



There are only two men left who were at the D-day landing in Normandy. They are Jim Glennie and Lake Larson. They are the first-hand witnesses of history. We have a member here who was born in an air-raid shelter in Birmingham while the bombs were

dropping all around. (all guesses to the pastor) It was a lived experience. We do not doubt that the 2nd W.W. happened because we have so many recorded personal testimonies. Now that there are so few left, revisionism is starting to take hold and we are being presented with different versions of the events of the war. As we read 1 John, John, the last of the apostles can say, "I was there" so there is no room for the revisionism that had already begun: a post-Christ Christianity. He can say that Christ actually did come in the flesh because "...we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched" He was actually in Simon's boat as we heard this morning when Jesus sent the fishermen out to catch a miraculous number of fish. Six times John says, "for this reason I am writing..." He will be going soon and he is making sure that we have a reliable and dependable account from the people who were there, making sure that the true word of God is handed down around the world and through time. Not one of us was there when Jesus came in the flesh so be very careful of those post-Christ Christians who have their views, opinions and beliefs, convictions and readings, doctrines and teachings, because they were not there. But John was. So were Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul and that makes their evidence is reliable. There is no other rule for life and godliness apart from the Bible. Praise God for the Bible!!

As we read the Bible we feel so much tender affection for all the people who were not there. "Dear children" or in the Greek, "My Beloved" This elderly man feels nothing but love and affection for them. "Though you have not seen him, yet you love him." (1Pt. 1:8) Teknia (τεκνία) in verse 12 and paidia (παῖδια) in verse 14 are both translated as dear children. Teknia carries the idea of children who have been forgiven. We forgive our children so easily because they are still young and unschooled whereas paidia infers that they are dear children of God who have been wonderfully cared for, loved and nurtured by God himself and never reminded that they are adopted. John and the other apostles have such a Father's heart and fatherly love for God's people in the churches. (see Gal 4:19 and Cor. 4:14-15) Isn't it a right and good thing that there should be real affection in the church! "My dear children" Jesus calls his followers, "Little children" in contrast with the wise people in the world who think they can work their own way into God's affection. We know we cannot, nor is there any need to do that because God loves you and lavishes his love on his children. The Spirit teaches us to say, "Abba, Father" You will often hear the children in Israel playing in the street calling abba, abba or Ima just as we cry out to our Father God. In his second letter John calls himself uniquely 'the elder' who loves God's dear children.

John addresses the fathers and the young men at the age of their spiritual growth. Just as there are many generations in church life so there are many spiritual generations. There is a maturity and growing in grace that takes place. John recognises that this is what happens when we feed on the word, have spiritual experiences, overcome difficulties and hardships. We can get a sense of achieving and making progress. You can become an established person in the house of God that people will turn to and listen to. That is usually perfectly healthy as long as you don't forget that you are all dear little children. The problem starts when a hierarchy starts to build up. Having elders is healthy but here it seems that there is a sort of hierarchy building up in the churches as they forget they are all dear little children who never saw or heard the Lord and so are very vulnerable to pride and feeling like they've arrived. With the apostles there is a certain confidence because they were there and don't need convincing. It's usually the more mature who realise how much of a little child they are. It's like the great theologian who was asked what his favourite Christian song was. He said, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tell me so." Just remember and don't progress past the knowledge that you are very precious to the Father, you are cared for and vulnerable but you are protected.

From verse 15 onwards there is a further warning about the dangers of loving the world. The world offers us an amazing physical place to be and things to do, see and touch and smell. The people John is writing to never got to see, touch or hear Jesus so all they have is his name and his teachings and stories. Words are intangible things and the world offers us so much in the way of position, status, clothes, friends and seats in high places. Just remember, the name of Jesus is more valuable, precious and lovely than anything the world can offer. "In his name we have the forgiveness of sin" Just the mention of his name and the whole of Heaven opens up like a flower and says 'come here sweet honey-bee'. "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in the believer's ear" Jesus has given us his name and that stands in the place of his very person and his blood that was shed on the cross for our forgiveness. God says you are my child completely, entirely and forever. Heaven is your home for all of eternity. Just mention his name. The name of Jesus is a wonderful thing.

John like Paul and Jesus calls all God's children his friends at least five or six times. (v7) Everyone can be a friend. Are you friends with each other? You can be friends with people of all generations. In a survey the people in their twenties wanted older friends who would show an interest in their welfare. Older people really want a friendship with younger people. But both groups felt there is a generation gap that needs to be crossed. A deep friendship amongst Christian people in the first century had permeated the church. Is that still true amongst us today? Are we friends? Across the generations we are forgiven people living in a forgiving way in real fellowship. There are good people out and about in the world. There are some people who are more forgiving than some Christians. But you only have to look at the cross to see that the world is a very unforgiving place. The one perfect man full of love and passion, wisdom and understanding, kindness and patience comes into the world and he is crucified. That is the baseline of an unforgiving world. The world needs something very different from what it has. John warns us not to be part of that unforgiving ethos of the world. The world needs a very different kind of love. In another place John wrote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16) Jesus' love challenges the world to its core with his gracious forgiving love. Jesus' love says that you are deeply lost and in your sin and I care for you. I am here to care for and help you. That is a very different kind of love that loves us for what we can get. It's a love for the unlovely. That's the kind of love the Christian church has to give to the world. There's something you need. It will mean change and most people don't like change.

John finishes his letter with, "Dear children keep yourselves from idols" He gives us a choice between the living loving Lord Jesus (v1:1) and the wooden, loveless, lifeless alternative. We can't see him but we love him. You can't see him but you are called to love him too. It will change your life.

I can say with confidence that you are all going to see Jesus. You will see his face and hear his voice. You will be able to touch him and he will touch you. Until that time we have his word and his Spirit but he has also given us visible and tangible signs. He chose a very humble thing that we can look at and somehow see him. Jesus is not a ghost, an idea or a religion. He is a person of flesh and blood. One of the great blessings Jesus left for the church is the bread and wine, a little meal on our life's journey to refresh ourselves and remind ourselves of a real body and real blood. A real person who came amongst us and gave his real life for our sakes so that our sins might really be forgiven and that we might have real fellowship with each other and really be the children of God and really become friends in Jesus name. Jesus is as real as this bread and as real as this wine. The day is coming when we will really see him.