

Sermon Notes:

God gives me assurance as I grow in love 1 John 3:19-24

Kids, draw a picture of the Advent Wreath

Write your name here: _____



Helping People Follow Jesus

Our Core Values:

Graciousness. Following Jesus is a journey in humility and grace. We want to humbly depend upon God's grace and humbly extend God's grace to others.

Togetherness. Following Jesus is not a solo journey. By following Jesus together, our differences help us follow him better.

Engagement. Following Jesus is a journey of prayerful, intentional community engagement. What matters most is people following Jesus and people learn to follow Jesus through relationships.

Reproducing. Following Jesus is a journey of reproducing gospel communities. We want to see this reproduction happen at every level – from life groups to starting other churches.

First Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2016

Welcome to our church. If you have children, please pick up a writing board for them and a bulletin so they can draw during the message (there's an idea on the back of the bulletin for their participation). Our service will be about an hour long. We value being together, so our children stay with us during the service.

If you need to leave the main room with a child, you are welcome to go to the east room for some privacy.

We don't "pass the plate" here at LEFC. If you want to give towards the ministry of this church, there is an offering box on the welcome table.

Pastor Tom Starkjohn. Contact info: Cell # 402.297.0672.

Do you get the LEFC Weekly email? This is for regular attenders and it's the way to keep up with our church. Send an email to Pastor Tom at tomstarkjohn@gmail.com and say "sign me up for that email".

Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,
let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

(Psalm 14:7 ESV)

Lighting of the Advent Candle: *The Prophets Candle:*

We light a candle to remind ourselves that Jesus, the light of the world, came into a world of sin and darkness. Today we light the first candle, which we will call the “Prophets Candle”. Long before Jesus came, the Holy Spirit was revealing to his Prophets that the Messiah was coming. Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:36-38.

Sing a song of praise to God: *O Come, O Come Emmanuel.* Hymn #100

Historical Confession of Faith—EFCA Statement #3: Human Condition:

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

A Song reminding us of the Gospel: *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus.* Hymn #102

A story of a life changed by the Gospel

A song helping us memorize Scripture

The teaching of the Word—1 John 3:19-24

A Closing Song: *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Because we have all our musical words printed in our hymn books this week, we have a combined bulletin and Life-Group notes this week. Each week at our Life Groups we practice four Life-giving practices, each of which are briefly listed here.

Life-giving Prayer (about 10 min)

1. Do you have any stories to share this week about worshiping God in the everyday stuff of life?
2. Try using the simple sentences below, filling in the blank. You could spend a bit of time on “glory”, people completing the sample sentence as many times as they want. Then move onto “Honor” and then “Thanks”.
 - Glory: God, it’s amazing that you _____.
 - Honor: God, I choose (or want or surrender) _____ to you.
 - Thanks: God, thank you for _____.

Life-giving Truth (about 45-55 min)

There are a lot of questions here. Your Life Group Coach will pick out a few below that are best suited for your Life Group to help process this week’s Life-giving Truth. Don’t try to answer every question – just think through a few together.

1. Last week's truth: Did you think about last week's Life-giving Truth *Love means laying down my life for others?* Was there a situation in your life this week when this Life-giving Truth was (or could have been) applicable?
2. This weeks Life-giving Truth is *God gives me assurance as I grow in love.* Why is assurance something desirable? Why would you want it?
3. Our Statement of Faith, #8 says, “We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose”. This is getting at the Apostle John’s linking of believing in Jesus and loving others (1 John 3:23). With this in mind, consider Jayne, who prayed to receive Christ long ago in her Sunday School. Now she occasionally goes to church, but mostly lives a sinful life filled with alcohol, fights, and gossip. When you ask her about her spiritual life, she says, “Once saved, always saved. I know I ain’t a good Christian, but I’m a saved one.” How is she misunderstanding “assurance” and even the nature of the gospel?
4. Listen again to this quote from John Newton: “**We cannot be safely trusted with assurance till we have that knowledge of the evil and deceitfulness of our hearts, which can be acquired only by painful, repeated experience.**” Share any experiences you have had that God has used to give you assurance?
5. John made the repeated point that a true Christian grows in love like Jesus. If Jesus lays down his life for the brothers, and we admire him, it follows that we would pray to love like Jesus. Consider spending some time in giving Jesus glory for the way he loved and then praying for love with honoring prayer.
6. John’s focus in this passage is on love as a basis of assurance. What other things can you think of that also can, as you see their growth in you, give you assurance of your faith?

Life-giving Relationships (about 5-10 min)

Does anyone want healing prayer this week? Remember, this is praying for the heart of you, the person, not the circumstances you are going through or other people in your life. Is there anything churning in your heart that we can pray for?

Life-giving Impact (about 10 min)

1. Does anyone have any Pray & Watch stories from this week? Did you make a plan and follow through with getting together with anyone on your Pray & Watch list?
2. Get your Pray & Watch list. Let’s spend our last minute or two together praying over all these names together.