



**Letters of Love**  
**#7 antichrists (Pentecost Sunday)**  
**May 20, 2018**  
**Courage Church, Detroit, MI**  
**scriptures:** 1 John 2:18-27, 1 John 4:3, John 16:7-11, Revelation 13:17, John 14:26, John 14:18

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of everyone hurt and killed in the school shooting in Santa Fe on Friday. There really are no words that could be said about this to possibly do any justice... but I do want to say this to you guys... I've been saying this a lot when this happens...

But people matter. Lives matter... Kids matter.

And just because something happens often, doesn't mean that it isn't the most awful thing in the entire world, EVERY SINGLE TIME IT HAPPENS. We must FIGHT against the subtle urge to grow numb to bad news, just because we see it all the time.

Our world needs Jesus. And our world needs Jesus people to rise up in empathy and mercy and justice and compassion and do whatever we can to be a part of the solution...

My heart has been just absolutely broken for all of those kids. I know the world is full of bad news... you never have to look far to find it... but I INTENTIONALLY let myself get sucked into the news when it comes to things like this, because I WANT TO READ THE STORIES...

I want to never forget that behind every statistic is a person with a story, just like my story... and as often as it happens, I am fighting in my own life to never let a day come when I hear news like this, and I not feel it deep in my heart and soul.

Please pray. Prayer matters. Don't ever let anyone convince you that prayer won't change anything... WE BELIEVE IN A GOD WHO TELLS US

THAT PRAYER DOES CHANGE THINGS... and prayer is something that we can ALL DO.

but it is important to look around, to join the conversations... to listen... Figure out if there is more you can do and what that may look like... but let yourself cry sometimes. That may sound like strange advice, but I mean it. Cry as if those are our kids... Because those are our kids.

and thirdly... Today is Pentecost Sunday.

and today we won't get into all of the history of Pentecost, we actually did that a few weeks ago in a sermon entitled "Pentecost" that you can go and look back on if you are curious, but for today's purposes we will just pick up on what Pentecost meant in the New Testament.

In Acts two, a bunch of followers of Jesus were all gathered to celebrate Pentecost together, it was a Jewish Holiday that people would travel to from all over the place to Jerusalem for...

So they were all there in this room, when The Holy Spirit whom Jesus had promised to send fell on all of them while they were gathered together.

The Spirit fell on them, and all of these amazing things started happening, they began speaking in other languages and the people who were there with them from other countries actually knew what it was that they were saying... hearing their own native tongues being spoken by people who had never learned that language.

It was an amazing sign for the whole world of just how much God loves them... that he would speak to them in their own language just to tell them.

and really, in a lot of ways it was the birth of the church. It was the Holy Spirit falling on the Church and empowering them which gave them the confidence needed to, really, go and change the world.

So that is a cliff notes version of Pentecost... it is the moment in history where God made the Holy Spirit available to EVERYONE.

and though the message today is not ABOUT Pentecost, the moment that took place during that first Pentecost after Jesus's ascension plays a significant role in the difficult passage that we are about to explore.

So lets all open our Bibles together to 1 John 2:18-27.

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now **many antichrists have come**. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have **continued** with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but **he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?** This is **the antichrist**, he who **denies the Father and the Son**. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and **you have no need that anyone should teach you**. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

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when I say the word “antichrist” - what do you think? what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

For many of you, you think: end times...

you think: end of the world... You think “everything is burning”

if you are at least somewhat familiar with the Bible, you may think: the Book of Revelation. The Apocalyptic book about “the end of the world.”

Depending on how deeply rooted in church you have been all your life, you may say something like “a world leader who will unite the people and then ultimately set out to destroy the world.” something along those lines...

and when you read the book of Revelation, there certainly is a case to be made for someone like that who is to come... often referred to as “the beast” -

but this particular word, which is the Greek word “*antichristos*,” - believe it or not, only shows up five times (in four verses) in the entire Bible, and the passage we just read is THE VERY FIRST TIME in the Bible we read about antichrist, AND in fact that passage we read mentions it THREE TIMES meaning that 60% of the times in the Bible that antichrist is mentioned, we just read!

... here are the four places you find the word “antichrist” in the Bible:

- 1 John 2:18 (twice in this verse)
- 1 John 2:22 (we read both of those today)
- 1 John 4:3
- 2 John 1:7

NOWHERE in the book of Revelation does the word “antichrist” appear. In fact, the ONLY place you get the word is in John’s first and second letters.

When you read Revelation, you get a description of many things that ARE ANTI-CHRIST... you get some pretty shady characters including one called “The Beast” who is likely the one that we often associate as being “the *antichrist*” - but when John uses this term in his letter, he doesn’t so much imply that it is one person who is going to take over the entire world system, as much as a characteristic that several people will have, who are deceivers...

look closely at verse 18:

as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now **many antichrists have come.**

As you have heard... antichrist (singular) is coming... but wait...

there are actually lots of them... many antichrists, and in fact, they have already entered the world.

in other words: there were then, and there are now, and there will remain UNTIL JESUS RETURNS... antichrists among us.

And I love the fact that the Bible translators almost always translate the word as a lower case word... which actually shows us... This is NOT a person. We talked a few weeks ago about how in the Old Testament, we read several times throughout about something called "The Branch" - which you would never think that the word "Branch" would be capitalized yet the translators DID capitalize it... because "the Branch" is a term referring to the Messiah, who we later find out is Jesus...

so something that you would never think would be treated like a person, A BRANCH gets a capital B... but something that the majority of the world fears is this scary person who is coming, the Bible doesn't think is even significant enough to capitalize it...

Because this word is NOT referring specifically (or at least exclusively) to one leader who will deceive the whole world... it is referring to something else.

So if the antichrist is not a specific person, what is it?

We will do a whole message on 1 John 4:1-6 in a few weeks, but lets turn ahead there for a moment, John says this in 1 John 4:3 -

"every spirit that does not confess Jesus is **not** from God. This is the **spirit of the antichrist**, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already."

According to John, (who is the only person who uses the word "antichrist") - THE ANTICHRIST is a *spirit*. And in fact, a very specific spirit.

the Greek word is "*antichristos*" which means: "instead of Christ" or "one who seeks the place of Christ"

It is a spirit which aims to show us that Jesus is NOT actually God...

that you can have something else OTHER than Jesus and you will be just fine...

most of us have to fight this spirit in our own lives, when we live convinced that there are things that we can do to get to God... there are actions we can take... some of us fight this spirit in our own lives, with the pride that we have... when we lift ourselves up for what we have accomplished, and for what WE DO... INSTEAD OF CHRIST.

Remember verse 16 from two weeks ago:

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and pride of life—is **not** from the Father but **is** from the world.

Its all one piece... John goes from thought to thought to thought. You want to see how the enemy is working in your life? Begin by looking there... is there lust? is there greed? is there pride? What are the things in your life that you have chosen INSTEAD OF CHRIST.

its so easy to read about things like antichrist... and think “Future...” think... “Revelation” - think... THAT DOESN'T APPLY TO ME, right now... but in a few minutes I will try and show you why I believe that if you can't rule over the antichrists in your own life right now, you should have no reason to believe that it will be any different later if you are around to face the one that so many have dubbed “the antichrist”

We absolutely must figure out what this means for us, today... because not only will it help us live better, fuller lives now... but it will also show us a lot about the future.

In the same way that we say salvation is so much more than just going to Heaven when you die... you must realize that if we view the antichrist, and the devil, and all of the evil things that we read about in the Bible only as something that IS COMING... we will miss the fact that John says IT IS IN THE WORLD ALREADY. And that matters...

because IF YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE TO SOMETHING, INSTEAD OF CHRIST... you will waste your life. We spent the last two weeks on that concept. There are things that are eternal... and there are things that will fade. And we get to choose what we dedicate our time, energy, attention

and money on... a lot of people spend their whole lives building an empire of self, that will all be gone one day anyway... instead of investing in the things that last forever. The eternal things...

what is that?

It is something instead of Christ. "*antichristos*"

John says: this is here NOW.

and that had enormous implications in the ancient world, and it has enormous implications for us today, in our modern world.

In John's day, the primary false teaching that had made its way into the church was the concept of Gnosticism... we will teach more on what they believed when we get to 1 John 4, but the big idea in a sentence is this: They believed that Jesus Christ did not actually come in the flesh. That He was God, but He only had the appearance of "man." Meaning the "man" or the "person" of Jesus was not actually God.

and there are a lot of reasons that this is a big deal... but this is what we want to focus on today... not so much on what their teaching was... as much as the fact that there was a teaching in the church that was different from the Gospel of Jesus Christ...

The Gospel is that you and I have sinned... that we deserve to die for those sins.... because we aren't who we should be... we often give in to things like pride and greed and lust...

but because God loved us SO MUCH, He sent His ONLY SON into the world to live a FULLY HUMAN LIFE... taking on flesh and blood just like you and I have, yet He remained God the entire time...

and Jesus lived a perfect life, the one thing that you and I never could possibly do and in fact have already failed at... but then He was willing to go to a cross and DIE in our place for OUR SINS.

and the Gospel says that IF YOU BELIEVE THAT... YOU WILL BE SAVED.

If you believe that you need Jesus, and accept what Jesus did FOR YOU... salvation is yours.

But what was going on in the church was there were these “antichrists” that were essentially undermining that idea. They were saying “God would never die for you. Jesus as a person may be willing to die, but God would never die.”

they are giving us something “instead of Christ...” an idea that the Gospel is not what it says it is.

And so when John writes, he explains how this can't be tolerated, and he actually tells us that these people who were spreading this had to either come back to the Gospel, or they had to leave. and it is very clear that a lot of them left.

He said “they went out from us... but they were not of us.” -

The church was NOT healthy, because there were lots of people but they were lots of people who not only believed the wrong things, but were teaching the wrong things, and John was saying: the only way to move forward is to take a step backward...” we have to get the foundation right, and when the foundation is right, then we can move forward together in health.

It kind of blows that idea out of water that “healthy things grow” - yes, when things are healthy, in time they will grow... but unhealthy things grow too... for example, cancer.

Cancer grows very quickly. And it is very destructive...

and if you don't catch it early, the problem gets more and more difficult to solve.

Think about our world!

Have you noticed how quickly our world has changed in the last few years? Have you seen how many people have given up on the church, and even become vocal enemies of it? Have you seen how many *ideas*, even



IN the modern church have been so anti-Jesus and yet they make people feel good about themselves and so they spread extremely quickly?

antichrists are in the world already.

I watched this brief video about the school shooting on Friday... they were interviewing one of the survivors... one of the students and this is what she said... and this should absolutely break your heart and paint such a clear picture of our world...

The interviewer asked her "is there a part of you that thought "this isn't real... this couldn't happen in my school"

she said: "no... there wasn't. Its been happening everywhere and I always kind of felt like eventually it was going to happen here too."

What have we (?)... as world... as a society chosen... what path... what have we clung to, INSTEAD OF CHRIST (?)...

that a teenage girl would say that she goes to school every day expecting that one day someone is going to show up in what should be a safe space... and start killing all her friends.

Because that statement is a statement about the whole world, and the many parts of our world in which we have had an opportunity to make Jesus the center, but we have chosen something else INSTEAD.

WE NEED JESUS IN OUR WORLD.

and anything that tells you otherwise, IS AN antichrist.

Anything that causes you to live your life as if you don't need Jesus, IS AN ANTICHRIST.

Just for instance... politics. I believe there is a place for politics and I believe the church can and often times SHOULD have a role in it, but when the church treats politics like it is the thing that is going to save them, even though they may say "Jesus is our Hope" - it is pretty obvious from the way they speak and the way they live their life that ultimately its not Jesus who they trust to bring about real change in our world at all.

You say Jesus is your Savior... but you are living like it will be a political system that will bring you the justice you think you are owed, or that it will be a political system that gives you the goods that you think that you need or the rights you think that you deserve.

its "*antichristos*"

and if you watch closely you will notice that the world was not changed overnight. It was changed very subtly... it was like a cancer that wasn't caught... and now the church is freaking out because it doesn't know what to do with the fact that its voice is having a harder and harder time cutting through our noisy world.

But I will tell you what we can do... WE CAN TRUST JESUS. We can make sure that we are always choosing Jesus, and never choosing anything INSTEAD OF JESUS.

I don't want to spend a long time on end times stuff, but I do want to share this one thing with you... because I want you to understand what the BIG PICTURE IS, in the way that the antichrist is going after us... he is using the same tactics now that he will use in the end.

If you read Revelation, you will see that even the Beast who clearly has the Spirit of the antichrist, controls the money. (Revelation 13:17) - it says that THIS is how they will get so many people to give in to it... nobody will be able to buy or sell ANYTHING, unless they get the mark. They somehow, subtly... slowly... got the world to a place where it completely depended on them.

They somehow got the world locked into a system in which you can not get the things that you need for yourself and for your family, WITHOUT him.

See... we don't always catch that we have cancer, until it is too late... but we know right away when there is a car accident... we right away notice the things that bring instant change...

and because that is human nature, we expect THAT BIG MOMENT... and because of that, our fear tells us that the end times will happen like a gun to our head... and its abundantly clear that that is a possibility for some.

but the Bible tells us the thing that will really get people will be more like this... we will say "Jesus is Lord!" and they will respond: Jesus? Is Jesus going to feed your kids? No! But here is what will... here is something, instead of Christ, that will take care of you.

John tells us what the antichrists were in his day...

But what are they in ours? what are they in your life? what are the things that you choose, instead of Christ.

think about it... if today you are trusting in the government... or today you are trusting in even yourself and in the way that you are able to provide... or today in your own life you have convinced yourself that you get to set your own moral code, and that what is true for you IS YOUR TRUTH... what that is saying is that you are god of your life. You control your destiny. You pay the bills, you are the one who provides...

when the time comes when the only way to keep providing is to give in to the demands of something INSTEAD OF CHRIST... what would stop you from giving in to those demands? You have been doing it all along.

That is why I genuinely believe that Christians need to step out of the arena of "self preservation" - always trying to make sure we survive... and step into the arenas of mercy and justice and empathy... always trying to figure out how to BE THERE FOR OTHER PEOPLE WHEN THEIR BROKEN SYSTEM FAILS THEM... showing them one that will not.

We need to determine in our lives TODAY, that we TRUST JESUS.

Okay... but now HERE IS THE BIG IDEA. This is John's BIG MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH, and we will keep exploring this more as the weeks go by.

Verse 20 and 21, watch this:

But you have been **anointed** by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

John tells his church, there are antichrists... but antichrists can't touch the anointing...

Because something happened on the Day of Pentecost... the Holy Spirit filled the lives of everyone there... and He continued to fill the lives of all who sought Him from that day on, and He continues even today to fill our lives with Him when we seek Him!

Jesus in John 16 said that He had to go, so that the Holy Spirit could come... and He said that the Holy Spirit would convict us, showing us the parts of our lives that we need to do away with... the parts that need to change... (John 16:7-11) - the parts of our lives that we are choosing things **INSTEAD OF CHRIST**.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance the things that Jesus taught us (John 14:26)

and the Holy Spirit will equip us...

Jesus says "I am leaving... **BUT I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS ORPHANS...**" (John 14:18)

Jesus knew that the world is messy... that antichrists were coming... **AND HE WOULDN'T DARE LEAVE US TO FACE IT ALONE!**

and if that's not enough for you, look down again in 1 John 2 at verse 24:

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

You have in you, **RIGHT NOW...** what you need to understand the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, Christ and the antichrist.

now verses 26, 27 and 28:

“I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and **you have no need that anyone should teach you**. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.”

I write you, because people are trying to deceive you... BUT YOU HAVE WHAT?

the anointing...

a couple lines later... HIS ANOINTING TEACHES YOU...

now, when it says “you have no need that anyone should teach you” - its not saying that we don’t need any teachers at all, or that we have nothing left to learn... but what it is saying is this:

THE GOSPEL IS SIMPLE.

And just because I may be able to get up here and dissect it a bit for you and hopefully show you some ways that this applies to your life even now that maybe you hadn’t seen before... Some people have masters degrees, even doctorates in this stuff... and thats amazing and wonderful but it DOESN’T CHANGE THE GOSPEL.

you are completely capable of grasping the Gospel... you are completely capable of grasping the love of Jesus... without me. And without a masters degree in Bible... without any of the things that the world thinks gives you credibility.

But the big word here is ANOINTING. Anointing matters more than education. I dare say it matters more than even reality. Because anointing is the one thing in which the Spirit can break in through an impossible situation, and he can bring possibilities out of it.

Anointing is WHY we do NOT diminish prayer in tragic moments when we feel powerless... thinking its some cheap excuse to not take any action. Anointing will lead us to know what action to take.

and here in this passage we read today, the word shows up twice in verse 27 and once in verse 20... which means that IN TODAY'S PASSAGE, for every time we read about the antichrist, WE ALSO READ ABOUT THE ANOINTING.

Because we aren't going to be able to face a world that every day sets itself more and more and more in opposition to the message of the Gospel... trying to sell us a bill of goods that is supposed to fill us INSTEAD OF JESUS...

we aren't going to be able to resist that, without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. But here is the amazing thing... John makes it so clear... YOU HAVE THE ANOINTING.

John says it like this in 1 John 4:4 -

GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN ME, THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD.

Pentecost changes everything. In a broken world with lots of things that seek to put themselves IN THE PLACE OF CHRIST... that seek our heart INSTEAD OF CHRIST...

we have the Spirit of the living God living and breathing in us helping us to pave the path forward... and if we keep abiding in Him... when we encounter an antichrist...

we will know.

and we will overcome.

Because greater is He who is in me, than he that is in the world.