In the first century, it hadn’t been long after Jesus had died, was resurrected, ascended back to heaven…

That some Christians began listening to unbelievers who claimed Jesus was nothing more than a “do gooder with a Messiah complex”…

As a result, they began to walk away from the teachings of Christ, and go back in the worldly lifestyle they had turned away from to seek the Lord.

So God inspired the Apostle John (one who walked with, talked to, and touched Jesus after He had risen from the dead…) to send them a letter to help chase away their doubts…

and build assurance among this group of believers who were living much like ourselves today, in an UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM that opposes God.

John had written to them about issues concerning Love, Acceptance & Forgiveness in the life of the believer… that it’s not just something we freely receive from God, but also freely give to others…

Even when people wrong us, frustrate us, hurt us or shame us…

And yes, that is often times easier said than done… that’s why we need the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Who can bring us to stop and ask ourselves: “Why am I here” —— Why has God saved me?

This mornings message is from 1 John 2, starting w/V15.

 I believe it is essential to answering those questions and living

“right-side up” in our upside-down kingdom…

Do not love (agape/sacrificially love) the world (Kosmos - the beautiful arrangement or decoration that we can see)…

Having just taken a trip thru glorious Utah & Colorado in the fall, I can see where that might be a struggle for some… even here in beautiful Arizona…

Enjoy it yes, love it more than God… not so good… “Why are we here” —— Why has God saved us?

John continues… Do not love (agape/sacrificially love) the things in the world… (He’s talking about stuff… possessions)

And that if anyone does, the love of the Father is not in them. Why? Because then created things have been elevated above the Creator.

The reference Scripture given on the screen in Matthew 6:24, Jesus says…

So why does God instruct His children not to try and juggle/balance their love/service for Him & money/possessions (anything really)?

Because “God’s will & purpose for the life of the believer gets short-circuited in process.

John continues in V16?

Every person has desires for possessions, pleasure, and power/be in control… Don’t we?

But who gave us those desires in the first place? Since God created us, He did!

What God wants His children to understand is that…

Since the world has fallen because of sin/ man’s disobedience…

Our world has chosen to separate itself from God and is now living to love & please itself above it’s Creator…, which obviously isn’t

“Why He has us here”? —— Why He has saved us?

So it becomes easier to understand why it’s foolishness to sacrifice God for any pleasure on this earth...

Or for possessions made by man…

It makes even less sense to try to fulfilling one’s desire for power/control in a world that is ruled by sin and run by God’s enemy…

But this broken/flawed/sinful place is the only world we know…

Until we come by faith, to Jesus Christ! As we have begun learning on Wed nights. Heaven awaits!

The more we intentionally push out to the unsaved voices around us and give ourselves to maturing in Christ…,

His Spirit progressively delivers us from making what we know… more important than what God wants us to know. “Why were here” —— Why He has saved us? That our temporary life here isn’t about us…

His Spirit delivers us from blindly chasing what the world has to offer, and instead gives us the power to see what life is really all about.

That we live in a world that is hurting & broken… In need of Godly friendships & relationships… and most importantly a saving relationship with Jesus… like you & I have…

When we are too busy juggling/balancing God & our desires for other things, it is easy to miss the blessing that God wants us to be in the lives of other people…

As Dee & I traveled about, we ate mostly sandwiches and yogurt out of our cooler, but we did stop & eat 3 times…

In a message that I preached sometime ago, God opened my eyes to the opportunities He gives when Christians do dine out, and servers come to wait on us…

So on these 3 occasions recently, we told our servers that we were going to thank God and ask His blessings on our meal.

We asked if there was anything they would like us to pray for them about?

Ericka – Who had just relocated from Atlanta asked for guidance.

Sydney - is getting ready to graduate from college and specifically asked for God’s wisdom and guidance to live a life that brings glory & honor to Him.

Erin – is a single mom, working hard, trying to get custody of her children.

They were SHOCKED & BLESSED when we asked them to join us in our prayer…

Sometimes I forget to pray for the food…

 It wasn’t until days later, when we were on our way home and I was reflecting… that God deepened my understanding of how much more other people and our service to the Him matters…

Eternally more than the temporary things we can see/possess/control.

He tells us this in V17…

One way or another we’re going to leave our stuff, or our stuff will leave us…

Romans 12:2

Some may think that God seems to be asking an awful lot of His people…

But if we will, in the end, He will fulfill our desire for:

1. Power in His Eternal Kingdom.

Matthew 20:26-28 (Jesus dealing with disciples seeking power)

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Loving God & serving Him sacrificially not out of our abundance… where there is no real cost to us…

Luke 19:15-19 (Parable of the Minas – *3 months worth of wages*)

15 The king returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

16 “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’

17 “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

18 “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’

19 “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

And we know what happened to the wicked servant who “opted out”of serving by hiding what was given him to use until the king returned, saying he knew the king to be hard, “reaping what He did not sow”…

Sounds like good motivation to sacrifice & serve Him… Amen?

Thru that servant Jesus is addressed the “extra humble”, that claim they don’t want or deserve any reward or POWER in heaven…

Jesus says if you’re planning to be there, the owner has plans for us to continue serving Him on the New Earth… by putting us in charge of one or more cities…

What sacrificing to love God, serving Him NOW does… is it allows us to find the joy, that we will experience as we love & serve God eternally.

We talked a little about that Wednesday… How we’re going to be busy serving God in heaven (just like they are now)…

We’ll have places to go and people to see on our Lord’s behalf!

Secondly, He offers the reward of:

1. Possessions in His Eternal Kingdom. (We’ll have stuff!!)

Matthew 6:19-21

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

After Jesus defined that principle for the “Rich Young Ruler in

Matthew 19:16-22, Peter asked Him in V27-30;

27 “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things (New Heaven and New Earth), when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And everyone who has (sacrificially) left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

That’s 100 houses, hundreds of brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, wives, children, and fields waiting for us to enjoy forever!

V30 But many who are first (here) will be last (there), and many who are last (here) will be first (there). More evidence that we are living in an upside-down Kingdom…

Lastly, He offers the reward of:

1. Pleasure in His Eternal Kingdom

Psalm 16:11

11 You make known to me the path of life;

 you will fill me with joy in your presence,

 with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Sacrificially loving pleasure above God, serves only to squeeze out one’s love for the Father & doing His will.

Everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father.

It just keeps us isolated from him… but whoever serves God above all that… is set for eternity.

Please stand as we close this morning…

* Are you or have you allowed a desire for POWER/CONTROL to:

Keep you from church?

Keep you from serving the Lord & doing His will and sharing Christ?

Do you let it keep you from giving sacrificially to the Lord?

If so, you may be suffering from “pride of life”

* Are you or have you allowed a desire for possessions/money to do any of those same things?

You may be suffering from “lust of the eyes”.

* Are you or have you allowed a desire for worldly pleasure to:

Keep you from church?

Keep you from serving the Lord & doing His will and sharing Christ?

Do you let it keep you from giving sacrificially to the Lord?

You may have… “Lust of the flesh”

Here’s what I can tell you, there is a cure… God loves you, He accepts you, and He will forgive anyone who will repent and seek Him today…

If the Holy Spirit has spoken to you about this, I invite you to come NOW and kneel at an altar of prayer and settle it with Jesus today…

Life is too short, Heaven is forever… make the decision Jesus would want you to make.

Please come NOW as we sing: Is your all on the altar