October 4/5, 2025

Living in the Last Hour

Face to Face Series

1 John 2:18-29

Pastor Bryan Clark

Ancient China was concerned that they would be invaded from the North, so they built the Great Wall of China, a wall so high, a wall so thick that it seemed impenetrable. But over the next 500 years, China would be invaded three different times. It wasn't that the wall wasn't high enough, wasn't that the wall wasn't thick enough, it's that they had failed to consider the enemy within. On all three occasions, the enemy simply bribed the guards at the gate and marched in the front gates. When you read through the New Testament, there's no question that the great concern for us, collectively as the Church, is not an invasion from without. The big concern is not the atheists; it's not the secularists; it's not the Jesus haters. The great concern of the New Testament is that we will be invaded from within. That's what we want to talk about this morning.

If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 John, Chapter 2. If you're new with us, we're working our way through John's first letter, and John has told us that in order to experience authentic Christian community, there must be *light*. There must be *love*, and he adds the third ingredient to that this morning: There must be *truth*. We pick it up in chapter 2, verse 18:

> **Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.**

So John has been using two different Greek words that are translated **children** in the text. The first one shows up in chapter 2, verse 1, which is the Greek word teknon. It literally means to originate from and carries the idea that we all, as believers, originate through the Son. We originate born again in Jesus. So he also uses that term in chapter 2, verse 12. But in verse 13, he changes to a completely different Greek word. It's the Greek word paidion. It carries more the idea of submission, or surrender, probably most accurately the idea of dependence. It is used to describe an infant, and that infant's dependence on the parents to survive. That's the word then he uses in verse 18. So, it carries this idea that those that are most at risk to the false teachers, most at risk to the antichrist, are the new believers. They're dependent on more mature believers to help them and to raise them.

We talked about this last week, where John talked about our responsibility to one another in this journey. And then he talked about a concern that, rather than loving the Father, we might get deceived into following and loving the world and basically waste our lives away. So, **children, it is the last hour**. That is a phrase that's unique to John, although in other places in the New Testament we read about the *last days.* It's quite certain that last hour…last days…is meant to indicate the same thing. So what is that referring to? What John is referring to is the last hour, or Paul, the last days. The easiest way to understand this is to go all the way back to the beginning of the story. In Genesis, chapter 3:15, right after Adam and Eve sinned, God made a promise that through the seed of a woman would come one who would crush the head of the serpent. In other

words, it's the first promise that God will send a Savior. This promise, then, is developed all throughout the Old Testament. We learned that the promise will come through Abraham. It's developed through Moses. It's developed through the prophets. But what was distinctive about all those generations for thousands of years, is they were looking forward to God keeping His promise to send a Savior. Two thousand years ago, God took on human flesh, and through His death, burial and resurrection, kept His promise. Jesus then rose from the dead. He ascended to the Father. Every generation since then, uniquely lives in a time period known as the last days or the **last hour.** Often people will say to me, "Pastor Clark, I think we're in the last days," to which I always respond, "Yes, we are. We have been for two thousand years." The understanding of that is God has kept the promise. So we're the only generations in human history that live after the keeping of the promise. So our mission is not looking forward to the promise, but the declaration that the promise has been kept. God did send a Savior. He offers salvation through Jesus. Therefore, the only thing left on the horizon to happen is for Jesus to come back and usher in the new heaven and the new earth. So this is the **last hour**. These are the *last days*. We're declaring the message and looking forward to the return of Jesus.

The New Testament, over and over again, tells us that a mark of these days will be false prophets, will be false teachers, what John refers to as **antichrist**. The Greek word translated antichrist means just what it sounds like it means. It means *against Christ*. But it can also mean *instead of Christ*. In other words, a counterfeit. It's probably both that, because the best way to keep people from Christ is to set up a counterfeit Christ that will deceive them away.

Think of it this way, the atheists are obvious. The secularists are obvious. The Jesus haters are obvious. The counterfeit is not so obvious. You'll notice he talks about the **antichrist** with both the singular and the plural. The singular is certainly a reference to the evil one that he referred to in our text last week. It's a reference to Satan himself. He's the ultimate *against Christ*. But we also know from Paul's letter to the Corinthians that he describes Satan as one who disguises himself as an angel of light. In other words, he's the ultimate counterfeiter. He disguises himself as an angel of light to deceive people away from the Christ. If you go back and you look at that statement in its context, there's no doubt in my mind what he's referring to is religion. Religion is the great counterfeit. I'm absolutely convinced that more people will miss Jesus because of religion than any other cause. It just seems right. It's a counterfeit that ultimately leads people away from the Christ. So what he's saying is, this is a mark of the last hour. Verse 19:

> **They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.**

It sounds a little bit like it goes round and round, doesn't it? Here's what John is saying. "Within their church, there were antichrists, those who were creating a counterfeit Christ to deceive them and lead them astray." But they have now gone out from us. Probably in modern language we'd refer to it as a church split. They are no longer part of the church because they were exposed and got sent away. But clearly they are still trying to deceive some of these young believers to follow what they're teaching.

Now it's important to understand this in the first century context. So in the first century, the Church went through lots of struggles together. They were trying to gain clarity on what they believed was true. They were trying to work through all these issues. They were trying to come together and be the Church and figure this out. So there was lots to learn. There were lots of struggles. But what defined the first century Church is no matter what, they stuck together. And they stuck together because there was no other option.

Now think about how different that is today. Just take Lincoln, for example. Lincoln has many wonderful churches. There are churches we love. There are churches we support. There are churches we pray for. There are churches we would recommend. It's not uncommon for some good reasons, sometimes not so good reasons, that people choose to leave and go to another church. That's fairly common. In the first century, that option didn't exist. So to go out from the church was to go out from the faith. At that point they were leaving the faith. So that's what John is talking about.

There are two things that are important to notice in verse 19. One is what pulls us together to experience authentic Christian community is the *truth*. We've talked about the word *koinonia*, which literally means *to share in common with*. And one critical thing that we share in common is the truth. It's what brings us together and defines us as the people of God. But what John is also saying is that as a result of coming together in koinonia around the truth, it exposes the lie. It reveals those that are out of alignment. It reveals those that don't believe the same thing. It exposes the antichrist among us. So, it's important to understand that what brings us together is the truth. But as a result of coming together, it exposes what's not true. Another way of saying this is, "Show me a church that doesn't value community, and I'll show you a church that is easy to lead astray." Lone rangers are very easy to lead astray. That's what John is saying. Verse 20:

> **But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.**

So this word **anointing** has several aspects to it. It's almost certain that the false teachers were using this term an **anointing** as part of their teaching. We know for certain that some of these Greek religions talked about some sort of a mysterious anointing that gave them some secret knowledge. So that's part of why John is using this language. It also is a bit of a play on words. The word translated **anointing** is the Greek word *charisma*. It's the same root word from which we get Christos, the Christ, the Anointed One. That's what Messiah means. So what he's saying is, "Actually we have an anointing." We have the Christ, not the antichrist, the anti-anointed ones. Primarily what he's talking about shows up in the Gospel of John in the Upper Room, chapters 14, 15, 16, right in there. Jesus talked a lot about the coming of the Holy Spirit. That is the anointing. Jesus even said it's better that I go away, because when I go away, I'm going to send My Spirit, and My Spirit will dwell in you, and My Spirit will lead you into all truth. So every person that has trusted Jesus as Savior automatically receives this anointing, which is the Holy Spirit. So the Holy One in that verse is Jesus, who sends His Spirit to guide us to truth.

One of the interesting things about Christian community is we are actually supernaturally connected in a way that is not possible for any other group of people, because what's true of each of us is we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us that supernaturally unites us together as the people of God. When he tells them **you** "do" **all know,** you have to remember this word **know**" is an

important word for John, because there were false teachers, antichrists, saying they were in the know. They've had this anointing. They've had this mystical revelation. That's what *gnostic* means. It means *to be in the know.* So what John is saying, "No, you have the anointing. You have the Spirit of God. You know what's true. You don't need that." So it goes on. In verse 21 he says:

> **I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.**

So John has to be clear. ***I'm not writing to you because I don't think you know the truth. You do know it.*** John is essentially saying, "I know you know it. I told you the truth." You remember this is how the letter opened. John walked with Jesus. John was with Jesus in the Upper Room. It's how he started his letter. "I've walked with Him. I've heard Him. I've touched Him. I've seen Him." And John is telling them, "I told you the truth. You're not lacking anything, and no lie is of the truth." Now that may seem like a rather obvious statement, but here's what he's saying. There is no one in the room this morning that has the capacity to know every lie of the culture. We couldn't even come close to that. They're coming faster than we could keep up. What John is saying is there's no need to learn the lies. What you need to learn is the truth. And as long as you know the truth, the truth exposes the lie. As long as you know the truth, you will recognize that which contradicts the truth, for there is no lie in the truth. That's what he's saying. Verse 22:

> **Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.** (Vs. 22-23)

So now we're getting specific. **Who is the liar?** What is the great lie that they're teaching? The answer: that Jesus is not the Christ. Christ, meaning the Anointed One, the Messiah. We as churches all over town may disagree on a variety of issues, simply because the Bible isn't as clear on some of these issues as we wish it was. We refer to these as secondary issues. But there is a core of primary truth that you have to believe or you're not a Christian church. And at the center of that is the truth about what we refer to as the person and work of Christ. If you're going to be a Christian church, you must get the Christ right, or you're not a Christian church. There's no wiggle room on this one. So in the first century, the religious Jews had their own view that Jesus was not the Christ, was not their Messiah. The Greeks had a different perspective but still ended up with their belief that Jesus is not the Christ. It's not necessary for us to go into all that this morning. What is more profitable is to think about, "What would that be for us today?"

I think primarily the teaching related to the counterfeit Christ comes to us through the internet and through social media. It is full of misinformation about Jesus. There's many on the internet that would identify themselves as Christian, but they present a view of Jesus that does not line up with the truth of history or the Word of God. It's a Jesus of their own making. It's a Jesus made in their own image. It's a Jesus they're comfortable with. It's a Jesus that makes no demands of them. It's a Jesus that's okay with their lifestyle. But it's a counterfeit Jesus. The Jesus of the Bible is the Jesus of history. He was a real man that walked on this earth…God and man together. John has told us, "I knew Him. I walked with Him. He taught me." He heard Him directly. He saw Him directly. He touched the resurrected Jesus. And the record of who Jesus is and what He has done is recorded in the pages of the Bible.

The Bible Engagement Center has done volumes of research on this stuff, and one of their conclusions that I find rather frightening, is that roughly as many as 80% of those who identify themselves as Christians are more likely to believe their own personal…personal notion of the truth than what is revealed in the pages of the Bible. In other words, there's a high likelihood of buying into a counterfeit Christ. What John says is, "If you get the Son wrong, you don't get the Father. In order to get to the Father, you have to get the Son right." Now I understand this is a very unpopular teaching today. We want to believe that all religions are equally valid, that all roads eventually lead to God. But Jesus specifically said that's not true. The only way to the Father is through the Son. That's what Jesus said. John is affirming that. If you don't get the Son right, you don't get the Father. But if you confess the Son, then you get the Father. What's at stake here? Verse 25:

> **This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.**

So we've talked quite a few times in our John study about this concept of **eternal life.** It's not simply a duration of life, but a quality of life…the life that has defined God forever…the life that Jesus came to unveil and to manifest…the life we were literally created for. This is what my soul longs for. It will never be satisfied with anything less than this life. But in order to experience this life, you have to get Jesus right. That's what he's saying. Verse 26:

> **These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.**

So it's really important to understand what John just said there. All of us begin our spiritual journey as spiritual children. We don't know much. We start a journey to learn and to grow and to understand. All of us have had to take that journey. That means there's lots of things when we come to Christ, we don't know; we don't understand. We probably believe things that aren't true, and over time, more and more we come to an understanding of the truth. That's not what John is talking about. That's not being an antichrist. What John is talking about are those who intentionally are seeking to deceive others away from the Christ. Verse 27:

> **As for you, the anointing which you received** (*That's the Holy Spirit.*) **from Him abides in you** (*…lives in you*)**, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.**

So John really likes this word **abide**. He's used it multiple times. Abide means like *to remain in.* It means *to take up residence in.* It means *to live there*. So it's great language that the truth must take up residency in us. It lives in us. It remains in us. The anointing—the very Spirit of God that comes from Jesus—is there to lead us to truth, to guide us, to help us understand what's true. He too, abides in us. But what does John mean when he says, **you have no need of anyone to teach you?** Like many phrases in the Bible, it has to be understood in its context, because John started the letter telling us he taught them. He saw Jesus; he heard Jesus; he learned from Jesus; he touched Jesus. That's the whole point. He is teaching them what Jesus taught him. The whole point of the letter is he's teaching them. The whole New Testament is about the importance of being taught. It's called discipleship, to understand and believe the truth. So what's being said here is that these people don't lack what they need to know, to know the truth. The false teachers, the antichrists,

were saying "You don't know enough. We have this mystical information. We have special knowledge. We have the light you need to know, in order to experience more." What John is saying is, "I know you know. I taught you; just abide in that truth. Live in that truth. You also have the Spirit of God to guide you in that truth. You don't need anything from them." That's what he's saying. He wraps up this chapter, verses, 28 and 29:

> **Now, little children,** (N*ow we're back to the Greek word teknon, all of us born of God*) **abide in Him,** (*live, remain in Him*)**, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.**

So here's what John is saying. He's referring to the return of Jesus. We're all waiting for the return of Jesus. He's talked to us all throughout about these antichrists, these false teachers. They don't live in the Light because the Light exposes their rats, and they don't like having their rats exposed, so they slink back into the darkness where they can hide their rats. We learn that they say, "We have no sin; we haven't done anything wrong." They don't see any rats, because they live in the darkness. But one day, the One who is coming is the Light, and the Light will shine into the darkness, and their rats will be exposed, and they will pull away in shame because of their sin. But we as believers, we will abide in Him. We remain in Him and do not need to shrink away. We can look forward to that day with **confidence**. The Greek word translated **confidence** is a really strong word. Most translators would say we don't have an English equivalent that's strong enough. So it's the idea that *we should not be afraid of that day*. *We have every reason to be confident*. We walk in the Light. We confess our sins. Our sins are forgiven. The truth abides in us. The Spirit of God abides in us. He has taken up residence in us. We understand that He's righteous. We seek to walk in His righteousness. And when He appears, it will be a glorious return, because we have walked in the Light, because we abide in the truth, because the Spirit of truth abides in us. What is necessary to experience authentic biblical Christian community? Light…love…truth!!!

I want to close by asking you two simple questions. You've heard from us recently that we are encouraging everyone to think about taking intentional steps this year to grow in your relationship with Jesus. So, I have two questions. What are you intentionally doing this year to grow in your understanding of the truth? Lincoln Berean offers a lot of resources, but none of the resources do you any good if you don't get involved. So what specifically are you doing to grow in understanding of the truth? Second, what specifically are you doing to intentionally grow in your commitment to Christian community? Lone rangers are easy to deceive. So, what are you specifically doing to grow in your commitment to Christian community? Light…love…truth!!!

> *Our Father, we're thankful this morning that we walk in the Light. As those who walk in the Light, we love one another, and you have given us Your truth, Your truth that lives in us, that abides in us. You've given us your Spirit to guide us and teach us the truth. Lord, may we faithfully walk in the Light together as Your people. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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FALL 2025 // WEEK 5

Life Group Questions

1 John – Face to Face // October 4-5, 2025

Living in the Last Hour // 1 John 2:18-29

Introduction

Over the past weeks, we've been talking about authentic community. We learned that the essence of community is entering into the life that has defined God forever—to dance with God. But to dance with God—to dance with Jesus—you must dance in the light. If we're going to dance with Jesus, then He requires that we love like Jesus, so we have to reorient our lives to think of others as more important than ourselves—to give ourselves away. So, the necessary ingredients for community are light, love, and this week we're going to talk about truth.

Study Questions *(to complete on your own)*

1) Read 1 John 2:18-29 in a couple different translations of Scripture. What does this passage teach us about God? Note your observations.

2) Give your best definitions of antichrist, anointing, and abide, as described by the text and/or by Pastor Clark in his message.

   Antichrist:

   Anointing:

   Abide:

3) In two or three sentences, summarize the main points of 1 John 2:18-29.

Discussion Questions *(with your group)*

1) In order to experience authentic Christian community, there are three necessary ingredients: light, love and truth. We explore the ingredient of truth in our passage this week, but let's review light and love. **Why are light and love necessary to experience authentic community?**

How is the operating system of the world (see 1 John 2:15-17) a barrier to genuine community?

2) **What do you think John means by "it is the last hour" (v.18)? Compare Hebrews 1:1-2 and 2 Timothy 3:1-9 for further clarification.**

3) **What does John mean by "antichrist", and how can there be many "antichrists" coming?**

What are some markers of an antichrist? How can we identify them? Compare with Matthew 7:15-23.

What are some types of "antichrists" that are prevalent today? With whom are they popular and what makes them attractive?

4) John heavily emphasizes the theme of truth in contrast to deception (counterfeit truth), but John also reminds us of the source of truth that we can trust. **What does John mean by "you have an anointing"? What do we have?**

Compare John's words in verses 20-27 with his other writings about the source of truth in his gospel writings. Below are some verses from John's gospel that point to our source of truth. Read them aloud with your Life Group as time allows. **What role does the Holy Spirit play in our lives, and what do the verses say about your "anointing"?**

John 8:44
John 14:6
John 15:26
John 16:13
John 17:17
John 18:37

Based on the verses listed above, what steps can we take to better arm ourselves with truth and guard against believing the lies of counterfeit truth?

5) As a group, you have now discussed the component of truth. We know the source of truth, and we know how to identify a counterfeit version of truth. **Why is truth necessary to experience authentic community?**

How do the three necessary ingredients of authentic community (light, love and truth) work together in the life of a believer and in your community?

Which ingredient is most challenging for you to live out consistently and why?

Remembering our collective vision for this year of "Intentional: Grow + Multiply", how might your Life Group help you grow in that area this session?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so that we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit— we invite you to strengthen your souls with exercises that challenge and stretch you in new ways. Choose one and commit to repeating it until you gain strength in that area.

1) **Scripture Reading: to listen and soak in the Word as an experience of the words washing over you.** Read or listen to the entire letter of 1 John at least twice/week. As you take it in, resist the impulse to study and parse the details. The point is not to gain "head knowledge" but a stirring in the heart as the Holy Spirit brings the Word to life in you.

2) **Memorization: to internalize God's Word.** A key passage for this series is ***1 John 4:7-14***. Commit to memorize it yourself and encourage others in your group to do it with you.

3) **Walk & Pray: to actively engage with the scripture passage.** Write out the passage of the sermon each week on a note card and take it with you on a daily walk.

4) **Journal Reflection: to practice remembering what God has done.** Make time in your schedule to put down in writing the feelings and thoughts that are stirring as you interact with the Word of God.

Self-control Exercise: to help you come to stillness from a busy or hurried pace of life. Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or other people's needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes is up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

Prayer

Praying together in a group is different than praying alone with God. It's a conversation that can help you grow closer to each other as you are in God's presence. One way to pray follows this often-used pattern in scripture – acknowledge who God is, recognize the need we have for Him, and ask to partner with Him on behalf of others. When possible, use the passage of scripture from this week's sermon as your starting point, then form a prayer that follows this pattern:

God, our Father, this week we learned that you are _____ and _____ .

As I looked into your Word, I understood how I need you to _____. Help me to be faithful to _____ in the week ahead.

Other people are on my heart, and I trust that you have put them there for a reason. I ask for your will to be accomplished in their life as they _____. Help me to know how to respond well to the needs of _____, even as my first step is in praying for them right now.

Each group engages in prayer differently. Some groups go around and allow anyone to pray that desires to do so. Other groups have several people pray or maybe 1 person closes the group in prayer. Still other groups split into smaller groups of 2-3 people and those people pray for each other. How you choose to engage in prayer is dependent on your group and your choice to ENGAGE! We learn to pray by praying and by listening and praying with others!