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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
March 24, 2019  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 52:13-53:3. Passion: "Trial and Denial"

Hymns: 149; 141; 151:1-5; 151:6-7 (238:3-5)

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

Sermon Text: 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. <sup>2</sup>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, The Propitiation for our sin, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: John offers some fatherly wisdom and counsel.

That could characterize this entire first epistle of John. I know our text opens the second chapter of this epistle, but these opening words of our text really capture the tone and affection of this entire epistle. John is addressing the Church as his little children, as dearly loved children. John is concerned for the spiritual welfare of his spiritual

children. By the time John wrote this epistle he was an old man and had been exiled to the island of Patmos. He was no longer free to visit and personally encourage the Church, and so the Holy Spirit directed John in his writing of this epistle.

What a blessing this epistle is for us to read and cherish today as we consider the Lord Jesus' place in our hearts and lives. John's fatherly advice that opens our text may sound a bit like something your fathers may have said to you, "I want you to stay out of trouble!" but it really says so much more and has a much richer message. John begins our text by saying "*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.*" (v.1) Yes, it is important for us to understand that John's purpose was to encourage Christians in living God-pleasing lives, lives that honored the grace and love and forgiveness bestowed upon them by their Savior God.

John also understood the difficulty that sin brings into our lives and how sin must be addressed for our salvation. So as we continue to meditate upon our Savior's Suffering and Death let us appreciate how it impacts us when --

**THEME:** Facing the Bar of Divine Justice.

If you are going to court, especially criminal court, it is essential that you have the best legal counsel available. When we sin we are answerable before the law, the law of God; and ultimately we all will be called before the bar of divine justice. Who represents us there makes all the difference.

### **I. Securing the Best Advocate --**

is even more important if we are to avoid being sent to the eternal prison-house of hell. Most people foolishly choose to represent themselves with a presentation of their own righteousness. The problems with that choice are manifold. We cannot even fathom what true righteousness is. We don't have any righteousness of our own. By nature

we don't understand what the Judge needs to hear. Our defense will fail. The defense of **all** those who choose to represent themselves will fail. They will hear the words *"Depart from Me you cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."* (Matthew 25:41)

We need better representation before the Judge of all men than we can provide for ourselves. We need it daily. We need to have the Advocate that has a winning record before the throne of God. There is only one Advocate that is successful before the bar of Divine Justice and His record is one hundred percent.

*"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* (v.1)

This is a very special individual standing by our side. That is literally what the word John used here means; a paraclete is one who stands by your side. Jesus isn't there simply for moral support. This isn't small claims court. This is the big time, the Supreme Court of all supreme courts. Jesus is standing by your side to make your case for you just like a lawyer does in our earthly courtrooms. When asked how you plead, guilty or not guilty, you know in your heart of hearts that you are as guilty as sin. Very literally. This time this is not a figure of speech. **YOU ARE AS GUILTY AS SIN!** On your behalf Jesus enters the plea of **"Not guilty, Heavenly Father."** And what a marvel of grace that this plea is not laughed out of court, not only because you have sinned today, but because you are a repeat offender. In many of our courts in America there is what is known as the "three strike rule." Three felonies, and they put you in prison and throw away the key! It is a desperate situation, but not nearly as desperate as your situation before the bar of Divine Justice. And yet your plea, entered for you by Jesus is accepted, and a pronouncement is made. God the Father finds you **innocent** of all charges!

How can this be? Because it is Jesus who is your Paraclete, your Advocate, your Lawyer, and He isn't just anybody. He is "**Jesus Christ the righteous!**" He is Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, but also conceived by the Holy Spirit. True God from eternity who took our human nature upon His divine nature. And so He became our brother. But having been conceived by the Holy Spirit He was born pure and sinless. Throughout His entire life Jesus and only Jesus remained sinless. He fulfilled the law of God perfectly. He fulfilled the law as our substitute. You see that is all part of Jesus being the Christ. He is the Servant of the Lord chosen by God to secure for us salvation. And He did this by first fulfilling the law and establishing that perfect righteousness; a righteousness that is then credited to us by grace, through faith in His name.

So yes, it makes all the difference that it is Jesus Christ **the righteous** who is our Advocate with the Father. Some might think how lucky you are to have Jesus standing by your side. Luck had nothing to do with it. Luck had **nothing** to do with it! This is **grace**, for it is "*by grace you have been saved through faith.*" (Ephesians 2:8)

And that, dear friends in Christ, is only the beginning of --

## **II. Understanding His Qualifications.**

**1 John 2:2** "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

Now we add to the amazing qualification that Jesus is "*Jesus Christ the righteous.*" We add that He is the **propitiation** for our sins. We talked about this amazing truth just two Sundays ago but this is so key to the gospel of your salvation that we are going to review this amazing truth once more. Many talk about this, focusing on the fact that Jesus paid the debt of our sin, and that is absolutely true. The fancy word for that is "**expiate.**" The word we are accustomed to use is redeem. He paid the price for our sin and paid it in full. There is something

more here, and it is a very important more. **Propitiate** includes the effect this payment had with God the Father. **God's wrath is appeased.** *"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:1) So much we covered two weeks ago but there is more to bring us joy and rejoicing!

You see there is someone else who accuses us of sin, and that is the devil himself. His accusations don't stand a chance before God because Jesus has brought the perfect defense forward as we stand before the judgment seat of God. Jesus made the perfect payment for all sin, not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. This is universal redemption.

This is the part that gets really important. The devil isn't trying to convince God of your guilt anymore. That is settled. Now the devil is trying to convince **you** of your guilt. He is trying to undermine your faith and confidence in the atoning sacrifice of Christ made for us and for our sins. He is good at this. He is good at leading us down the path of despair. Think of Judas Iscariot and the dreadful end to which he came. Jesus said of Judas that it would have been better if he had not been born, (Matthew 26:24) and Judas is called the son of perdition. (John 17:12) Well his sin was especially bad, wasn't it? Well, wasn't it? He betrayed the Lord Jesus! He sold out Jesus for thirty pieces of silver! If the devil can convince you that it was the heinous nature of Judas' sin that made it so he was not saved, then the devil may also find a way to convince you that you are too bad to be saved!

Jesus *"is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but also for the whole world."* (v.2) God's wrath has been appeased, and not only for those who will eventually believe, but for the **whole world**. **All** people of **all** time have been covered by the sacrifice that Jesus made. *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them!"* (2 Corinthians 5:19) **This is universal justification!** You are a human being

living in this world. Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the world! You have been covered by Jesus' all atoning sacrifice. You are redeemed! You are **justified!**

Now let's go back to where we began, to those loving words of counsel at the beginning of our text. *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin."* (v.1) John is writing all this about the marvel of grace that is ours in Christ crucified to encourage us not to sin. The Holy Spirit has taken these words and again this morning implanted them in your heart that you might know the love of Christ, the depth of His love for you, and the wonder of His redeeming grace. *"We love Him because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19) John's desire for the recipients of this letter, the Holy Spirit's desire for the recipients of this epistle is to keep us out of trouble; to keep us in true faith that we not spurn the grace of God and scorn the sacrifice Christ made for us. Here is the power of Christ that overthrows the power of the devil. Here in this gospel is the *"sword of the Spirit"* with which we fight the devil, and *"the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."* (Ephesians 6:17, 16) Jesus has delivered you from sin and its condemnation. You have been *"reconciled to God through the death of His Son."* (Romans 5:10) Now honor that grace, that sacrifice by NOT sinning!

**AMEN.**

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