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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 23, 2018
3rd Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 4:8-12, Luke 24:36-49
Hymns: 363; 207; 754; 313:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 John 1:1-2:2

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ²the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

⁵This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice 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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

² My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: How real is it?--

How real is the resurrection of Jesus Christ? For that matter how real is Jesus? Some people, people who are supposedly really smart people, don't think those questions are very important. They will answer that Jesus is as real as you want Him to be. Jesus' resurrection is as real as you need it to be. Was and is Jesus really God who came down to earth to die for us? Or was He simply a man, albeit a good man who lived a wonderful life of love, and died a tragic death? These questions are relevant because they reflect ancient heresies that still find an audience in modern Christian denominations in America.

The truth of the matter is extremely important. Your life depends on it. Your spiritual and eternal life depend on Jesus being the absolute truth that is established in heaven, and that has taken hold of your heart and life. Jesus is our crucified and **risen** Lord. How true is Jesus' resurrection? It is as true as the sun rising in the morning dispelling the gloom of night. It is as wondrous as the warmth of the sun bringing life to a dark world. Let us enjoy --

THEME: Basking in the Light of Christ, Our Risen Savior.

John addresses the reality of Jesus and --

I. Knowing Jesus is the Word of Life.

Listen to how John stacks the evidence for the truth of the person of Jesus Christ being both the Son of God and our Risen Savior.

1 John 1:1-4 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was

manifested to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

In the beginning Jesus **was**. The disciples heard the voice of God the Father declare Jesus to be His beloved Son. They beheld Him with their own eyes as He healed the sick, stilled the storm, raised the dead to life again, and ultimately rose from the dead Himself. They didn't see *visions* of the Risen Lord. They saw Jesus with their own eyes! They touched Jesus, yes, also after the resurrection, with their own hands. After the resurrection Jesus ate with the disciples on at least two occasions, one of which we read of in our gospel lesson this morning.

Jesus is the Word of life! That is really a statement loaded with the truth, for Jesus is the Word by whom all things were made! Now as our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus is the Word of the gospel declaring to us that truth of sins forgiven and peace with God. We are reconciled with God so that we are in fellowship with God the Father. Fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ is more than just a passing acquaintance. It is a most intimate relationship, more intimate than any relationship between two humans can be, for God knows us thoroughly. He knows our every action, word, and even thought. He knows our every need, our every concern, our joys, and our griefs. He even knows our struggles with sin, and temptation. He loves us for Jesus' sake, and forgives all our iniquities.

And we have fellowship with Him! We can turn to Him at any time knowing that He loves us as a dear Father loves his dear children. We need not hesitate to come before His throne at any time because for us it is the throne of grace.

This is what is ours because Jesus is real and living as our crucified and Risen Savior. How can we respond to this wondrous reality except by --

II. Walking in the Light of Life.

1 John 1:5-7 “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice 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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

John goes on to declare the message he received and which we then also have received from Jesus. This fellowship that we have with God is a determining force in our lives. You must understand that God is Light, and **not** darkness, no darkness at all! Sin is darkness. If we are supposedly in fellowship with God we cannot at the same time embrace the darkness of sin. Darkness and light cannot exist together. Yes, I know that we all still slip into sin when we are tempted. Indeed we sin every day, but that is not the same as embracing sin in our lives. In other scriptures we are warned against presumptuous, or willful sin. (2 Peter 2:9-10; Hebrews 10:26-27) That is when we get an attitude that we can take God’s forgiveness for granted. It is rather like regarding God as a chump who has to go along with us in our sinful ways. I think we are all familiar with the rationalization, “I can sin today and repent tomorrow, and God will have to forgive me.” **That is presumptuous!** That is darkness in our thinking. That is not responding to God’s love with love, but seeking to take advantage of God for the fulfillment of the desires of our flesh. That is **not** fellowship with God.

By the way, if you behave like that there is no guarantee that you will repent tomorrow. Sin entangles us in its grasp. Remember also that repentance is a fruit of the Holy Spirit whom we are inviting to leave our lives when we sin presumptuously. And again, God acts according to grace, and when one despises the grace of God one may find he has lost that grace.

The other rationalization is that we aren’t sinning. Sometimes this false premise comes in the form of viewing our lives through the eyes of the world, the **darkness** of the world. We may conclude that if the world says it’s not sin then it’s not sin. The other premise for this is that we view the law of God in a shallow external manner, justifying our actions as did the Pharisees of old. We define things so we can live as we desire and argue it is still within

the limits of the law. Besides that we think we are better than other people, or at least not as bad. John makes it clear that this doesn't work.

1 John 1:8-10 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Self-deception is easy and far too common, and very, very dangerous to our souls. If we deny our sin, deny our sinfulness the truth is not in us. We are calling God a liar. You know that is serious enough when one calls another person a liar. Calling God a liar with the denial of our sinfulness and guilt is to make a mockery of the salvation which He has secured for us at the cost of sacrificing His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Then the truth would not be in us.

On the other hand, if we confess our sins the most amazing grace is present with God. If we confess our sins God is both faithful to forgive and just to forgive. Faithful to forgive: God forgives and forgives, and forgives us again and again. In spite of our weakness, in spite of our **unfaithfulness**, God remains faithful and true to His gospel, true to that salvation which He established for us in the death and resurrection of His Son. And it is that death of His Son that makes it just and right that God forgives us. Our sins have been paid for by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. When we humble ourselves before the Lord, confessing and turning away from our sins, and plead for His forgiveness **for Jesus' sake**, God must forgive. He has painted Himself in a corner, so to speak, and He has done this intentionally for our sake, that we might be assured that He truly forgives. God takes our sins away by putting them on Jesus who carried them to the cross. It is done! “When we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” (1:9) ALL unrighteousness. No spot or stain of sin remains. Remember the declaration made through Isaiah: “*Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool.*” (Isaiah 1:18)

And so we walk in the light of the glory of God, in the grace of Jesus Christ, in the love which God has showered upon us, and we flee the ways of this world. Life is about --

III. Living with Jesus' Word of Forgiveness.

John's next words are so important for us to comprehend, and yet they are so easy for us to pass right over, almost as if they weren't there. You'll see what I mean when I read them to you again.

1 John 2:1-2 "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

I know for myself, and even my pastoral use of this Scripture passage that I most often go right to the wonder of Jesus being our Advocate who argues our case before God, and then the wonder of sins being forgiven. I pass over the part that speaks to us of what our life ought to be, how our gratitude for this wonderful gospel will, by the Spirit's power, direct us on the path of life.

John speaks to us as children, not in a condescending way, but with affection, leading us to the conclusion that we should all reach for ourselves, and yet he guides us to this glorious conclusion by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He writes to us about Jesus, and His reality as our Risen Lord, and how wondrously God forgives us our sins when we confess our sin and our unworthiness. John writes this for us so that we will understand why we should, indeed why we are compelled to say, no, **NO, NO** to sin in our lives. It is for the love of Christ who died for us and rose again. It is for the love of Christ who has treated us with such great love that *while we were still sinners* Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) It is for the love of Christ, so that all the world may see and know that wonder of grace in its power in our lives. How can we who benefited so from His grace, who live under the shadow of His love, do anything other than willingly live according to His commandments, to the praise and glory of His name!

And now we return to the reality of our weakness, that is the weakness of our flesh. When we slip, when we fall, Jesus our Crucified and Risen Lord stands by us. He serves as our Advocate before the throne of God, pleading our case before the bar of divine justice. He presents a defense for us which the Father cannot refuse, that we still be found righteous before Him because of Jesus' blood and righteousness.

He didn't die for just a few, or even for many but not quite for all. He died for the sins of the **whole world**. This fact makes it impossible for the devil to accuse me, or even my own conscience to condemn me. It is in this truth that we see that God is greater than our heart, so that even if our heart condemns us, our heart is mistaken. (1 John 3:2) We are washed. We are justified. We are saved from sin and death both now and forevermore.

That is the Light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that glorious light under which we bask, soaking in the wonder of grace and love in sins forgiven and the hope of everlasting life. How real is Jesus? How real is Jesus' resurrection? It is as real as you need it to be, and that is absolutely real, sure, and certain! Therein you find forgiveness, and fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ both now and forevermore.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)