

1 John 1:1-4
Jesus is Life

Well it's that time again - time of much familiarity probably for a lot of us - get to see familiar faces as a lot of us reunite with family - a time of familiarity with foods that are eaten and consumed - quite a bit of time of joy as there is a kind of reuniting with friendships even and a giving and receiving of gifts - just a lot of traditions that are utilized and put into practice and formed this time of year. Whether you're the family or the type of person that holds out for the day itself to, actually, open gifts, or you cannot wait, and you have committed to opening all your gifts before the day. It doesn't really matter. There's people that will go out of town and choose to celebrate Christmas however they like. Many traditions being formed, many different ways to celebrate this time.

But as Scott mentioned there is, no doubt, a focus that we try to have that is upon Christ, a focus that we try to keep central that is on Jesus - Jesus our Messiah and our Savior, the One who was born, that came down to this earth, lived His life, accomplished the mission in going to the Cross, was buried and then rose again on the third day to confirm Salvation, and that He really was sent by God in all that He did. We try to keep Christ central. We really do, and that can be challenging. There's a lot of distractions. There's a lot of different things. Sometimes we're on our best behavior this time of year because we know for young people, we want to get the gifts and not be naughty. If we're older, we know that if I'm only going to see my family for just this time, I can be on good behavior and get through this. And yet, we're totally missing the point, and we have failed to keep Christ central. It's imperative that we keep Christ central, and it's funny that we can give this attention to this day, this season, this month, a time to keep Christ central. But the reality is it's beyond that. If you're a follower of Christ, Christ should always be central. Why? Why change? Why all of a sudden give it attention?

Well, we have an excuse to continue to put Christ on display as we've been doing at this church, and as we long to do. This morning, we get to really see Christ as the way and, really, a unique aspect of all that He is, that it might help our minds to be pushed and pulled even, in different directions, and to grasp the glories of Christ and who He is, that we can better respond to Christ and keep Him central in all things. So, that's what we're going to see

this morning. We're going to be in 1 John 1:1-4, and we're going to see three ways, three different ways, that John gives us to keep Christ central. How can we keep Christ central, not just for tonight or tomorrow if God gives us that day, but for our lives? How can we keep Christ central? And we find these three ways coming out in these four verses here. So, let's look at our text.

Let's look at 1 John 1:1-4. John writes, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." John, in this prologue, in this beginning of this letter, how does he start off? How does he choose to begin this letter? He puts all the focus, all the attention, on one thing, on one person, on Christ. He keeps Christ central. That's the very focus and thrust of how he begins this, just as we see in verse 3; "...we proclaim also to you..." He proclaims Christ. This is the whole point and focus of not just these verses but really what will be the rest of the letter of 1 John.

And so, how do we keep Christ central based on just these four verses that we see tonight? Well, the first thing that we can find is that we need to... in order to keep Christ central, we can reflect on His humble humanity - reflect on Christ's humble humanity. And there's no doubt that this comes out in the beginning of what John writes here - Christ being a human. We know the background of John. Many of us know that he's a disciple of Jesus, one of the privileged few to follow Jesus around, to be with Him in His ministry, not just to be one of the twelve, but even one of the inner three, him and James and Peter. And as they saw Jesus doing every type of miracle in His life and ministry. John, having this privileged position, write, as we see, what he has heard and seen with his eyes and looked upon and touched with his hands. He, kind of, explores all the senses here to show that he is a legitimate eye-witness of Christ. And this isn't something that's hearsay. Alright? I heard that legend of that Jesus character. This is no myth. This is no fable. This is no bedtime story that's been passed down and questioned as if whether or not it's even real. John writes as one with authority because he

was there. He can say this definitively, and he can show it and prove it in the very sense that he, actually, got to see and hear and touch Jesus and who He was in His humble humanity. He says, "...we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you..."

And you can just start to picture some of the things that are going through John's mind as he's writing this. Right? What things were racing through his head? Peter wrote similar phrases in his letters, and Peter referred to the time when they went up on the mountain, and Jesus just pulled back a little bit of the cover that was, kind of, basically, covering up His glory, and Jesus showed him His glory, His transfiguration, on the mountain for Peter, James, and John to be blown away and see the glory of Christ; that He was in fact who He said He was. And Peter refers to that event. What was John thinking of? What events were going through John's mind? Well, there's no doubt, the mundane and the ordinary ones; was Jesus a real person, a real human? Absolutely! John walked around with the guy for three years. He had meals with Him. He's watched Jesus drink water. He watched Jesus get tired. He interacted with Jesus. He touched Him. Even after Jesus went to the Cross, was buried, and rose again, John was, actually, there in the room to see doubting Thomas come and, actually, place his hands in the scars that were on Jesus' body. John had this privileged position. He could recall Jesus and His voice as He was proclaiming and teaching to multitudes of people, Jesus on the boat, speaking across the water to the thousands that had come to hear Him. He remembers helping Jesus as he just watched Jesus in His supernatural fashion multiply bread and fish and see this meal that started off so meager and yet sufficiently provide food for thousands of men, woman and children, remembering Jesus, and not just the same voice that taught the masses but also silenced nature, shut up the storms and the seas and the wind.

You think these extraordinary moments that John must have had going through his head in addition to these mundane moments of just rubbing shoulders with Jesus the human, the humble man Jesus. This is how the gospel's presented, and this is exactly what John was referring to; I interacted with this man; I saw Him. There's no question. This is important because John's actually writing at a time when... Later on (it didn't take very long, near the end of the first century AD), you had people that were already casting doubts on Jesus and whether or not He was real. People are already coming in and starting to talk of Jesus like He was some mystical

kind of apparition, some kind of ghost even, this force that was around that inspired these disciples, but He wasn't really human, wasn't really a person, and John has to address that and say, yes, He was a person because I was there. I can testify to this that He, actually, was real; I saw Him; I touched Him; I heard Him. Jesus, in order to understand who He is, and who He was, you have to understand Him as a man like you, like me. This is Jesus. And unfortunately, not only was this being challenged in John's day, it still comes and resurfaces over the years, and it gets challenged in our day as well.

People still have a heyday with this, and they run free with it, and you find it on TV on the Discovery Channel and the History Channel, and people start to cast doubt on this whole existence of Jesus. Was He even real? Do we, really, know the real Jesus? We're on a search for the historical Jesus. In fact, back in the eighties and the nineties, there was a Jesus seminar, a group of scholars, a hundred and fifty scholars, these critical scholars, getting together, these smart men, and what'd they do? They went through what we knew about Jesus. They went through the gospel of Matthew and Mark and Luke and John, and they treated them very different than you and I treat them. Rather than reading those accounts, those eye-witnesses that were there and saw these things and did their homework and did their research and recorded it accurately, instead, these critical scholars went through the gospels and they rated each thing they found in the gospels. If there was an account of Jesus teaching, they would take each phrase and they would vote; how likely is it that Jesus, actually, said that? How believable is it? And if there was any story where Jesus did something supernatural, they would obviously, kind of, band together and say, yeah, this probably didn't happen. This is probably one of those moments that you, kind of, have a conspiracy forming where people are making up these stories about Jesus to make him look a lot better than he really was. And you have this questioning of Jesus' existence even. Was He even real? If He was, who, really, was He?

And John gives us comforting words. You can trust me. I was there. I heard this man. I saw Him. Luke in the beginning of his gospel tells us that he is a historian. He went and he hunted down all the people he could find, and he asked them exactly what happened, and it's amazing that all their accounts somehow go together, and they match up. They don't disagree with each other. They, actually, complement one another and give us a fuller picture of the real man Jesus that existed. And that's what John's words are

accomplishing here. Not only has John, kind of, shown that he has seen and heard and even touched Jesus, but he says I will establish myself as a witness. I testify; I'd be willing to stand up and testify to the veracity of what I'm saying, to the truthfulness of Jesus as man. In fact, it's reminding ourselves even of what Jesus told His disciples. Before He ascended up into heaven, the last thing He told them was, not only have you guys the privilege of being with Me, now you're My witnesses. In Acts 1:8, He states, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." John's willing to go the next step. Put me on the stand. Put me on trial. I will testify to all these things about Jesus. And he even goes so far as to say, "...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you..." John is not going to be quiet about this. He's going to speak boldly about the man Jesus Christ that he got to interact with, that he got to follow. This was his mission.

His mission was not just to testify but to proclaim, to make this known, and he would. He would make known Christ the man, the humble man, that came and suffered and died and did what God called Him to do. And at this point, you think, okay, how significant is this really? Why do we, really, make sure that people understand that Christ existed? Why do we need to make sure that people understand that Jesus was a man like you and I? Why is this important? It's really important because it has everything to do with all that's wrong with mankind. We just go back to the Garden of Eden and we think about how God had set up this paradise, and you have Adam and Eve there and their decision to rebel, disobey, and cause the fall of mankind, to disobey, to sin and bring in death, to bring in this curse upon the world and all that's around them. It's a terrible moment that took place, and since then, you've seen this downward spiral of mankind getting worse and worse and more sin and death plaguing this earth. Well, in order to fix that, you need another Adam. You need another man to step in and reverse the cycle. You need someone to come and completely change the trajectory of where things are going.

Enter Jesus the man, the second Adam, the new Adam that would change everything. This is what Paul teaches us in Romans 5:18-19. Just think about this simple thought and logic; "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men..." (thinking of Adam) "...so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men." (thinking of Jesus)

He goes on to say 'For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.' ” Jesus had to become man. He had to be man so that He could identify with mankind, the human race, and the mess that we were in. He could come down, identify with this and bring us out of this curse, and He could reverse it completely by His righteousness and undo what Adam did in his wickedness and sin. How can we keep this central in our minds? How can we, really, make this something we understand day in and day out?

We know we live in a cursed world. We know that we look around and sin abounds. We're reminded of the evil over and over and over again as we read headlines. There's no question about it, but deep down we know that this will not always be, that what Christ did two thousand years ago began the very starting point of renewing and redeeming this creation, and He will finish the job when He comes back. Even more so, we know a greater truth that relates to what Jesus's doing right now. Not only do we wait for Christ to come back and redeem everything and restore everything, we actually have hope in the very fact that Christ is a man even now. We see Christ is doing an amazing ministry in heaven for you and for me. As Hebrews 2:17-18 states, "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Even now, as we wait for Christ to come back and make things right, He's up in heaven, and because He came to earth as a man, because He identified with you and me, He can approach His Father as our high priest. He can do this amazing, priestly work where He comes before the Father who is full of wrath and ready to punish the sin that you and I commit every day, and Jesus stands in the way and says I've already taken the punishment. I am the representative of this soul.

He is our great high priest. How? ...because He's a man ...because He can identify with you and I ...because He lived on this earth and He stands to represent us. And so, also, when you suffer, when you go through trial and difficulty, He can relate. He's been there. He, too, was suffering, and He, too, was tempted. Amazing thought that as we continue, we don't just keep Christ central by thinking about what is to come and how He'll make everything right, but we think about, even now, the ministry, presently that Christ is doing. We can keep Christ central - that He is our faithful high

priest because He's a man, because He's like you, because He's like me, and He lived in this flesh on this earth - beautiful truth. But it's not just enough to leave your view, your picture, your understanding of Christ as that. Christ is not just simply a man. We have to go the next step and remember Christ's heavenly home. We must remember Christ's heavenly home. Yes, Christ... and we must reflect on the very fact that Christ was a humble human, did come to this earth. But also, there's this other side of Christ that needs to be emphasized, and as much as your mind doesn't like it or your ability to reason and think through it gets challenged, the Scriptures affirm it over and over again. It's the fact that the Scriptures talk about the one-person Jesus Christ, but He has two natures, and you can't get around it, not in this text and not in several other texts in the Scriptures. The person of Christ is, for sure, a hundred percent man. He can understand and relate with us in His human nature, but at the same time, He's a hundred percent God - both of these things working together, and it's not just a mere blend or confusion of the two; it's both in their fullness - fully God, fully man.

This is what John will even say right here in our text, just the very beginning of the first verse; "That which was from the beginning..." Who "...was from the beginning..."? You? No. Me? No. Adam? No. What human can make that claim that they are from the beginning? What human can rise up and say, oh, yeah, I was there when God was making this earth and deciding what He's going to do? I was there I helped Him. What human could say that? No one. But Jesus? It's a different story. Jesus was from the beginning. As John is clearly laying out, He was from the beginning of and even helping God and assisting and being a part of speaking things into existence. He would affirm this even in his gospel that he would write. In John 1:1-3; "In the beginning was the Word..." (in reference to Jesus) "...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." You see, Jesus is no ordinary man. He's no ordinary man because no ordinary man can make this claim, but this is Jesus. We've already seen, clearly, He was a man; John testified to that, but at the same time, He's eternal. Who else can make that claim that they are eternal? Not even the angels can. Jesus - clearly showing that He is God.

In addition, we see John continue to describe Jesus in our text. He describes Him as the life that was made manifest or made known, and He was with the Father and was made manifest to us. Once again, what human can say they

were with the Father before they came down to this earth? It's insane. Anybody that said such a thing would be laughed at, mocked; yet this isn't the case for Jesus. He's not a mere man as Hebrews 1:1-3 states, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." Look at verse 3; "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. No man can make such a claim. We're encountering something that your mind and my mind cannot fully grasp and understand. It's the glorious person of Christ - that He is fully man in every sense because John testified to it, saw it, heard Him, touched Him, yet at the same time, He always existed; He's eternal.

If you want to know what God looks like in human form, it's Jesus. He is the God-man. This continues to be taught in Scripture. In John 1:18 (still referring to Jesus in John's gospel); "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." Only Jesus has seen God, and Jesus is the one who "...has made God known." And as Colossians 2:9 bluntly states, "For in him [in Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily..." God in bodily form, it's Jesus. So, here we have this encounter that we can't get away from. We can't escape. We have Jesus, fully man in every sense that John witnessed and saw, but also one hundred percent God, being eternal, being from God, being from heaven. And people run into some dilemmas at this point, and they start to change what they believe, and so they start to change their Bibles, and these cults are formed where they take the person of Jesus and it's too glorious. It's too much for them. They want to, like, somehow subject it and put it into a box that they can understand, and so they start to change the person of Christ, and when you've done that, you've completely derailed from the truth. You've got Christ wrong as the Jehovah's Witnesses do, who changed their translation of the Bible, and they no longer call Jesus God, but they call him a god. Kind of like Michael the archangel; he's one of these, yeah, heavenly beings, but is he God? No. Definitely not. This is the claim of Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults, and they go wrong at this point. When you lose the person of Christ, you lose the gospel. You lose the good news. You lose the truth, and in preaching that message to people, you're damning people to eternity away from God because you're not preaching the real God - Jesus.

John goes on in 1 John to say that not only was Jesus eternal and with God, but He brought life. He brought life; another claim that no man could make. This is only God. No prophet could say this. Only God could say this. John refers to Jesus in our text as "...the word of life..." The life - and he says He "...proclaim[s] to you the eternal life." This is Jesus, the Word of life, the eternal life. Furthermore, in other places, John describes Him in this way, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." John 14:6; "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' " Jesus came and Jesus brought more than just a message of God. Jesus came and brought life - Himself offering life. And the amazing thing is that He Himself is the source of that life. He didn't bring it as a gift in His hands and said here's the object of life, go ahead, take it. He said it's Me; I come bringing you life, and it's found in Me. No man can make such a claim. We're encountering something glorious, truly glorious, that no person could ever attain to. Fully man yet fully God at the same time; this is the glorious person of Jesus Christ. So, why celebrate the birth of some man into the world? ...because He was clearly not just some man. He was God more than man. So many people recognize this. They recognize that there's something special about this child that was born.

In fact, if Jesus is anything less than God, then we run into some issues, namely idolatry; we're worshipping that which is not God. As one author put it, "To give worship to Christ if He is less than God is to engage in heinous idolatry. If Jesus was only a creature, He deserved His ghastly death. Jesus wasn't killed because He told people to love each other, but precisely because He claimed the prerogatives of Godhood." This is the very nature and distinction of Jesus - that He knew and He came as a man, but at the same time, He made these bold claims being God as well. And it's for that that people did not like Him, but they rose up, and they crucified Him. He truly was and He truly is still God. This is the glorious nature and understanding of who Christ is. You want to keep Christ central this holiday season? You want to keep Christ central in your life? You need to acknowledge Him as more than just this amazing moral teacher. You need to have a better and correct understanding of Jesus He's not your inspirational, kind of, guide. He is God, and there's no way around it. He is God.

He did not just come to identify with mankind. He, actually, came to offer Himself as eternal life, being the only true God. This is what He said in John 17:3; "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and

Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” ...saying He Himself is the source of eternal life. He came to bring life to you and to I. It’s amazing. We must not only reflect on the humble humanity of Jesus, but also remember that He’s from heaven. He is divine. He is deity. He is truly God, and with that, we need to come to a response; how to respond to such a person, such a person that is so glorious that our minds can’t even fully grasp and understand. How do we recognize Christ in His highest honor? How do we recognize Him in this way, give Him the most honor that He deserves? ...because we have a truly glorious Savior, and as John states here in verse 3; “...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Amazing. When you understand Scripture correctly, when you understand the truth about Jesus, you understand that you now have a relationship with God. You can relate to God. The almighty Creator and judge that you once feared and trembled before, you now can approach and speak to and have a relationship. Why? ...because of the perfect God-man Jesus Christ. You can have fellowship. You can be associating with God. You can, actually, be in participation and partnership with God because of this amazing person Jesus Christ.

So, what does it look like to actually respond to Jesus? What does it look like to respond in such a way as to give Him the highest honor? I’ll give you two here. First is, we must revere Christ as Lord. There’s no other option here. We have to revere - we have to begin and start at this point where we revere, fall down before Him, worship Him, bow down to Him, and view Christ as Lord, as Master, as King. You see, it’s impossible for mankind to have this healthy relationship with God as long as you and I, mankind, are still in sin. There’s no way. If you are in sin, if you are an imperfect person, you can’t relate to God. You can’t know Him. You don’t get that privilege. But when God does something so glorious as to send Himself down in human form to appease His own wrath, to save mankind, we now have a completely changed situation - and this is what Jesus did, being the God-man as we’ve already established very clearly, not from this text but all of Scripture, being the God-man, He alone could, actually, take on this mission. He alone could live a life of perfect righteousness. He alone could, actually, rise up and obey by going to the Cross. He alone could stand in between you and God and take the punishment that you deserve - and that He did on the Cross, and He was buried, and He rose again on the third day to verify and show that He had the authority to do this.

At this point, when you recognize that relationship can be established between you and God because of the God-man Jesus, you have two options. You have two ways to respond. It's simple. One, you can reject Jesus. You can go ahead and reject Him now, say no thank you. Jesus might've existed. I'm not, really, sure about all that stuff, but I don't really need His help, and I'm okay. I don't have anything against Him. I'm okay. I don't need Jesus. Go ahead; you can reject Him now, but then you face the wrath of God later. God's wrath, His anger, His righteous and perfect wrath against your rebellion and sin, still, is hanging over your head. Well, there's a second option, the better option, and that is you receive this beautiful gift. You understand, that this perfect person, that God-man did the very thing that you need to redeem you and bring you out of this cycle of sin that you're stuck in and to take away the punishment that you deserve so you can receive Him now and be rescued from the wrath of God later. This is how it begins. There is no way to have relationship with God, the One who made you, apart from revering, bowing down to and worshipping the God-man Jesus Christ. As "Jesus said..., 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' " We have to go through the God-man Christ.

You see, receiving Jesus' death through your sins - it means more than knowledge. It's not this mere knowledge and understanding and even, you know, a lot of people can understand the story of Jesus and see the sacrifice involved and think, well, that is amazing, and that is a great story. But it involves more than that, involves more than just this kind of knowledge in your mind, and it involves this surrender. It's this surrender of yourself completely to trust only in the God-man Jesus Christ. This is how we begin to recognize Christ in highest honor. This is how we keep Christ central, not just this time of year but at all times. We surrender ourselves. We devote all that we are to Him - devote our entire lives to Him. We no longer live. He takes over. He is boss. He is King of kings and King of your life. We live for Him in every possible way you can think of. So, that it is true of your life that whether you are eating or drinking or whatever it is you're doing, you're doing it for the glory of God, and because of the God-man Jesus. But we can't just stop here because God wants to do more than just rescue you from His wrath. As amazing as that is because you don't deserve it, as amazing as that is because we are sinful, rebellious people, and we should just rejoice

right there knowing that the God-man took our place and our punishment, God wants more. He wants more than to rescue you from His wrath.

He actually wants you to live a joyful and abundant complete fulfilled life, and this is possible by remaining in Christ's love. More than not just revering Christ as Lord of your life, you continue and you can remain in Christ's love. God wants you to have a complete and full, joyful, fulfilled life. John 10:10; Jesus states, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." There's more. There's more than just escaping the wrath of God. There's an actual opportunity for you to live every single day of your life in full joy, complete fulfillment and satisfaction in all things, and it has nothing to do with what's happening around you. You think, oh, that's possible. Oh, yeah, that joy and that fulfillment, I know how that happens. You win the lottery; that's how it happens. Right? You have something amazing happen to you. You have a good day. You have all the lights turn green for you. You have a day where everything just goes your way, and that's how you have a fulfilled and satisfied life. Absolutely not! Jesus is promising something greater than that. He's promising a satisfied, fulfilled life no matter what suffering comes your way, no matter what difficulty and hardship you face, and it all comes down to the concept of recognizing that He is the vine, and you are a branch. To be fulfilled, to be complete in your role as a branch, you need to bear fruit; that's your role. A branch that is connected to a tree must be bearing fruit; if it doesn't, it gets chopped off, thrown into the fire. The vine is Jesus. He is the source and He continues to give life. If you stay and be a branch and remain in Him, remain connected to Him, then you will have a life that is abundant, bearing fruit, full of joy, satisfaction in all things at all times.

This is what it means to keep yourself in the love of God. You remain in His love. And there's nothing wrong with the love of God, just to make sure we're clear. It is that constant river and stream that is flowing, the waterfall that's pounding you that doesn't stop. It's the sun that keeps shining and the warmth that you continue to feel on a hot day. It doesn't stop. It doesn't all of a sudden go away. Well, what do you do? You remove yourself from it. And that's how you are no longer in the love of God. You are no longer remaining in Him. You are no longer connected to the vine because you removed yourself. But God wants something greater. He wants you to recognize Christ in highest honor. And doing that is by remaining in Him, in His love, as Jesus states in John 15, and other places; "If you keep my

commandments, you will abide in my love...” And this is not some kind of fast one that Jesus is trying to pull where He’s throwing a rule book at you and saying good luck, try and follow these rules. No. Jesus’s saying you will remain in My love when you follow My commands and obey because these aren’t burdensome. These commands are a joy. What we have in the word of God is life, and it is a joy for us. If we remain and stay in it, then we continue to feel the constant love and life coming from God, coming from Jesus the vine, and we bear fruit, and it doesn’t matter what’s happening around us at all, doesn’t matter what’s circumstantially coming our way.

God wants more than just you being rescued from His wrath. He wants you to have eternal life starting right now through knowing Him, through knowing His Son the God-man, and remaining in His love. And that’s exactly this response. This result of joy is exactly what John says at the end of our text, isn’t it? Verse 4; “And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” A completion of joy will come when you, actually, acknowledge, fall down, worship, and respond to Jesus the God-man in relationship with Him. In some translations, it actually says, “And we are writing these things so that your joy may be complete.” And either one is right because in other translations, and in fact, in other parts of the Bible, we find both. There’s an abundance of joy for those who remain in Christ, who continue in His love, who obey His commands. It’s a blessing. You can live a Christ-centered life. You can keep Christ central always. You don’t have to wait until December. You don’t have to wait for tomorrow. You don’t have to establish a tradition where you read the Christmas story on Christmas morning, and now Christ is central. You can keep Christ central at all times, and if you are, it’s going to be obvious. Your life is overflowing with joy. You’re bearing fruit at all times; it doesn’t matter what’s happening around you - an amazing blessing from an amazing, good God that we serve. He’s not this dictator that’s ruthless and says deal with it and follow Me. And these really difficult commands, but He gives these commands for our good that we actually have joy, satisfaction, fulfillment in all things - an amazing blessing, an opportunity to keep Christ central.

I encourage you, if you aren’t there, get there. Use this time of year as an excuse to get there - connect to Christ again, come before Him, bow down - worship Him as the God-man who did what no one else could do to bring you into relationship with His Father and has now paved the way for you to remain in His love and have a satisfied fulfilled life, and not because of a

time of year but because of the constant unconditional love of God. That's the joy you can have. What a blessing it is to keep God central at all times.

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