

3rd S of Easter - 4/14/24 SM, SJ

1 John 1:5—2:2 – This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the atoning sacrifice not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world, Dear Fellow Redeemed:

Have you ever thought about the very early days of the New Testament Church and what it was like as the books of the New Testament were being gathered together into what we think of the New Testament canon, the 27 books we recognize as God's Word, joining the 39 books of the Old Testament canon?

It didn't happen overnight. It was almost 400 years after the death of Christ that there was general agreement on these 27 books as inspired of God, and worthy of being added to the Bible. Some like Revelation, took longer than others. Part of the problem was that there were not only false teachers and false prophets, but books claiming to be from God, but not.

John's purpose in writing this book was dealing with people teaching false doctrine, claiming that God spoke to them, but those were all lies.

What do you suppose Jesus is going to say to these people – these liars and false prophets – when they stand before him for Judgment? Will he welcome them, even though they follow a false Savior, an impostor, an imitation? Or will he say, **I tell you the truth, I never knew you?** How important it is for us to follow not just someone who calls himself Christ, but to follow the true Christ, the one and only Savior who lived and died and rose again! Following the true Christ isn't like making sure you buy the right car, or choose the right lawyer to represent you in court. Our eternal salvation hangs in the balance, so let us be very careful as we learn today that:

We Make Our Claim on the Risen Christ

1. Declare your fellowship with him
2. Demonstrate your fellowship with him

1. Declare your fellowship with him

Cults aren't anything new. One of the reasons that Paul wrote to this group of Christians who were being threatened spiritually by a cult known as the "gnostics." Like many cults today, the Gnostics claimed to have secret knowledge that could change their lives and affect their futures — but the only way to gain this knowledge was to join the cult.

But we don't need any cult or its leaders to teach us about God, Jesus or heaven. We have the testimony and words of those who knew Jesus when he was in this world, who heard him speak with their own ears, saw his miracles with their own eyes, and touched his resurrected body with their own hands. John tells us: **That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. (2) The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it.**

Notice what John calls Jesus — **the Word of life**. Through Jesus and the good news of what he has done for us, you and I have received the blessing of *eternal* life. John tells us that Jesus is life, and he came into the world to give *us* life.

John teaches us that you have been given the good news about Jesus **so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**

Fellowship is the key word here. It means that we have a special relationship with God, with God's Son and with Jesus Christ. The only reason that we have that special relationship with God and each other is the coming of the **Word of life**, which changes our relationship with God from fearing God as the mighty and terrible punisher of

sinner to seeing him as our kind and loving heavenly Father. Not longer is it “you” and “I” but now it is “we.” We have learned to think of each other as “family.” It also meant that people didn’t have to go to the gnostics to uncover the secrets to having a special relationship with God; they already had a relationship with God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

John even tells us why he has decided to tell us this: **We write this to make our joy complete.** The wording shows that our joy is already complete, because you and I know that our God has already saved us. We don’t have to wonder what will happen when we die, or when God returns on the Last Day. We know that our sins are forgiven through Christ, and God will take us to live in the mansions of heaven when our time in this world is over. So our joy is complete, and our joy continues as we continue to experience on a daily basis the fulfillment of God’s promises.

Since we know that we have fellowship with God, God expects that we will live in such a way as to show it to him and to others: **This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.**

2. Demonstrate your fellowship with him

Notice that John doesn’t just apply these words to his readers. They applied to him, to them, to me and to you. John uses five “if” clauses to describe the attitudes of those who have been changed by faith.

The first two deal with our actions **If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

If any of us desires to have fellowship with God, to be his children, then we must not live as darkness of sin, but rather we will live in the light of God’s Word. Yet in this life will never reach sinless perfection. We will slip and stumble at times, but even that is no reason to despair, because we know that our loving and gracious Savior has **purified us from all sin.**

The next two statements deal with our words: **If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.** If we think we are perfect, that we have done nothing wrong, then we are only lying to ourselves. And there is no reason for us to be afraid to admit our sins to God, because God has promised to forgive us those sins. Never be afraid to confess your sin to God — no matter how many or how terrible those sins might be, because God has promised to forgive you your sins, each and every one of them.

John makes a choice so easy: lie to ourselves and keep our sins — losing our relationship with God and all his blessings in the process — or confessing our sins and having God take them away as he at the same time pours out on us blessings and riches in eternity.

In his final “if,” John points out the danger of denying the presence of sin: **If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.** Anyone who claims to be perfect, who has never broken a single one of God’s commandments is to deny what God has told us in his Word, such as: **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God or there is no one who does good, no, not even one.**

John uses his final words to once more point us to our Lord and Savior. How much God doesn’t want us to sin, but if we do sin, we should not be afraid, because God has provided the answer to sin, as John points out: **My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."**

John leads us away from sinful words, thoughts, and actions. But when we do sin, we have a helper, one who pleads for us before our heavenly Father as our defense attorney. And he provides us with the very best defense of all, because he himself paid for our sins, and not just for our sins, but the sins of the whole world.

Don’t go looking for the Savior in the wrong places. Don’t turn to a cult or a popular false prophet. Turn to the one who has already saved you from your sins, who pleads your case before our Father in Heaven, who has given a new and special relation with God so that he has become our Father by faith. Make your claim on the *risen* Savior, because only he leads to eternal life and heaven. Amen.