

Sermon File # 1039

Scripture Text: 1 John 1:1-4

Sermon Title: *A Motivated Disciple*

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On Sunday Morning February 2, 2014

At East Madison Baptist Church, Madison, Wisconsin

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version, 2011.

Sources cited in this manuscript are listed at the end.

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A Motivated Disciple

Introduction:

Today we begin a series of messages from The First Letter of John, and we will look today at the first four verses. Although John omits the usual greeting and self-identification of similar epistles, the evidence is clear that John the Apostle, the Beloved Disciple, is the author, writing to the churches in Asia Minor, sometime in the late first century. Even a cursory reading will remind us of the similarity in style and content to the way John opens his Gospel in its prologue (1:1-18).

I'm looking forward to sharing with you nine messages from this letter of John because it's a message from a pastor to his people. (Although I'm only your interim pastor for a while, I gladly serve you in a pastoral role.) The apostle serves as an example to me as a true "player coach" and "pastoral counselor" who is responsible for the spiritual care and oversight of his flock, who are always under the threat of the Enemy from without and discord from within (Yarbrough, 27-29). John is writing his first letter to warn the church against a heresy that has crept into the church, false teaching that denied the full humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. His pastoral concern is to protect, instruct and exhort the people of God (Stott, 11).

Our text for today alone is evidence that the earliest disciples, apostles and first century church believed strongly in the full deity and humanity of Christ, a truth that continues to be challenged by various sects and skeptics today. In fact, this high view of Christ was one of the three tests for assurance that John gives us in his first letter. Along with the test of orthodoxy were the tests of holiness and love. John wrote his gospel that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:31), and he writes this letter that we might know, have assurance, that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). To have this assurance, we must pass the test of uncompromising belief in Jesus Christ, correct behavior that reflects the character of Jesus, and genuine, Christ-like love for one another.

John begins his first letter with an introduction that expresses his motivation for writing this letter. And we'll note that this motivation is the same that should drive us all as disciples of Jesus. Follow with me as I read these first words from the first letter of John.

Read 1 John 1:1-4

It hasn't taken me long to discover that Wisconsin is a sports-minded state, and Madison particularly loves the Badgers and the entire state loves the Packers. I've already purchased my Badger cap and jacket, and one of our kids bought me a Badgers sweatshirt. Even though the Packers fell short of expectations this season, due largely to injuries, I expect most of Wisconsin will be glued to their television sets tonight to watch former Badgers Russell Wilson and Montee Ball in the Super Bowl.

This week also athletes will be gathering in Sochi, Russia to compete in the 2014 Winter Olympic Games. I can assure you that every athlete has a story about the role of motivation in reaching their goal to compete in the Olympics. One of the fundamental aspects of good sports teams are their high level of motivation, something that must come from within the athlete. If a child is pushed into over-involvement in sports, he or she will likely burn out and drop out. Recently, I heard a very successful college football coach say that the most difficult task he's ever had is trying to coach players who are complacent and who lack motivation.

Here in our Scripture text we read the words of the aged Apostle John as he uncovers his true motivation for writing this letter, with clearly no sign of being burnt out or having lost his genuine concern for others. As we consider the words of our text, we are challenged to look into our own hearts, that is, the depth of our mind, will and emotions, to see we have the proper motivation as disciples/followers of Christ.

The Apostle John was known as the Beloved Disciple, and these opening words of this letter show his sincere motivation. Perhaps because these are his first words in the letter, they show his priority in encouraging the church to share his motivation. John would say that this motivation is the antidote for burnout, for losing heart in the Christian life. And the motivation we are to have is not a "flash in the pan" burst of enthusiasm, but rather issues forth in action, primarily the action that will lead others into fellowship with Christ and with those of us who are in his church, which is the activity of authentic evangelism.

Without this motivation we cannot have the full joy that is the birthright of every child of God. Our own completeness as followers of Jesus is dependent upon our having this proper motivation, as we will note in the movement of our text. John is saying that the motivated disciple, first of all, is...

Convinced about the reality of Christ

This first letter of John is nothing if it is not certitude and solid affirmation without equivocation. In fact, the purpose of his letter is to give certitude and assurance to the timid, nascent believers in Asia Minor's churches. And John writes straightaway that these believers and we may and must have a similar assurance. John is writing as one who is absolutely convinced about the Word of life, as we note in verse 1.

This Word of life is what John says he and we are to proclaim, to declare if we indeed have proper motivation. In his gospel, John writes in the opening verses those majestic words of his prologue (John 1:1-18). Here as in our text the Word is referring to the eternal Son, the God-man Jesus Christ. The Jews would understand "Word" to mean the wisdom and creative power of God, as in Genesis chapter 1. The Greeks (Gentiles) would think of the Word as the logos of God, the essence of life's meaning. The motivated disciple is convinced about...

His life

As in his gospel, John thinks of the living Word, Christ, as the eternal Son becoming a man, a man whom John knew well. John was one of the disciples, the followers and learners of Jesus, walking with him for three years, and then finally standing with Jesus' mother, Mary, at the foot of the cross. He experienced first-hand the humanity of Jesus, as he walked, talked and ate with him and as he saw him perform miracles that were signs to illustrate his stupendous claims as the great *I Am* of God. And John was a witness to the risen Lord, who appeared to his disciples in his resurrection body, given them his instructions, blessings and fellowship during the 40 days prior to his ascension.

Our text speaks of the eternal Word being God's self-revealing speech, and the in-fleshing of God in Jesus of Nazareth as God's ultimate "speech act" (Vanhoozer, 127ff). We can imagine John's marveling at his own words as he reflects on the central, core teaching of the apostles, the in-fleshing, the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, what John Piper calls "the touchstone of orthodoxy" (SG) and CS Lewis calls "the grand miracle" of the Christian faith (112ff).

John is concerned about false apostles, current antichrists, who had evidently infiltrated the ranks of the church. These heretics were casting doubt over the miracle of Jesus' full deity as well as his humanity. There were those who came to be known as Docetics (from the Greek *dokein*, to seem), who said that the body of Christ was not real and that a redeemer could not possibly suffer and die on a cross (Comfort, 2141). Others were of what came to be later known as an Arian perspective, saying that Jesus was a mere created man, and less than the divine and eternal Son of God.

The world today continues to be offended by the idea that the only Savior of the world is a real and particular man, indeed in the eyes of the world, a common man, of humble Palestinian birth, living a mere 33 years and suffering a disgraceful death. If the “savior” were but a lofty “ideal man,” or a good but innocuous teacher and moral example, he would be more acceptable to the world. But the eternal Son came as Jesus of lowly Nazareth, a Jewish carpenter’s son, and claimed to be the great *I Am* of God, and the only way to the Father (John 14:6). The true Gospel stands over against any of the lesser gospels espoused in *The Da Vinci Code*, and other specious theories. The motivated disciple is convinced about the reality of the life of Christ and also...

His death and resurrection

The purpose of the incarnation of Christ was not to provide a great moral example, which certainly Jesus is. The goal, as Jesus himself said, was to give his life as a ransom sacrifice for many (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). It was necessary, Christ said, that he suffer and die for us, that we might be forgiven and given the gift of new life in him. In fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, who took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. He was pierced on the cross for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-6). The Good News presupposes the bad news that we are all lost sinners, unable to save ourselves or atone for our own sin. We are not sinners because we sin, but rather we sin because we are at heart sinners, in rebellion against holy God and at his mercy and in desperate need of his grace, his undeserved love and forgiveness. This is all possible only because of the cross.

And the resurrection of Jesus is God’s declaration that our sin problem has been solved. The death of Jesus was God’s sacrifice for us, and the resurrection gave the cross the power for our new life and the efficacy to make us right with and before holy God (Romans 4:25). The resurrection of the Son of God is not an ideal in our imagination, but is a real, historical event that transformed the disciples from fearful victims into courageous victors and conquerors. And, when anyone turns to Christ in faith, believing the Good News, trusting in Jesus as Savior and following him as Lord, the resurrection happens! We are not only made right with holy God, but as Paul writes, we are enabled live daily in the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20).

John writes these verses in this assurance, and his heart for others is rooted in the Christ event, the incarnation, death and resurrection of the living Word. These verses in our text say that John was convinced, not by second-hand information about Jesus, but rather through his senses of hearing, seeing and touching. As the *Amplified Bible* says, John and the other Apostles “gazed upon” Jesus for themselves (verse 1). They saw him as eyewitnesses (verse 2) and were not followers because of what someone else told them. And although we are millennia removed from this time in history and are not privileged to experience Jesus’ physical presence, we are nevertheless given the reality of faith and certitude, which is foundational to a heart for others (See 1 Peter 1:8f).

When the risen Jesus invited Thomas to touch the scars in his hands and side, Thomas confessed his faith in Jesus as his Lord and God. Then Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not

seen and yet have believed" (John 20:27-29). By grace working through the Word and the Spirit, we can have the certitude of faith for ourselves. Our faith must not be second-hand, such as the "faith" passed on through parents or well-meaning pastors and evangelists who tend to coach and coax words of assent to "the plan of salvation." Saving faith is a first-hand encounter that comes to those will to fully consider, i.e., to "gaze upon" (verse 1) the person and claims of Christ, who then will impart a personal experience of faith that he blesses, even more than he blessed those with him in the Upper Room (John 20:29).

As with John, the motivated disciple is being...

Converted by an experience with Christ

Along with the other disciples in the Upper Room, John's life had been changed. The risen Lord had breathed upon them the Holy Spirit, who would come in fullness and permanence on the Day of Pentecost some 50 days later (John 20:22; Acts 2:1-4). Here in our text John writes in the second and third verses that he is testifying to what he has experienced that left him a different person than he was before. His experience with Christ is...

Personal

John speaks from the perspective of one who has experienced and even been transformed by the power and person of Christ. John uses sensory words to underscore the fact that his faith was not just his adherence to and agreement with facts about Jesus, but was a love relationship with Jesus Christ. He was known as the Beloved Disciple, who had enjoyed a special relationship with Jesus during his earthly ministry, and now he was continuing in to know Christ and even in deeper ways than when Jesus was with him in the flesh.

In our text John uses the word fellowship, *koinonia*, the common life we share together, a life meant to be shared with God and one another. Indeed this *koinonia* is the life of God himself within us that binds us together as his people in his family. And with this word he uses the word "joy." John Piper has it right when he says that God is a hedonist and he has called us to be hedonists, that is to say, pleasure seekers. Piper in fact says it is a devastating doctrine that teaches that it is wrong for a Christian to seek his own happiness. But our pleasure is found, not in the fallen human nature in an effort to gratify the appetites of the sinful flesh. Rather, our pleasure is to be found in our relationship with and our delight in God, who first has delighted in us (*DG*, 11ff).

David speaks as a hedonist, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) when he writes the sensuous words, "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8a). God intends that we know him in his fullness and that we learn his love and learn to love him with all that we are. God offers us the pleasure of his presence with us and within us. As David says, God will fill us with joy in his presence, and at his right hand there are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). This seems to be what John is speaking about in our text. Paul also expressed a similar ambition to know Christ in an ever-increasingly deeper way (Philippians 3:8-11). This experience is...

Life-changing

The risen Lord Jesus stood before his startled, frightened and mystified disciples and invited them to experience him for themselves, which was the encounter that transformed them. “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:38-39). John dared to touch and see for himself. By this encounter the disciples, John included, were changed from frightened, timid and disillusioned followers, fearful that their Master had died in vain, into the indomitable apostles of the risen Lord. And though we do not see him in his flesh, yet we are given by the Spirit a personal encounter that is as real as that of the flesh. And we, like John, have only begun to be converted through the continuing experience of faith.

John was the Beloved Disciple, but before that Jesus gave him, along with his brother James, the moniker “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). They were the “hell-fire and brimstone boys who wanted Jesus’ permission to call down fire upon the unresponsive Samaritans (Luke 9:54). And John, along with his brother, and in collusion with his mother, ambitiously sought to be promoted in rank to Jesus’ right side of authority over others (Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20:20-28, etc.). Something happened to John. It was a life-changing experience of dying to the old sinful nature and gradually, by the inner working of the Holy Spirit, becoming more in love with Jesus and more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit came into John and began giving him a heart like Jesus’ heart, one that loves God, delights in his presence and yearns to love others into the kingdom. John wrote as a man whose life was in the process of conversion, and that transformation is what motivated him to have a heart for others. He wanted others to share a similar experience.

Our trip to the Holy Land in 1988 was a great time of inspiration, but I can’t say it was life-changing. It was indeed a moving experience to walk where Jesus walked, and cross the Galilee, that he crossed so many times with his disciples. It was even emotional to stand outside Gordon’s tomb, wondering if perhaps this was the place where rose from the dead. But it is far more impressive to realize the Lord of glory is actually dwelling inside our hearts, that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that Christ within us is the hope of glory.

Yes, he makes our bodies individually the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is a scary thought. As NT Wright says, the very thought that the Holy Spirit comes to live within human beings, making us temples of the living God, “ought to make us shiver in our shoes” (131). And we need to live in the awareness of Christ’s presence, following the advice of the old monk, Brother Lawrence, and practice the presence of God. We don’t need a trip to the Holy Land, even though it’s an important and informative destination. Rather, we need to realize that our bodies are part of the real “Holy Land,” the place where Jesus lives.

You will never have full motivation as a disciple until the fire of Jesus’ love burns within you, until the life of God comes into you. Life in Jesus is this eternal life, not just the duration of life but a transformed life. Every mortal has “*bios*” life, but only the twice-born are given new “*zoe*,” eternal life, “a spiritual *quality* of life, which God

gives to every believer through Jesus his Son" (Smalley, 10). By grace through our faith in Jesus we are given this new life in him (cf. John 3:16; 17:2-3). Paul even goes so far as to say that Christ is our life. He encompasses all of our life, filling our person and shaping our character, and dictating our agendas and qualifying our relationships. And we discover more and more that life can never be the same again. He wants to keep giving more of himself, replacing more of our old sinful nature, until we can say, "Christ *is* life to me (Colossians 3:4; Philippians 1:21).

When Christ becomes that much of our life, his presence in us yearns to spill out into the lives of others. A motivated disciple, like the Apostle John, is...

Concerned to share the message of Christ

The Message paraphrase captures the sense of conviction and change that has happened to John, and the resultant concern, even the passion he has to share Christ with others:

"The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so that you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"

Obviously, John realizes the Good News is something to be shared...

And so we are not surprised to see that the primary verb in our text is "proclaim" (in verses 2 and 3. Marshall, 100). The Good News of Jesus awaits and seeks to be shared openly with the world. The Christian life is anything but secretive and private. Of course we must come to know Christ personally through a faith encounter when God speaks to and enters the secret place of our hearts. But as Christ dwells in our hearts by a living faith, we are also made aware of the worth of every individual soul, and that personal faith, if it indeed is living, begs to be shared with others.

As John wrote these words about proclaiming and testifying to others about the Good News, he was no doubt aware of the infinite value of every human soul whose everlasting destiny may weigh in the balance. In the words of CS Lewis, there are no mere mortals. Everyone we chance to meet or even to see on the busy street is an immortal soul, destined to become like Jesus because of grace received through faith, or destined to become like Satan himself, because even now they are in his grip (Lewis, *WG*, 14f). The Apostle Peter underscores the value of every human soul in the heart of God by writing,

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Throughout my many years as a pastor, I involved the churches I served in programs and seminars and on-the-job-training in personal evangelism. These programs would usually begin with a burst of enthusiasm, but eventually only the faithful few remained involved in the church's program of personal evangelism. It seems that

motivation was lacking, and that even as we shared the message of Christ we failed to sense the value of others. But knowing the value of others, we are to share Christ...

With clarity and conviction

Notice how John is anxious to testify and proclaim the message of Jesus so people can understand. It's as though he is saying, "We proclaim to you exactly what we too have seen and heard" (verse 3). Just as he wrote in his gospel account, his purpose was that his readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life in his name (John 20:31).

Donald Whitney tells the story of "a man who became a Christian during an evangelistic emphasis in a city in the Pacific Northwest. When he told his boss about it, his employer responded with, 'That's great! I am a Christian and have been praying for you for years!'

"But the new believer was crestfallen. 'Why didn't you ever tell me?' he asked. 'You were the very reason I have not been interested in the gospel all these years.'

"How can that be?" the boss wondered. 'I have done my very best to live the Christian life around you.'

"That's the point,' explained the employee. 'You lived such a model life without telling me that it was Christ who made the difference, I convinced myself that if you could live such a good and happy life without Christ, then I could too'" (Whitney,104-105).

I know the famous quote of St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel wherever you go, and, if necessary, use words." It certainly makes a point, but could lead to a dangerous misunderstanding. It's usually necessary, at some point to use words, because the Good News is a word, a message that must be shared boldly and with clarity and conviction.

As was true with John, to have a heart for others means that we are concerned to share Christ...

With purpose

The culture of John's audience, just like that of Paul's as he writes to the Corinthians, was one of exclusion. People prided themselves in their class distinctions, and it was difficult even for Christians to include in their fellowship those of an inferior social class. Also, many thought that all that was needed was the dispensing of information, and the "wise" would grasp the message. The evangelical heart seeks to communicate successfully. Although the results are in God's hands, and our task is to communicate with love the message, yet we are also as ambassadors of Christ, to seek to persuade others to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The heart of John yearned for others to share fellowship with God, this inner life of God, and also with him and others in the Body of Christ. In verse 3 is a strong purpose clause in the present tense: "so that you also 'may keep on having' fellowship with us" (Robertson, 206). Our yearning isn't that others make a decision for Christ and then we leave them to fiend for themselves, assuming they will "go to

heaven when they die.” Instead, we yearn for others to share with us in the life of God now, and to join with us in a heavenly fellowship on earth and in the enterprise of praying and working that the will of God will be done on earth as it’s being done in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

I wonder if perhaps this is at the core of our lack of concern for others. We ourselves have not cultivated a heart that pursues God’s glory and joy (Piper, *DG*, 253). If we were fully in love with Christ, and found deep joy in him and a daily walk with him that is fresh and alive, would we not necessarily yearn for others to know him in the same way? And would not our hearts spill over with obvious love for others, manifest in simple acts of thoughtful kindness? If Christ Jesus were as precious to us as he desires to be, and if our hearts delighted in him as they were redeemed to do, the language of our hearts and lives would speak out, “I want you to know the one I know and to have the life and joy that he alone can give.”

The heart of John yearned for others to join up with God in this life-changing, soul-satisfying relationship. This desire for shared fellowship was both “heavenward and also person-to person” (Yarbrough, 33). John’s heart yearned for others to be joined to his own heart, indeed, with the hearts of those in the churches. Our text speaks very loudly against the idea of Christian individualism, one of the sins of the evangelical church in the West (Rah, 27-45). We are made for community as social creatures. Yet the child of God is to be joined with the children of God in a mystical spiritual unity. We are born of the same Spirit who draws us together into one body, one family.

Several years ago the Chicago Tribune newspaper had an intriguing front page article. The story was about twin baby girls who had been abandoned on a sidewalk in China. A suburban Chicago couple went to China to adopt one of these little girls, not knowing she had a twin sister. They named their adopted baby Mia. The following year a couple from Miami (FLA, USA) went to the same city to adopt a little girl who also had been abandoned in the same spot in front of a textile factory. One of these couples wrote about their daughter’s upcoming birthday on an Internet site for parents who had adopted from the same orphanage in Yangzhou. After a series of e-mails, what these adoptive parents had suspected was later confirmed through DNA testing. These girls, who amazingly had both been named Mia by their adoptive parents from the north and south of the US, were fraternal twins, separated hours after their birth. They met at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport. As the parents watched as these little girls, dressed identically for this meeting through the parents communication with each other, they were in awe. “To me, it’s a divine thing. It’s a miracle. In the sea of humanity, these kids found one another,” said one of the mothers.

The front-page headline of this article says, “Separated at birth, united by chance.” We were separated from God and one another at birth, lost and thousands of miles away, like from Chicago to Miami or Chicago to China. And then we were found by grace, which was anything but chance. And now we are called to be united in his family. And that’s a picture of our unity. *Separated at birth, united through rebirth.* Most of us here today come from various backgrounds and have been on divergent pathways. Yet, we who belong to Christ have been born anew as his children, and we are all indwelt with the same Holy Spirit and renewed nature. By the miracle of

his grace, out of a sea of lost humanity, we are brought into fellowship with God and with each other. And we must cherish our fellowship and our unity in Christ. And our joy is not complete without this union.

Joy is one of the themes in John's Gospel, the word "chara" appearing 9 times. True joy comes from participating in the Kingdom of God, and this joy is "not to be confused with pleasure in the sense of rollicking good times or self-indulgent gratification" (Yarbrough, 43). John writes as if he were saying that his joy will never be complete until the lost are gathered into the fold of God. He so wants others to share the joy of delighting in God. He feels his own joy is diminished unless others share that joy with him.

I know of those who earnestly desire to have children. I think I as a parent can understand this deep longing on the part of those who cannot have children. I thank God for the advances of medical science that can facilitate pregnancy and childbirth, and I also pray that our society can facilitate the adoption process, and make it more accessible and affordable. But also, shouldn't we yearn for others to have eternal life, that they might be a part of the heavenly family forever?

John knows that his own joy is bound up in the joy of others. We should have our eyes and hearts on others and their needs and we know that our joy is bound up in their everlasting destiny and in our loving, serving and sacrificial ministry to them.

I think I know what I Howard Marshall means when he writes that the heart of a pastor cannot be fully happy as long as some are outside the fellowship of God's family. Howard notes that there were no doubt some within the membership of the Asia Minor churches who were nevertheless outside of the kingdom (105). Our joy as God's servant leaders and pastors is tied up in you, and as long as you, even though you are a church member, are outside of Christ's fellowship, with himself and his people, we cannot be fully happy. Something within is missing. Something vitally important. Someone. You, perhaps.

And as fellow members of the Body of Christ, we are joined together with him and with each other in a mystical union. And our individual happiness and joy can never be what Christ wants it to be if we are not in pursuit of each other's fellowship and joy. That will probably also mean that we must be willing to be hurt by those, even fellow Christians and church members, who will reject our love and spurn our fellowship. But we must take the risk of unconditional love.

As long as there are those among us who as yet have not entered fellowship with God and with us his people, we are diminished. And indeed the church, of all places and institutions, is not an island unto itself. It is an interdependent fellowship of people, who by God's grace and calling, are being made into the Body of Christ. I understand that during the past few months a number of your members and fellow believers have drifted away from your fellowship. I pray that you will be motivated to draw them back into this fellowship and that your motivation will be, not primarily for the strengthening of this church, but to enrich the faith of these fellow believers and add to their joy. This effort will certainly increase your joy as well.

Conclusion:

You'd have to be a recluse to not have heard all about the teams playing in today's Super Bowl. We've heard all the pundits say analyze and overanalyze, predict and provide info for those who'll gamble on their favorite team. But likely the game will be decided by motivation. One of the evenly matched teams will likely have just slightly more motivation and will exert just a percentage or two more effort to tip the scales and win the game.

As Jesus' disciples we must be motivated. Because if Jesus is living in us, and if we let him take control, filling us with himself, he will love people through us, his heart for others will be within us. When we walk with Jesus, we experience his love which begs to be shared with others. We don't want just to show them a good life, but we desire to share how they can know Jesus and the full measure of his blessing. We who belong to Jesus do naturally his motivation, his heart for others. It's the heart that wept over the city (Luke 19:41) and the heart that was broken over the sins of the world and was broken for us upon the cross. Paul had this Jesus-like heart when he prayed for his kinsmen, his fellow Israelites (Romans 9:1-3; 10:1).

What makes East Madison Baptist Church truly the people of God and will give power to your ministry and purpose to your outreach, and even to your daily living among those in spiritual darkness is this kind of motivation. Without it, we will be diminished in our joy and God will be diminished in his glory that he otherwise would reveal among us.

Questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:

1. Describe what it means for you to "have a heart" for something or someone.
2. Why is it important to be convinced of the Good News (the fact of mankind's lost condition, the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection, the Judgment, heaven and hell) in order to have proper concern for others?
3. Why should our experience of conversion and our on-going transformation by the Holy Spirit gives us an increasing concern for others?
4. A quote attributed to St Francis of Assisi is, "Preach Christ to everyone. And if necessary, use words." But what might the Apostle John say about the importance of words?
5. What opportunities do you have to share Christ, by both your life and your words? In what ways do we depend on the ministry and witness of the church in reaching the lost with the Good News?

6. What does John mean by fellowship with God? With one another? What is the basis of this fellowship?
7. Reflecting on the words of our text, especially verse 4, how is your maximal joy dependent on others? How is the joy of the church fellowship dependent on others?

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