let others know the encouragement and blessing they have been to others you know
- Encourage them from the Word of God (*even the Truth itself, commends you. 12 b*)
  1. Pass along the Father's "well done, good and faithful servant"
- Don't leave encouragement unspoken (*We also say good things about him vs. 12c*)
  1. Don't assume they know - pass on the blessing – just like Old Testament believers did from generation to generation
  2. Do it face-to-face (*vs. 13,14*)

### **Deceptive Beauty**

Postcards. Those glossy pictures of paradise printed on a four-by-six mailer. Ever notice that the scenes on postcards always look better than the actual place? The sun shines brighter, the surf curls rounder, the palm trees stretch taller. This is what you had in mind when you planned your vacation, not the overcrowded, billboarded reality you saw when you arrived. Even notice how the same thing happens when we come to a new church family. What was the glamorous and exciting picture we perceived or were sold on the way in all of a sudden loses its luster and appeal when we get into the long haul of building and sustaining relationships with forgiven sinners. Jesus does not pull the wool over our eyes and in this tiny little book of 3 John not only paints the real picture and the heavy lifting of what it means to be in relationship within His family, but He actually gives us the power and perspective to make it into the loving and supportive body of Christ He intended it to be. He calls us to a how new way of inter-relating and he gives us the grace and power to do it.

### **It is all in your perspective**

On September 30, 2007, Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre broke Dan Marino's record for throwing the most touchdown passes in football. His new record stands at 421 passes and counting. Two weeks later, Favre broke another record. His 278 picked passes made him the most intercepted quarterback in National Football League history. Brett Favre reminds us of another famous athlete. Babe Ruth once held a record with 714 home runs. What many do not know is that Babe Ruth also struck out 1,330 times. The football and the baseball player had something in common: neither quit when they failed; both knew what it meant to persevere. **Ted DeHass, New Bedford, Iowa; sources: Jon Krawczynski, "Favre Breaks Marino's Mark With 421 (Associated Press), ABC News (9-30-07); "Favre sets interception record," The Sports Network (10-14-07)**

### **Implied comment**

A lady was walking past a pet store when a parrot said, "Hey, lady! You're really ugly!"

The lady was angry but continued on her way.

On the way home, she passed by the pet store again, and the parrot once more said, "Hey, lady! You're really ugly!"

She was enraged now, so she went into the store and said that she wanted the bird disposed of. The store manager apologized profusely and promised he would make sure the parrot didn't say it again.

The next day, she deliberately passed by the store to test the parrot.

"Hey, lady!" the bird said.

"Yes?" she replied.

"You know." **Jennifer Hahn, Noah's Favorite Animal Jokes (Barbour Publishing, 2003)**

### **The Cure for Gossip**

I like the story of the minister who had two gossip sisters in his church. One day, they saw his car parked in front of the liquor store and began spreading word of their minister's "drinking problem." When he learned who was spreading the rumor, he parked his car in front of the sisters' house and left it there overnight. **Taken from our sister publication Leadership journal, © 2006 Christianity ... John Killinger, "Pastoring Is Political," Leadership, (Spring 2006)**

### 3 John 1:1-14

From the church leader. To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love because we share the truth.

<sup>2</sup>**Dear friend**, I know that you are spiritually well. I pray that you're doing well in every other way and that you're healthy. <sup>3</sup>I was very happy when some believers came and told us that you are living according to the truth. <sup>4</sup>Nothing makes me happier than to hear that my children are living according to the truth.

<sup>5</sup>**Dear friend**, you are showing your faith in whatever you do for other believers, especially when they're your guests. <sup>6</sup>These believers have told the congregation about your love. You will do well to support them on their trip in a way that proves you belong to God. <sup>7</sup>After all, they went on their trip to serve the one named Christ, and they didn't accept any help from the people to whom they went. <sup>8</sup>We must support believers who go on trips like this so that we can work together with them in spreading the truth.

<sup>9</sup>I wrote a letter to the congregation. But Diotrephes, who loves to be in charge, won't accept us. <sup>10</sup>For this reason, when I come I will bring up what he's doing. He's not satisfied with saying malicious things about us. He also refuses to accept the believers we send as guests. He even tries to stop others who want to accept them and attempts to throw those people out of the congregation.

<sup>11</sup>**Dear friend**, never imitate evil, but imitate good. The person who does good is from God. The person who does evil has never seen God. <sup>12</sup>Everyone, including the truth itself, says good things about Demetrius. We also say good things about him, and you know that what we say is true.

<sup>13</sup>I have a lot to write to you. However, I would rather not write. <sup>14</sup>I hope to visit you very soon. Then we can talk things over personally.