

## **God is Light: Listen not to the Liars:**

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Good morning and **Happy New Year** to you all!

How did you see in the New Year? Did you stay up until midnight and count down with your friends?

I'm not such a great fan of doing that these days. I find a good night sleep more interesting than counting down to the New Year. 2011 will be there when I wake up!

My brother would say: **"Sam you're such a Nanna!"**

All the same I tend to stay up for it.

What about this whole **New Year resolution** thing? I don't know if I can ever recall making one. I tend to make plenty of resolutions throughout the year, so I feel I don't need to wait until the beginning of the year, just make one!

Did you make any New Year resolutions? To exercise more; to spend more time with your family; to be a better husband or wife; or something more spiritual like reading your bible and praying more than you currently do?

I did some research on the Internet, and found some pretty funny New Year resolutions. Listen to these:

*I will not tell the same story at every get together.*

*I will not bore my boss by with the same excuse for taking leaves. I will think of some more excuses*

*I will do less laundry and use more deodorant.*

*I resolve to work with neglected children -- my own.*

*I will balance my checkbook . . . on my nose!*

*I will remember to brush my teeth with the bristly end of the toothbrush.*

*I will not eat medicine just because it looks like candy.*

*I will not wet the bed and blame it on my younger brother.*

*I will stop saying, "Ooh, that feels nice" whenever the security guard frisks me at airport.*

*I will Learn what the word "resolution" means.*

And in my opinion, the best one of all:

*I will never again take a sleeping pill and a laxative on the same night.*

Funny stuff aye?

**If we had to come up with a New Year resolution as a church, what do you think it would be?**

Any ideas?

I feel very strongly that this morning's message from 1<sup>st</sup> John is very timely in answering this question.

I believe that God has an important word for us today;  
A resolution that we are to make.

Let's read the scriptures together: 1 John 2:18 – 27.

***Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the anti-christ is coming, even now many anti-christs have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.***

***But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.***

***See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us – even eternal life.***

***I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him.***

So just to recap a little, we have been looking at this idea of **God being Light!**

Because he is light we are too:

- **Live in Fellowship.**
- **Love one another. And;**
- **Love not this world.**

Today's message is called:

## **GOD IS LIGHT: LISTEN NOT TO THE LIARS.**

This section of scripture that we have just read is titled 'Warning against Antichrists,' in the NIV Bible.

So John changes track a little and addresses a situation that is present in this Johannine community; that's the community of believers that he wrote this letter to.

There are a few things that we can learn about their situation:

1. There used to be some people present in the community who are no longer present. ***They went out from us***, John puts it in verse 19.
2. These people denied that Jesus - Son of Joseph from Nazareth – is **the Christ**. The Savior, the Messiah, the Son of God. ***Such a man is the antichrist*** John states in verse 22.
3. Because these people did not believe in the Christhood of Jesus, they **never really belonged** to the community. John states this in the opening paragraph. Therefore it is a good thing that they left.

These antichrists must have been influential in the Johannine community. This is why John is writing against them. They had obviously been teaching some wacked up ideas, and John needed to warn the congregation about them.

But even though they had apparently left, the congregation mustn't have been completely free from their influence because John stills sees fit to empower them against their teaching. This is what he is doing in these verses.

How does he empower them against these antichrists?

Two ways emerge clearly:

1. First they must remain in the truth that they had heard from the beginning: Verse 24, ***See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you.***
2. Secondly they must remain in the anointing or the Holy Spirit. Verse 27 b: ***But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him.***

If they do these things, John can have confident assurance that these antichrists will not lead his community astray.

**But church, what does all this have to do with us this morning?**

We don't have antichrists among us do we?

Surely no one here would be foolish enough to deny that Jesus is the Christ?

I don't believe so, no.

I don't believe that there are deliberate false teachers present here today.

But we do share some **common ground** with the Johannine community.

It is very likely that the Church were in a state of dismay, confusion, frustration and pain. Some things had gone down, and people had walked out, whether good or bad.

People had left the church.

There was **confusion** as to what to believe.

Had God left them to fend for themselves?

What were they to believe?

Where were they to go from here?

**What hope was there?**

To put it simply: **The Johannine Community was in a difficult place!**

**Church, we are in a difficult place!**

Your interim leadership team have a difficult job of finding suitable leadership come the end of February, for this New Year and much beyond. And I might add that they are doing a wonderful job serving you all!

We all have a responsibility to pray and seek the Lord as to his direction for the Church.

We all have a responsibility to continue to evangelize to those who do not yet know and serve Jesus.

Like the parents and children in the **Milford Kindergarten**.

Like those in this **Milford community**.

Like those on the **North Shore**.

Our enemy will forever be trying to pull down God's body; his Church.

He will forever be trying to stop us from being **effective** in our mission field.

He will forever be trying to **distract** us from the truth.

He will forever be trying to **lead us astray** with false teaching.

We have more in Common with the Johannine community of ages past than one might initially think.

For this reason, John's words apply all the same to us.

**Friends, it's at a time like this, while looking forward to what God might have for us in 2011, where we need to make a resolution as a Church.**

A resolution **centered** on God's word from this passage.

A resolution in **two parts**:

**FIRST: A Resolution to REMAIN IN THE TRUTH;**

**SECOND: A Resolution to REMAIN IN THE SPIRIT.**

Let's look at the first resolution:

**A RESOLUTION TO REMAIN IN THE TRUTH.**

John states in verse 24: ***See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you.***

What do you think it was that they had heard from the beginning? What might John have been encouraging them towards?

All commentators agree that '***from the beginning***' is a reference to the commencement of their own Christian lives; the first teachings or doctrine that they received when they became followers of Jesus. This is reiterated elsewhere in scripture:

2 Timothy 1:13: ***What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.***

What did you first hear about the Christian faith?

What were you first taught '***from the beginning?***'

I'm sure this list could be long, but I bet it would essentially come down to one element, one fact, or better still one man:

**JESUS!**

The answer is always **JESUS!**

Regardless of the question asked by a lecturer at Carey Baptist College, there will always be some clever student who will raise their hand and simply answer:

"The correct answer is **JESUS!**"

**Jesus is the TRUTH that we are to REMAIN IN.**

He calls himself **the truth**, as well as the **way** and the **life**.

We must remain in the teaching that proclaims 'Jesus **as God.**'

That Jesus **was Human.**

That Jesus **died completely.**

But that he didn't stay dead, but was **raised to life.**

What do these tenets of the Christian faith mean to you and me?

That we can have relationship with the **Father.**

That we can live **freely.**

That we can inherit **eternal life.**

**THESE ARE THE PILLARS OF OUR FAITH.**

**THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT FROM THE BEGINNING.**

**THIS THE TRUTH WE MUST REMAIN IN.**

The truth about Jesus.

We must keep our eyes on Jesus.

This morning's scripture reading from Matthew is in fact related to this sermon. Peter needed to keep his eyes on Jesus to continue to walk on the water. He could not be distracted by the storm that was surging around him. **His resolve had to be Jesus and Jesus alone.**

It can be very easy to turn away from this simple yet profound truth.

This is what the antichrists had done. They denied that Jesus was the Christ. I don't know whether they were wickedly deceitful, or blindly deceived themselves. Either way, John states strongly that if they deny the Son, they do not have the Father.

The world around us screams out the same lie:

*"Jesus isn't the only way to God. What an arrogant statement."*

*"All these other people of other religions can't be wrong as well."*

God's words however are very clear on these matters: John 14:6: ***Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."***

**LISTEN NOT TO THE LIARS: REMAIN IN THE TRUTH.**

I'm saddened by the number of students I talk to at Carey College who have become so caught up in all the academia of their studies that subtly they have diverged away from orthodox Christian teaching to the point where they struggle to believe what the bible says is true.

They get so caught up in other, less important teachings and doctrines, what we would call, third order or fourth order teachings that they seem to forget the first order!

Church, let's move forward together through this difficult time and resolve to **keep our eyes on Jesus.**

**Let's make a RESOLUTION TO REMAIN IN THE TRUTH!**

What was our second resolution?

**A RESOLUTION TO REMAIN IN THE SPIRIT.**

Verse 27 b: ***But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it had taught you, remain in him.***

Firstly the key word here is the word 'anointing.' The Greek word used is 'Chrisma.' Some bible translators will say 'unction' instead of anointing. To 'unction' was simply to 'touch the surface lightly,' or 'to paint.' Oil would be placed on the forehead often in the Old Testament, particularly for kings, and it was a metaphor for having received some sort of commission or in the case of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit.

So John is reiterating the words he wrote from his gospel book chapter 16:13. Again the words of Jesus:

***“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”***

**LISTEN NOT TO THE LIARS: REMAIN IN THE SPIRIT.**

We are to **remain** in the Spirit and the Spirit will **lead us** into all truth.

This is slightly more difficult to understand than our first resolution. How are we to remain in the Spirit?

One Pastor and author by the name of **Thomas Smail** would describe the place of the Holy Spirit as central to every dimension of our Christian faith. He would say that the Christian experience is an experience of Jesus-in-Spirit. That Christian life is not merely a cognitive embrace of Christ; it is an engagement, an encounter with Christ in the Spirit.

The Christian faith cannot be **void** of the Spirit.

The Spirit is part of **every experience** we have as Christians, and if he's not, then is it even a Christian experience?

We need the Holy Spirit to guide us through the difficulties we face.

We are people of the Spirit, and to remain so, we must learn to be people **who can hear and sense the Holy Spirit.** Otherwise how can he lead us into all truth?

I'm not necessarily talking about a '**big neon lights and loud whistles**' experience, though sometimes that happens.

Then how does the Spirit speak?

The Spirit speaks first and foremost through the bible, and all things must submit to the objective authority of the bible. **I believe that strongly.**

But I also believe that the **Spirit can speak to us in other ways**. Through quiet promptings in our hearts; a gentle nudge to call a friend and ask how things are going; a thought placed in our minds challenging us to invite our non-Christian neighbors over for dinner.

This is what sets us apart as the people of God. We have His Spirit in us!

### **We are a Spiritual people!**

I recall one such nudge from the Holy Spirit. I was driving home from the supermarket, when I saw a young woman sitting in her car on the side of the road looking extremely distressed. I felt I should pull over and see if everything was ok. It turned out her two beautiful children were in the back seat, and she had driven up to Auckland to get back together with the father of the two children. He was not interested in her or the children and had kicked them out onto the street. She had nowhere to go.

To cut a long story short, I ended up giving them a place to stay for the night, some food for their stomach's and some thought for their souls. I was fortunate enough to be Jesus hands and feet that weekend. She knew God loved her from that experience.

**But it wouldn't have happened if I hadn't responded to the Holy Spirit.**

**The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.**

He will lead us into 2011.

He has a plan for us.

He has a plan for Milford Baptist church and its surrounding community.

And you're included in that plan.

So amongst the winds, waves and rain that we currently face in this storm, let's continue to look forward into the eyes of Jesus. Let's make a New Year, Church resolution together:

**TO REMAIN IN THE TRUTH and;**

**TO REMAIN IN THE SPIRIT.**