

Sermon Series: The Call for Attentiveness
“Purpose and Pathway”
Sunday, January 22, 2023
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To accomplish something important in life, one must be attentive. E.g, I was reminded about this when years ago the family and I were driving a lot through the U.S. on summer vacation, and we went about 400 miles on many days on end. We had stopped and visited the Mennonites in Pennsylvania, and we had lunch with them, and then we hit road. Unfortunately, we ran into a lot of traffic on the interstate, and it was stop-and-go traffic for a while. After all the previous driving, and after a good lunch, I was starting to get sleepy, and I actually dozed off behind the wheel, with the result that I hit a car— more like tapped a car— in front of me. Fortunately no one and no thing was hurt, but from what I remember Elena insisted on driving at that point! Attentiveness is certainly important in driving, as well as in many other areas of life— like in the classroom in school, while we are doing our job at work, cutting the grass at home, and so on. And attentiveness is extremely important for our faith, as Jude makes clear.

READ Jude 1-4 (pp. 243-244)

Vv 1-2. READ. “Who is Jude? To whom is he writing and when? Cf. Matthew 13:55; John 7:1-5; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5.” Surprisingly, in modern biblical scholarship there is a strong consensus that the Letter of Jude claims to be written by Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, who is mentioned in Matthew 13:55 along with James, Joseph, and Simon. It is mentioned in John 7:1-5 that Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him, but by Acts 1:14 Mary and Jesus’ brothers were in the upper room with the disciples in prayer after the crucifixion and resurrection. It is also of interest that in 1 Corinthians 9:5 Paul mentions those traveling missionaries in the early church who travel with their wives, and Paul mentions the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas (Peter). I will not get into the Roman Catholic Church’s reading of these brothers as cousins or relatives of Jesus, and thus preserving Mary’s virginity, because the much more natural reading of these texts is that they were actual half-brothers of Jesus, given birth by Mary. It seems clear that James, Jesus’ half-brother, was head of the church in Jerusalem and not a traveling missionary like Paul and Peter, so Jude could well have been among those meant by Paul. It is of interest to note that the name actually used in the original language is Judas, not Jude. But, as I understand it, the tradition of the English translation has translated it as Jude the brother of James in v 1 to distinguish him from Judas of James—i.e., Judas son of James—(Ἰούδαν Ἰακώβου) in the list of disciples in Luke 6:16. Where scholarly consensus stops is whether this is an accurate understanding the actual author of this letter. From what I have read, most New Testament scholars don’t think Jude wrote this, but rather it is written under his hand, i.e., pseudepigraphical (e.g., Lewis Donelson, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, p. 163). However, there is good evidence for the actual author to be the brother of James, the half-brother of Jesus, and I will mention three reasons. (1) The early church was in wide acceptance by the end of the second century AD to accept Jude as canonical, including Clement of

Alexandria and the Muratorion Canon. The only exception was the church in Syria, which did not accept it until the 6th century. In the third century Jude was rejected by some because of its reliance on Jewish literature outside the Bible, and we will discuss these writings in subsequent sermons. (2) This work does not seem to be addressing late first century AD Docetism, as in 1 John, or second century Gnosticism, but rather those who want to act in a lawless way, called antinomians. (3) If this letter was written by someone falsely using Jude's name but trying to get his authority, he would have found a better way to do it. He would have written in v 1, "Jude, brother of Jesus" or "Jude, brother of the Lord", but instead we have, "Jude . . . the brother of James". If Jude the half-brother of Jesus wrote this letter, and I believe he did, he identified more as "Jude, slave of Jesus Christ", as Paul does in Romans 1:1 and Philippians 1:1.

We can now address to whom Jude was writing and when, and we'll address the second one first. Jude has been dated anywhere from the 50s to 120 AD (Donelson, p. 164). But if Jude the half-brother of Jesus was the writer, then a date in the 50's is certainly possible. In Corinth Paul had to deal with antinomism, as in 1 Corinthians 5 where a man has his father's wife, and in the latter part of the first century AD in Revelation 2:20 we see that the church Thyatira dealt with licentiousness. New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 13) believes any date in the second half of the first century is possible, but believes the primitive theological character of the letter makes in the 50s AD likely. I agree. It is unclear to whom the original addressees were, but anywhere from Asia Minor to Palestine to Alexandria, Egypt are possible, but since the audience seems to be mainly Jewish Christian, I think Asia Minor or Palestine as most likely.

And, we read in vv 1-2 that the believers are kept, called, and beloved in Christ Jesus, all ideas used of Israel in the Old Testament.. Just as Jude, we are slaves of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, Paul uses this same word for "slave" in

Romans 1:1 and Philippians 1:1, as well as James using this word to describe himself to Jesus in James 1:1. I am reminded of Bob Dylan's famous song, "You Gotta Serve Somebody", where it can be the devil or the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody. It is interesting that I have not found an English translation to render this word as "slave", but "servant", but there is another word that could have been used had "servant" been meant— only the NASV has something different with "bond-servant". Jesus makes us free from the bondage of sin so we can be free to be His slaves— slaves to righteousness. E.g., I recall the way Beckett Cook, a podcaster, speaks of his former life in homosexuality, and how now he is celibate but feels free and peaceful in service to Christ.

Notice in v 1 what the believers are called, in the order that Jude, not the NRSV, actually gives: beloved, kept, and called. That is what believers are to God! E.g., in being beloved, I am reminded of the great basketball coach John Wooden who loved his wife dearly, and when she died, he used to write her notes and leave them on her side of the bed, so that there were a pile of letters. He cherished her, and in a similar way, God cherishes us. E.g., we are also kept, in a way where God protects us. Psalm 121 is a beautiful psalm which communicates that when one looks to the hills for his or her help, one finds God, who neither slumbers nor sleeps and who keeps us, who is like our shade at our right hand. I recall a friend of mine, Rev. Joe Connelly, who was driving home from Annual Conference last June on I-10 and a car came across his path and hit him directly, and at the last second he moved his car before impact, which sent him going about 30 feet off the interstate. He was able to walk away from this accident, by God's amazing grace, but he did re-injure his back in the accident and has needed surgeries to help him. But he can see how God protected him in what could have easily have been a fatal accident. Finally, we are also called. It is nice to have someone call you and me, especially if it is good news! E.g., I am reminded of

how we are called in service of Jesus, and Keith Green in the song “Asleep in the Light expresses it well in that the church often does not respond to the call God has on them: “Open up, open up/and give yourself away/you see the need, you hear the cries/so how can you delay?/God’s calling and you’re the one/but like Jonah you run/He’s told you to speak but you keep holding it in.”

As we go from here today, let us recall who we are in Christ. We are his slaves, beloved by Him, kept and protected by Him, and called into service for Him.