

Introduction

- Similar context to last week
 - church in Asia Minor
 - late first century
 - from "the elder", almost certainly John the apostle
 - but addressed to an individual - Gaius - who was probably in leadership in the church
 - touching on issues of truth and hospitality to visiting preachers or missionaries, so not very dissimilar to 2 John
- One of the **striking differences** is that this comes over as a **more particular and personal letter**:
 - as well as **Gaius**, to whom the letter is addressed, two other individuals are mentioned (**Diotrephes and Demetrius**)

Gaius

(1) The elder, To the beloved (my dear friend) Gaius, whom I love in the truth. (2) Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. (3) It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. (4) I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. (5) Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. (6) They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. (7) It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. (8) We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.

- Gaius was perhaps the most common name in the Roman Empire at the time!!
 - so efforts to identify with one of the other Gaius' mentioned in the NT are probably futile! (**Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4; 1 Cor 1:14; Romans 16:23**)
- Quibble on the translation offered by the NIV a wee bit in v.1:
 - "the beloved" rather than "my dear friend"
 - suggestive of this leader being **respected and beloved by the wider Christian community**, and not just a personal buddy of John's
- A person who is being commended and encouraged for his spiritual state
 - note implicit assumption of growth... "all may go well with you" - word used is suggestive of movement, not of something stationary
 - **walking in the truth thing again** - phrase from last week - applying what we believe to what we do; integration of faith & life
 - implication of that is that it really matters that we think through what we believe, since it will shape how we act!
 - and how we act will reveal how we really think/believe!

Examples

- our belief should make us value people incredibly highly; creation and redemption place God's mark of value on everyone!
- *but if we treat people carelessly, don't listen to what they are saying, don't try to understand them, don't give them the time of day, lose our temper at them, become impatient.... then the reality of our belief shows through*

Hospitality & Support

- Particular thing Gaius is commended for is his hospitality
 - remember last week the challenge to withdraw hospitality to those who were not preaching the truth?
 - here is the counter-point to that, the praise for someone who is opening their home, sharing of their resources, putting up with the inconvenience and sacrifice of having other people in their home

- brothers, appear to be missionaries or visiting preachers, working for "the sake of the Name" (v.7), but strangers to Gaius
- so he's taking folk he doesn't know well and he's loving them
- the impression is of generosity and genuine care, not mere token hospitality!
- probably also hints here to a support that goes beyond room and board, but perhaps help for their onward task - donation to help them spread the gospel? (v.6)
- In other words, here is Gaius "walking in the truth":
 - believes sharing the gospel is important, loving his neighbour...
 - so he opens his home and his wallet - with generosity and care
- We should be hospitable too:
 - there is power here, in welcoming others and supporting them;
 - food for international students... but also those closer to home?
 - (cultural differences we came across in Motherwell....?)
- These first few verses of 3 John, then, contain commendation - a personal one, with specific reference to one characteristic action of Gaius (his hospitality)
 - may we those who others - and the Lord - can commend!

Diotrephes

(9) I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. (10) So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

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- Real contrast with the next person we meet!
 - loving self, rather than others
 - refusing to welcome the travelling evangelists
 - refusing to let others help either!
 - Yet he and Gaius were almost certainly in the same congregation/church fellowship!
 - Diotrephes had rejected some (now lost) previous letter from John, and rejected his (otherwise widely accepted) authority!
 - setting self up as an authority - see the stopping others giving hospitality (v.10)
 - No real evidence that the difference was theological, arising out of bad theology
 - rather personal ambition, selfish interest seems to be the root cause of the problem
 - the problem was Diotrephes sin! He didn't share God's perspective that in all things Christ should have pre-eminence (Col 1:18)
 - *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy (Col 1:18)*
 - (arguments about the possible church situation, who were valid leaders, whether this was in the context of transition between apostolic leadership to bishops that was occurring around this time)
 - hadn't heeded Jesus' warnings against the invidious danger of the desire to rule
 - eg Mark 10:42-45 "(43) Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant..."
 - Verse 10 contemplates public rebuke
 - situation is clearly deteriorating - Diotrephes is now now "gossiping", speaking against "us" with malicious words;
 - he's misrepresenting John's position - imagine him saying something like "John says we should welcome everyone, anyone, into our homes till they eat all we have..."
 - moreover he didn't honour whose purpose was to bring glory to Christ's name, rather he was concerned with his own name, his own reputation
 - He thought himself better and so he wouldn't listen to John and came to reject Christ's followers

- May we be those who take care not to follow in his footsteps!

Demetrius

(11) Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. (12) Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone - and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

- Finish with another good example, thankfully!
- There is a brief word of good counsel to Gaius again, before a commendation of Demetrius
 - "even by the truth itself" probably refers to the testimony of his own integrity, the truthfulness of the way he lives, how when you get to know him the commendations turn out to have been true!
 - coupled with the instruction to imitate that which is good, there is a hint towards the value of having those we know to be trustworthy whose example we can imitate... as baby-Christians, as young Christians, as older Christians...

Conclusion

(13) I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. (14) I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.

- Again, both preference for face-to-face, and possible security concerns
- Peace, real peace, comes from knowing Christ
- Note finally the personal nature - friends here, friends there - by name!
- God cares for individuals, he loves us, and he wants our lives to be filled with the overflow of his love:
 - a walking in the truth that shapes the way we live
 - a warm hearted hospitality
 - an avoidance of selfishness and ambition
 - a desire to imitate that which is truly good