

# Kindly Enclyning

## 2. Human Becomings

# Last time...

- Opened by talking about the fundamental difference between thinking of the universe as a place governed by 'traffic regulations' versus a place governed by love and desires.
- Introduced the idea of 1 John as a commentary on Christ's final four discourses in John 13-16.
- Looked to those discourses as a means of determining what it was Christ desired for his church: not that they be good and satisfactorily moral people, or even that they have successful families and jobs. But rather, that they participate in a vision of triune love.
- Examined the first obstacle to that participation: our sin.

# The Great Burden

- Sin is our great burden, and it is what keeps us from fellowship with the Father.
- 1 John 1-2 presents us with two realities:
  - a temporal reality, that we all sin, and that if we say we do not we are liars, and the truth is not in us
  - an eternal reality, that we are made holy through Christ

# Walking as He Walked

- We saw that bridging the tension between these two realities are two things:
  - The fact that we have an advocate who will forgive and plead for our sins
  - That we are to walk as he walked, by keeping his commandments, and in the context of 1 John 1-2 and the Farewell discourses, the chief command is to Love One Another.

# Where we are going...

- Why the Trinity matters to all of this...
- What we must become...
- What we must NOT become...
- The Proof of the Pudding: Loving one another
- How then should we love?

# The Three-in-One

Why the Trinity matters

# 1 John 2:18-25

- *18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.*

# 1 John 2:18-25

- *21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.*



# The Trinity Matters

- There are those, John tells us, who professed (or maybe still profess) Christianity, but who deny Christ's deity and his relationship with the Father. This is the primary heresy with which the early church had to contend. There were those who were coming into the church under the influence of false, pagan philosophies, who tried to reduce Jesus to a created being of a lesser order to the Father.
- What John is telling us is that if we do not confess the Son, we do not know the Father. And the goal is to "abide in the Son and in the Father"--in other words to partake in the fellowship and love of the Triune Godhead. This, and only this, is Eternal Life. It is how Jesus defined Eternal Life back in John 17, and it is how John defines Eternal Life for us now.

# The Trinity Matters

- All of this means that everything that John is about to tell us--about who we are and who we are meant to become--does not work and cannot be understood unless we frame it as part of this triune relationship.

# What Christ Wants for This Church

- Last week we came to the startling conclusion that what Jesus really wants us to do is not just to be decent, obedient people, but to participate in the love and communion between the Father and the Son.
- I said I had a hard time imagining what that would look like. Well, I still do, but not because we are not told in the Bible what it should look like. Envisioning this vision of Triune love--and our participation in it--requires us to spend some time thinking about the Trinity.

# “Trinity”

- The Trinity is a major doctrine of Christian theology.
- “Theology” means “the science of God” and has a good deal in common with natural science. It is a way of organizing the things we have observed about God through His revelation and recording them. It is a very noble science.
- It is also a very practical science, in the same way that a map of the Atlantic may be practical.

# “Trinity”

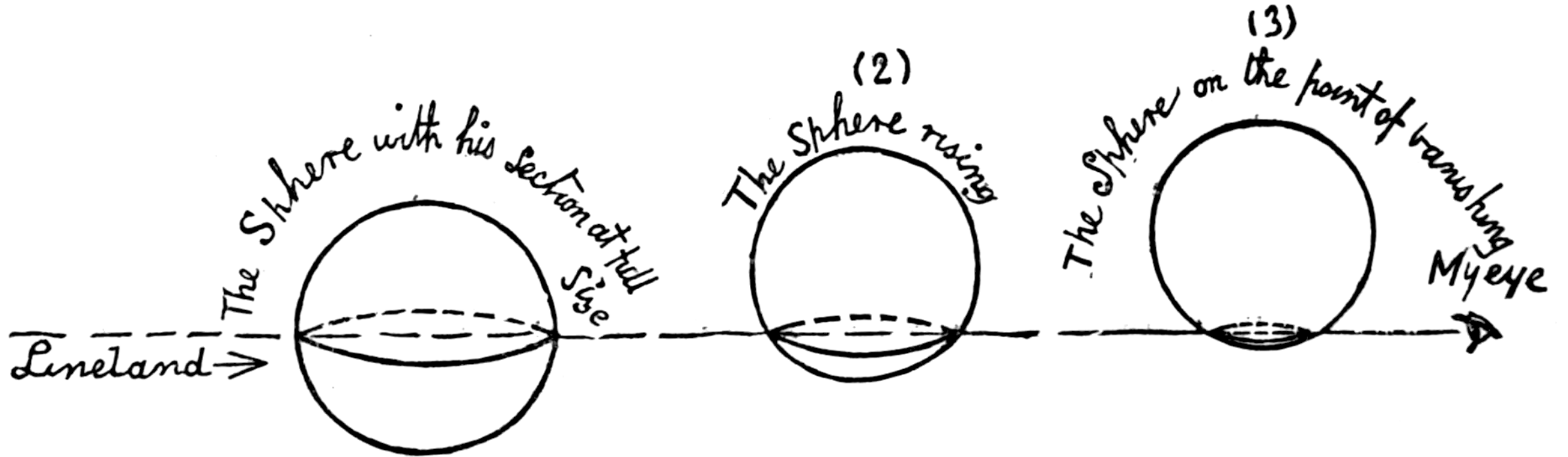
- But the science was not there before God. The Trinity can be likened in this way to the Law of Gravitation. Gravity has always existed as part of the created order. The “law” of gravity proceeded from observation of the natural phenomenon, not the other way around.
- Our doctrine of the Trinity is like that. It is absolutely vital for how we read our Bibles, and absolutely essential to Christian orthodoxy. But you will not find the word “Trinity” in the Bible. What you will find instead is that the Bible reveals many very important things about God to us, and that if we are going to take God at His own word we must believe that:

# “Trinity”

- “The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.”

-- The Athanasian Creed

# Why the Trinity is Hard



# A Higher Form of Life

- *You may ask, "If we cannot imagine a three-personal Being, what is the good of talking about Him?" Well, there isn't any good talking about Him. The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life, and that may begin any time--tonight, if you like.*
- It is being drawn into this higher form of life that Jesus wants for us, and which John wants for us when he instructs us to “abide” in Christ. And this is so important precisely because we are all in the act—in the temporal reality we talked about last week—of becoming something other than what we currently appear to be.



# What We Must Become

Children of God

# 1 John 3:1-3

- *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

# Children of God

- Christians are able to be “called children of God” because of the love the Father has given to us for Christ’s sake. And so we are. But we are told that “what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”
- To unpack that, we need to remember that John is talking about two realities: one present, one eternal, and telling us that the Christian life is meant to be lived in between them:

# Two Realities

- The present reality is that “what we will be has not yet appeared.” In other words, this is not our final form. What we will be is like Christ, and so to the extent that I am not like Christ, what I will be has not yet appeared.
- The eternal reality is that I will be like Christ: it has been promised. There is coming a day when I will be able to see Christ with perfect clarity, and at that moment his love and radiance will be perfectly reflected in me as the moon reflects the light of the sun, and in that moment I will be like him (and thus most like the personality which I was intended to have).

# What

- John says that “everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”
- This is the hope we are to live in, in the space and tension between the present reality and the eternal reality.
- Knowing that we are intended to be like Christ, we should be pursuing christlikeness, and this means purity.

# What We Must Not Become

Children of the Devil

# 1 John 3:4-10

- *4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.*

# 1 John 3:4-10

- *8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*



# Do not “keep on sinning”

- The alternative we are given to abiding in Christ--and pursuing holiness for the sake of the certain hope of being like Christ--is to “keep on sinning.”
- Now, this is not saying that Christians are sinless. To take that meaning would be to ignore everything John has said already.
- But one of the things that makes a Christian different from the world--and indeed, it is the very first thing on your road to becoming like Christ--is that the Christian is constantly aware of their own sinfulness and of their need for forgiveness.

# Do not “keep on sinning”

- The child of the devil, by contrast, *keeps on sinning*. It is not just that they sin. It is that they *keep on sinning*. They “make a practice of sinning.”
- Sin is a lifestyle for the unbeliever, a mode of habit, and the unbeliever has very little idea (except perhaps the conscience that God has given them but which may be very dulled or even perverted) that they stand in need of forgiveness.
- Notice the ongoing, continuing tense of John’s language. “Keep on sinning... make a practice of sinning.” You see, the unbeliever is also in a state of becoming.

# Human Becomings

- Every single person on this earth is going to live forever, and we are all in state of *becoming*, of preparing for our final destinations.
- As the believer is becoming more Christlike as he “abides” in Christ, so the unbeliever is becoming more like the devil (whose child he is, says John) as he prepares for his eternal destination in hell.

# The Proof of the Pudding

To Love One Another

# 1 John 3:11-15

- *11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

# Commandments new and old

- When John says “the message you have heard from the beginning” he is referring to something he mentioned back in Chapter 1, the “old commandment that you had from the beginning.”
- But this old commandment (old in the sense that it is at the roots of Christianity) is a “new commandment” (as John says) because it is more than the old commandment of the Law, which was merely to love our neighbors as ourselves.
- Jesus told us, and John tells us, that we are to love our neighbors as Christ.

# The Hatred of Cain

- Note the striking parallels between Jesus' "The World Will Hate You" discourse and what John says here: do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.
  - The world will hate you because their deeds are evil. And because we are not to be like the world, John tells us, we should not be like Cain, but instead should love one another.
- What John is saying is that one of the most potent roots of hatred--one of the things which will wither love the fastest--is envy.

# Christian Charity

- If you are not sure if you are loving your brother, John gives us a very helpful gauge. I would suggest that this is not the only way we can love each other (and certainly it does not absolve us from showing love in other ways), but for the vast majority of Christians it is a good barometer of where our priorities are:
- *16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)*



# How Then Should We Love?

As God is Love

# 1 John 4:7-17

- *7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*

# 1 John 4:7-17

- *13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.*

# Love requires a relationship

- This is where the ideas we've talked about—the Trinity and this idea of 'kindly enclyning'—really come together.
- We are fond of repeating that 'God is love' but most of us tend to mean by that that 'love is God.'
- But love is indicative of a relationship. God could not be love unless He were more than one person.
- The love between the Father and the Son is so perfect and so eternal that it too is a person, and that person is the Spirit—the Holy Ghost.

# Love requires a relationship

- John tells us that that Spirit has been given to us, so that the love of the Father and the Son dwells within us and makes us reflections of the Son.
- The more we can become like Christ, the more of the Father's love we can receive and the more we can love the Father like Christ loves Him.
- This is what John means when he says God is love. This is what Sanctification means. This is what being a Christian is all about.
- The Christian life is holiness for love's sake—a kind of holiness which is only possible because of love.

# Kindly Enclyning

- As it applied to the human heart, the medieval believed that man was made in the image of God, and so he should “kindly enclyne” (move toward by the attraction of like natures) towards God.
- For the believer, this would mean that the presence of the Spirit in your life and the presence of the Spirit in my life would “kindly enclyne” together, and we would be drawn together through love the way water seeks its own level.
- But the difference between humans and water was that humans had free will, so they could choose to resist this process. This resistance, really a defect of love, was sin.

# The test of love

- So there is a test of all of this, one which ought to convict every single one of us about how much the spirit is or isn't working in our life:
- *20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:20)*

# The test of love

- In your Christian brother you see the very nature of the Son of God reflected. Sometimes dimly, but even a single point of light is still infinitely brighter than the darkness that surrounds it.
- If the Spirit of God is in you it will love the Spirit of God that is in your Christian brother, and if for no other reason than that, you should be able to love him.
- How then should we love? As the Father loves the Son.
- So when you get right down to it, it seems that theology is much more practical than many of us are comfortable with.