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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 17, 2019
2nd Sunday Lent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 50:4-7 , Passion - Gethsemane I
Hymns: 149; 342; 163; 413:1,5

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

Sermon Text: 1 John 3:4-9

⁴Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

⁹Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

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

INTRO: Addressing the obvious when it isn't so obvious. --

Actually it happens from time to time that we might have reason to say "It goes without saying," and we immediately proceed to say what we think shouldn't need to be said. All too often when we don't say "It goes without saying," we don't say and we really needed to say what needed to be said. With the gospel of a crucified Savior that is tragic mistake which we may make all too frequently, all too easily. It's tragic because this is a matter of life and death for people's souls. As children of God we assume that everybody that calls themselves Christian understands the basic answer to this question, "Why was Jesus born into this world?" That is dangerous to assume. Countless millions whom we might assume know why Jesus came into the world don't. Some religions that speak about Christ aren't actually Christian, and even some Christian denominations have gotten so twisted in their doctrine that many within their numbers are at best confused, at worst in spiritual darkness.

Many would present Jesus as the great teacher of love and good works. They would define Jesus' purpose for coming into this world as one of addressing our better self, and the building of self-determination to live a righteous life. Our text this morning addresses the importance of living a righteous life, but without the proper gospel foundation that cannot be done. If the Christian faith is only about "*What would Jesus do?*" one might completely miss the point of why Jesus came into the world. It is much more of matter of "*What did Jesus do? And Why?*"

So then it doesn't go without saying. It dare not go without saying that --

THEME: Jesus Was Manifested to Take Away Our Sins.

Our text lays out for us --

I. The Need for Our Sins to Be Taken Away

1 John 3: 4-6 “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.”

As humans we are pretty good at rationalizing away most of our sins. We do this with false arguments like, “everybody’s doing it so it can’t be that bad.” Or minimizing the guilt by saying something ridiculous like “God really wouldn’t send someone to hell for rolling through a stop sign!” We see news items of horrific sins like the mass murder of Muslims in Christ Church, New Zealand, and we know we have never ever done anything like! That’s bad! There’s a lawbreaker who deserves to go straight to hell! As if you aren’t a lawbreaker. As if I’m not one deserving of hellfire!

“Oh, Pastor what did you do?” you might ask. You know the Ten Commandments. Pick any one of them. I’m sure I’ve broken it somehow, sometime. Surely more than once, and so have you. You just need to look honestly into the mirror of the law. And don’t forget what the Scriptures most clearly say. *“If you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”* (James 2:9-10) Even a small sin is lawlessness. You have broken the law. You are a lawbreaker. You are lawless! You have sins that need to be taken away; many, many more sins than you even know.

Your sin separates you from God. By nature we are all *“children of wrath, just as others.”* (Ephesians 2:3) Our text is quite clear on this point, *“Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.”* (v.6) If you have sinned you are estranged from God, completely estranged from God, no matter how much you might protest otherwise contending that you are a nice person. To have a relationship with God you must be righteous. To be righteous you must be

without sin. Only Jesus is without sin. Since you have sinned you need your sin to be literally taken away from you in order to have a true and peaceful relationship with God. It is so important even critical to say, to say it, to know it, to comprehend it to the core of our very being, **Jesus Was Manifested to Take Away Our Sins.**

In the Old Testament this marvelous truth was depicted by the Scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. The High Priest with his hands laid upon the head of the goat would confess the sins of the people, and then one of the Levites would take the rope lead and guide the scapegoat out of the camp into the wilderness where he was let go never to be seen again. That was done for the people to grasp the truth of salvation in the Messiah that was to come. Our sins would be laid upon Him. Jesus was to take our sins away so that the truth of the gospel might be established, *“As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”* (Psalm 103:12) Jesus takes our sins away. Jesus took them upon Himself and bore them to the cross where He endured the wrath of God in place of us. And so we are assured of God’s grace in Christ. Paul wrote to the Colossians *“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses,** ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And **He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.**”* (Colossians 2:13-14)

Jesus takes our sins **away**. He has taken all condemnation out of the way of our relationship with the Lord our God, having taken them to the cross once and for all! It can’t be said often enough that Jesus was revealed to the world to take your sins away.

Jesus came into the world for --

II. The Removal of Sin from Our Way of Life.

Our text makes it clear that this is big. People are constantly falling off the deep end on one side or the other. On the one side people profess to believe that perfection in this life can be attained, that we will actually not commit sin. Paul pretty much covered that for us when he wrote, *“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”* (Romans 7:19-20) In this life we will always struggle against sin.

Or maybe we don't need to? The devil is fine with that too. Some argue, “I'm forgiven, the more I sin the more grace there is for me with which to be forgiven, so why not keep on sinning? Paul answers that with a “God forbid!” That is nothing more than another of the devil's lies, and making a mockery of our Savior's sacrifice.

Let no one deceive you. Sin is not to be regarded lightly in our lives. It remains a devastating evil. In taking away our sins Jesus was not paving the way for us to continue in sin. The words of our text couldn't be more clear.

1 John 3:7-9 “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (v.8) The devil would seek to ensnare you in sin. It is clear that this is the devil's work. He has enslaved us to fulfill his unholy will, to serve the flesh, to live like the world. If we continue in sin, if we **embrace** sin, if we **incorporate** sin into our manner of life, then we are of the devil and not of Christ. Christ Jesus came to take our sins away, and to

destroy the devil's power over us. When our hearts take hold of that truth, when that seed of faith has been implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit we have been born again, born of God!

Think of Peter. In our passion reading this morning we heard how determined Peter was not to sin. Jesus even told him, "*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.*" (Luke 22:31) Peter was so determined that he could defeat the devil, he just wouldn't hear of it being any other way. And then Peter put himself in the way of temptation. Sadly I think John, not thinking, had a hand in that. The devil sifted Peter quite thoroughly. He was no match for the devil, and neither are we. "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **He** might destroy the works of the devil.*" (v.8) Peter has a lesson to share with us in this regard. Peter wrote in his first epistle, Jesus "*Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, **having died to sins, might live for righteousness**—by whose stripes you were healed.*" (1 Peter 2:24)

By His death on the cross Jesus destroyed the works of the devil. By Jesus' death **for** sin, we die **to** sin. By the power of the Spirit we are not only accounted righteous, but empowered to live for righteousness. The Spirit of Christ within us enables us to say "no" to sin and "yes" to righteousness.

So what is it all about, this Lenten season and all this dwelling on the unpleasantness of man's cruelty to Jesus and the excruciating death He died? Why do we have to talk about it so much? We talk about it because it doesn't go without saying that **Jesus was manifested to take away our sins**, and the price He paid to accomplish that was extraordinary. It doesn't go without saying that "**the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.**" To think otherwise is to accommodate the devil and to despise the sacrifice Christ made for our redemption. One cannot embrace both faith

and sin. Do you not know that *“You are not your own? You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.