

Jude 1-2

At 9:40pm on April 14, 1912, *The Mesaba* sent a message to an enormous ship that was sailing through the Atlantic. This message, which was intended to serve as a warning, read: “[we] saw much heavy pack ice and [a] great number [of] large icebergs, [and] also field ice, weather good, clear.’”

The ship that received the warning message from the *Mesaba* was one of the first of its kind: it was a large vessel that would carry thousands of people across the Atlantic in never-before-experienced luxury. In hindsight, it is ironic that the ship that received this message from the *Mesaba* was named the *Titanic*, because the ship was thought to be unsinkable.

This warning message from the *Mesaba* went unheeded and at 11:40pm on April 14, 1912, *The Titanic* struck an iceberg which led to the tragic deaths of more than 1,500 people.

We don't know too many of the details which led to the captain and crew's decision-making process on that fateful Spring evening in 1912; we can only speculate as to why the captain and crew ignored the warning. But we do know that *The Mesaba* saw the impending danger and felt it necessary to warn the crew of the *Titanic*.

Today we begin our sermon series in *Jude* and what we find in this short letter is another type of warning intended to signal to a group of people an imminent danger, the danger of Apostasy.

In the upcoming weeks we will unravel *Jude's* warning to the early church, and what we will find is that we are also recipients of this warning from *Jude*. Like the captain and crew of the

Titanic, and like this epistle's recipients, we all have a choice: whether to heed the warning or to ignore it.

What we will discover in this letter is an exhortation for all believers to *stand firm*.

Please join me in the reading of Jude verses 1 & 2. This is God's timeless written word, kindly given to his people.

¹ Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,
To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for
Jesus Christ:

² May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. ¹

Let's ask God for his help this morning as we begin our voyage through Jude's letter. (Pray)

Today's sermon will be broken up into 3 parts. In each, we will pose the following questions: 1. Who was Jude? 2. Who was Jude writing to? And the third, and final question we will ask of these short two verses is: Who are we?

1. Who was Jude?

In our English translation of the Bible, this epistle, (an epistle was a form of communication in the world of the early church – think letter writing) begins with the name Jude. The name Jude is translated from the Greek word (Ἰούδας) which we translate Judas.

Judas, being a common name at the time this letter was written, might cause some of us to think of the same Judas who betrayed

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jud 1–2.

Jesus with a kiss, leading to Jesus' arrest in the garden of Gethsemane.

One commentator quipfully writes “On the very threshold of a book written about apostasy appears a name which brings to mind a traitor who stands forever as the worst apostate the world has ever known.”²

Our Jude is not the same Judas. We know this, in part, because the gospel of Matthew records Judas the betrayer's death in Matt. 27:5. Judas the betrayer could not have written this letter because he was dead at the time it would have been written. We also know this is not the same Judas because of what Jude writes about himself in verse 1.

Jude gives himself the titles of “Servant of Jesus Christ” and “brother of James.” Both titles reveal something about Jude which will help us understand who he is and why his audience should listen to his warning.

The first title Jude ascribes to himself is “Servant of Jesus Christ.” Servant, translated from the Greek word *duolos*, can also be rendered as slave. Jude considers himself a slave or servant to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is Jude's status as the Lord's slave important for us to consider? For one, in using this title, he is acknowledging the Lordship of Christ as his supreme authority.

When we hear the word slave or servant, we might think of the antebellum South as our reference point (the years prior to the

² S. Maxwell Coder, *Jude: The Acts of the Apostates*, p. 7.

American Civil War). This would be fair in some regards because slaves in any context are purchased as property, but something worth noting is that the relationship of a slave to their master during the time of Jude was slightly different.

A slave of someone with regal authority and with power would act as a representative on behalf of their master and would be given a certain level of respect and authority based upon who their master was. When Jude writes that he is a slave of Jesus Christ, he is appealing to the regal authority of his master.

Another title Jude gives himself in the greeting of this letter is his status as the *brother of James*.

Being the brother of James is an important detail that could be easily overlooked. The James that Jude refers to is the same James that led the church in Jerusalem and the same James that wrote the Book of James. This James is the brother of Jesus. So, what is implied in Jude's epistle is that he is also a brother to Jesus.

But Jude doesn't explicitly include this in his titles. What Jude *doesn't* write is "Jude, brother of Jesus..." Why does he exclude this title? The answer is two-fold: First, Jude could be recalling what the Lord himself said of his familial relationships in Mark 3:31-34:

³¹ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." ³³ And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my

brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” ³

Submitting to the Lord as master was a priority for the Apostles and the disciples, thus their letters would have communicated this theme of submission. In fact, Paul uses the same title of *duolos*, or servant of Jesus, to refer to himself in Romans 1:1.

Jude and Paul both consider the title of being a slave under the Lordship of Christ as their highest honor, and what Jude does is he elevates his status as servant of the Lord above his status as the Lord's brother.

Also, Jude knew that he would need to have some further credibility with his audience. This is important because those who would have heard this letter read aloud would want to know by whose authority did Jude compose this letter. We've discussed his appeal to Jesus' regal authority as Jude's master, but he also appeals to James for credibility, James being an apostle and the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

So, who was Jude? He was a man writing from a posture of humility; submitted to the lordship of Christ. Yet he also wrote as someone under the authority of Jesus, garnering further credibility as the brother of James.

This authority and credibility provided Jude with the necessary weight or influence to give his audience the exhortation in verse 3 to “contend for the faith” or to *stand firm*. Now the question is: who was Jude exhorting to stand firm?

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mk 3:31–35.

2. Who was Jude writing to?

Jude doesn't give us much to go on as to the specific location of this church, or whether one church or many churches are in mind when he wrote this letter. Also, we don't know if this was a group of believers who were primarily Jewish or Gentile.

It is probable that Jude knew there would be some Jewish believers in his audience because Jude, throughout this letter, references extra-canonical writings which would have been known and read by the Jewish believers.

While specifics are not given as to the ethnic background or geographic location of this people, we do know that these are a people who were witnessing others in their midst – people who called themselves Christians – live in a manner that was not Christ-like. Reading ahead in this epistle, specifically in verse 4, we see just how these ungodly people were living.

Verse 4 reads: **For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**⁴

The wonderful thing about Jude's exhortation in this letter is that it comes with encouragement. Jude doesn't just sound a warning without providing his audience with help. This encouragement is found in what Jude designates his audience as: they are the *called*, the *beloved*, & the *kept*.

Often, when we hear or read the word *called* it might conjure up the idea that God is sending out an invitation for someone to

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jud 4.

respond to. But this is not the type of call Jude is referring to⁵. By using the word *called* to address his audience, Jude is reminding the believers in this church, or group of churches, of their permanent identity as God's people.

You see, there was a very real danger lurking amid this community of believers. There were those who infiltrated the church and were contradicting the Apostle's teaching by the way they lived their lives.

Jude, as a skillful shepherd, was on high alert and Jude was aware of this activity. But his tactic in dealing with it wasn't just to point out the sinful lives of the wolves who had infiltrated this church. No, his main tactic is to remind this flock of sheep of who they truly were – God's *called* people. And wrapped up in being part of God's called people is the reality that they are *loved* by God.

If you are using the ESV translation, you will find in verse 1 that the translators use the phrase "beloved in God the Father." Thomas Schreiner, a bible scholar who wrote a wonderful commentary on Jude, points out that God's call and His love are always closely bound together in the Scriptures.

In our sermon series in Hosea not too long ago, we learned that God's love and call are a fixed reality. We saw in Hosea that his love is not just a fleeting, passing emotion like ours. Chap. 11 verse 1 of Hosea reads "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of

⁵ Grateful to Thomas Schreiner's commentary on Jude for his treatment of *call* (p. 429-430). *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude*. Vol. 37. Also, Robert Letham in his *Systematic Theology* (p. 649-658) provides a robust analysis of the distinction between universal call, gospel call, and effectual call that was helpful for my study for this sermon.

Egypt I called my son.”⁶ God’s love is inextricably wrapped up with his call of his people.

Some might be wondering “doesn’t God love everyone?” And to this I would reply with an emphatic “yes, he does!” John 3:16 tells us “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” But we must distinguish between his universal call, or his invitation to all to believe, and his effectual call to those who are given faith to believe and be saved.

By effectual call, what I mean to say is that God’s call is always supernatural and unilateral. Supernatural in the sense that God raises the spiritually dead to life by the agency of his Holy Spirit; regenerating those he calls to believe in the gospel. And by unilateral, I mean that God’s call is one-sided; He is the one who calls and saves.

This should leave us all with a sense of wonder because it reminds us that this is not a work that we can do. At one time, we were all deserving of God’s wrath. But God, in his lovingkindness, sent His Son to save poor, weak, and wretched sinners such ourselves. Only God can give rebirth and cause the hearts of rebels to turn to him.

Jude reminds those he writes to that they are not only called and loved, but they are also kept for Jesus Christ.

God doesn’t just love and call his people to be his own, but he promises to keep them and sustain them through the hardships of this life. These believers were witnessing others around them live in a way that didn’t line up with being a believer. There was a

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ho 11:1.

rebellious nature to those who were professing to be believers but who did not submit to the Apostle's teachings or to the Lord. Jude calls out the behavior of these wicked people, but they remained in their midst.

I could only imagine that some of these believers were wondering what would become of them. Would their faith also be shipwrecked? Jude recognized that what these wearied souls needed to hear was that they were called, loved, and kept by their God.

Again, Schreiner's commentary is helpful for us when he writes on this passage "The ultimate reason believers will persevere against the inroads of intruders is the grace of God by which he set his love upon believers, called them to be his people, and pledged to preserve them until the end."⁷

Jude perceptively encourages this group of believers by addressing the fundamental reality of who they are. At their very core, these are a people that are called, loved, and kept by God.

3. Who are we?

The third question I want us to consider of this text is "who are we?" It would have been easy for me to just throw ourselves into the same category as question #2 when we asked who Jude's audience was because we know that ultimately God is addressing us when we read any page of scripture.

What makes us different from Jude's immediate audience is probably most obvious: time separates us. There is little consensus among bible scholars as to when Jude wrote this letter,

⁷ *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude. Vol. 37. (p. 431)*

but a date between 60-70AD would not be out of the question⁸. A lot has happened in nearly 2000 years, hasn't it?

Much has changed within the realm of Christianity and in the world around us. Specifically, within Christendom, religious councils, such as the Nicean Council, have convened over time to establish creeds meant to preserve our faith and testimony as a Church. Suffice it to say, time differentiates us from Jude's immediate audience.

But what hasn't changed over the last two millennia are the hearts of men and women. Believers are still tempted to question who they are at their core and Jude's response is that the believer is called, loved, and kept by God for Jesus Christ.

Additionally, throughout the history of the Church there have been men and women who have professed to be Christian but have behaved and acted in a way that does not reflect a life that has been purchased by Jesus and brought under his authority. Apostasy and wickedness still abound in the Church today.

That is what makes Jude's warning in this letter relevant for us. There are still those who assume to be Christian yet deny Christ by the way they live.

There may even be some who are hearing this sermon preached right now who might have a false sense of security and assume that they are Christian. Perhaps you've grown up in church or have been attending for a month, year, or even years, and you have built your life on the premise that you are all good. But you continue to live however you want to live and do whatever it is you want to do.

⁸ Schreiner and Davids, among others, all posit that a date between 60-80AD is plausible.

You might hear the gospel preached and think that because you've said a prayer when you were younger that you no longer need to be reminded of the gospel. Or you've checked off the laundry list of "Christian-y" things that need to be done such as attend church every now and then, pray for the food at Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner, or you might even have some Christian friends and think this is enough!

Jude is saying it is not enough. What we will find as we continue to go through this letter is that those who are truly saved will live in a way that reflects their salvation and negatively stated, those who are not saved cannot live the Christian life. This doesn't mean that the saved don't continue to sin. We will sin.

What it does mean is that we will persevere despite our sin because God's Spirit is active in us and causes us to repent of our sin. The danger that faces you is that you no longer care about the way you live, and you have no desire to live a repentant life, submitted to Jesus.

But the good news is if you've been truly called, you will be kept. If you think that your life doesn't align with what God wants for you right now, you are in a good place because that means the Spirit is doing something in you and it is not too late to turn to him.

It is an act of grace that he would show you where you are falling short. You can experience the fruit of what it means to be called, loved, and kept. Turn to Jesus, reach out to a Christian family member, or friend and ask for prayer.

If you are here and you are a committed believer, Jude's warning should not cause you to fear. There will be those who seem to be

standing firm for a short while who will fall away, and this is hard for us. It should grieve us.

I'm sure if we polled those who've been serving the Lord for decades, they would testify to knowing people who have walked away from the Lord, people who at one time seemed truly genuine in their faith and who did good works. It is heartbreaking that those who once seemed to pursue the Lord alongside of us no longer follow him.

But it is astounding that God would call us and love us. And I think what fails to register with a lot of us is that he would keep us. We tend to operate on this transactional level, thinking that we must do something to receive something from God.

This is how our economy works and many of our relationships are built on a transactional type of system. If we were to approach the Lord and other believers this way, this would be a misinterpretation of what it means to be a Christian.

The called, loved, and kept will live in a way that pleases the Lord because of the sheer grace of God upon our lives. We will repent of and kill remaining sin in us because of his amazing grace. You and I, friend, are being kept for Jesus Christ. We haven't really dug into what that entails, but it is appropriate for us to tease out what it means for the believer to be kept for Jesus Christ.

Because we are finite creatures, we tend to only think in terms of here and now. We want what will satisfy us now, and comfort us now. There is an entire company that is built on a business model that caters to our craving for wanting things now – I'm thinking of Amazon. I'm not trying to hate on them, I really enjoy having an

Amazon Prime membership – who doesn't! Especially when I can receive my order the next day!

What we are not so good at is thinking about eternity. We don't consider how our desires, thoughts, and actions will impact eternity. If we were honest with ourselves, we rarely daydream about what eternity will have in store for us.

Jude tells us in verse 1 that we are being kept for Jesus Christ. This is not just some temporary promise. This has eschatological significance, meaning, this promise is meant to carry us through to the end. God is keeping us safe until the day we go to be with Jesus or the day he returns for us!

Jude's words should give us confidence in a world of uncertainty because as believers we are not just called and loved, but we are being kept for Jesus. What an amazing truth! Friends, we are being kept for that day when our Savior will make all things new. THAT is what we are being kept for.

We are not just kept from the eternal consequences of sin, though we are. We are also being kept for his coming kingdom. The very kingdom in which we will enjoy everlasting communion with our King.

In Jude's concludes the greeting of his letter in verse 2 with the following blessing:

“May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.”

What Jude does here is he sets a pattern for how believers should pray for one another. Our disposition toward others should always be to pray for and show others mercy, peace, and love. Jude even

adds that it would be multiplied to his audience. I can't tell you how many times I've prayed but have failed to ask God to multiply his blessing on others.

This blessing is an outworking or an identifying mark of being the called, loved, and kept; we should all now desire to multiply mercy, peace, and love toward others in how we pray for them and how we treat them.

Church, is it your desire for others to experience the same mercy, peace, and love that has been shown to you in Christ (or to pray for others in this way) despite how they might treat you?

May we be a people who constantly strive to bless others by being merciful in the way we approach situations, by striving for peace and praying peace over others, and by being loving in our interactions regardless of what others may offer to us.

To sum up Jude's greeting in this epistle, Jude is gearing up to warn a people against the dangers of apostasy, but he begins his letter with some encouragement for the believer: the Christian's truest identity is that of one who is called, loved, and kept by God.

And he even shows us how the called, loved, and kept are to pray and live. We should be those who pray blessing on others. We should also be people who exhibit mercy, strive to be peacemakers, and those who love others with the same love that God has shown to us in Christ.

(PRAY/BENEDICTION: Jude v.2)