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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 7, 2019
5th Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 53:10-12 Passion: Jesus Is Crucified

Hymns: 143:1-5; 157; 388; 158:1,2

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

Sermon Text: 1 John 1:5-10

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.

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. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

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

INTRO: "Oxi Clean -It gets the tough stains out!"

If you believe the commercials Oxi Clean is almost miraculous in how it gets stains out. Most of us have probably bought it for the laundry, maybe used it on a stain on the carpet or used it to clean some other material. But it of course comes with a warning to test on an inconspicuous spot first to make sure it doesn't ruin what you are trying to clean.

This is just one of many products that claim to be the right stuff to clean the stain that you are dealing with. Some are specialty products for pet stains, others are for delicate clothing. Stains have been a problem in this world for a long time, and I'm sure we have all had something ruined either by a stain, or by our attempts to get the stain out.

Of course you already know where I'm going with this, don't you? The oldest and worst stain of all is the stain of sin on the souls of mankind. Many different stain solutions have been peddled to mankind, and many have invested all that they are and have in false solutions that left the stain untouched and ruined souls even more.

By the grace of God, and only by the grace of God we have been given the ultimate solution for the stain of sin. It is in fact --

**THEME: Sin's Only Solution:
The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son.**

Sometimes we can become quite upset over a stain in a fine piece of clothing. Do we find ourselves getting that upset over a stain on our conscience? In our text John clearly presents --

I. The Destructive Stain of Sin.

1 John 1:5-6 "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. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

Sometimes we need to see things in the light, in the light of God. Yes, our text sets before us the contrast between holiness and sin by setting God's holiness right next to man's sin. "*God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*" (v.5) No darkness of sin **at all!** We are inclined to see shades of gray as if it were light. In fact what we see as shades of grey is actually darkness. All those things that we consider insignificant sins, rolling through stop signs, speeding down the highway, fudging a little about last year's income as we file our taxes. Everybody does it, it is just little stuff. And what about our spiritual lives? Neglecting our Christian duty in our prayers, in our church attendance, in encouraging others in their Christian lives, failing to trust the Lord in our lives, or neglecting our church offerings. We rationalize that there is no law that says exactly how much we are to do. Holding grudges, getting even, speaking evil of those who have hurt us, who doesn't do those things?

All those things proceed from darkness and in God there is no darkness at all. We think it is enough to be like our neighbors. Jesus said, "*You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*" (Matthew 5:48) And that is what John is talking about. We aren't like God. You can't say of anyone of us that there is no darkness at all.

But then that isn't exactly what John is getting at is it? It isn't the incidental slipping into sin that comes into our daily lives that John characterizes as walking in darkness. Walking in darkness is choosing the path of sin in our lives. Knowingly, willfully saying of sin's way, "This is the path I am going to take in my life," that is walking in darkness. And again, that could be such a variety sins that are common in the world in which we live, often sins that the world characterizes as normal behavior, if not celebrating as good. Often the world entices the Christian to walk in darkness. Each and every one of us must realize what that means. It doesn't matter if we claim to be Christian ("have fellowship with Him") if we walk in the darkness of sin "**we lie and do not practice the truth.**"

Sin alienates us from God. If our walk in life is living in intentional sin that is **darkness** and there is no light within us at all. Sin destroys faith. Sin destroys the soul. Just as it did with Judas so it continues to do today. John wants us to realize that sin is no laughing matter. Sin is serious, deadly serious. And of course it touches every one of us, and leaves its mark, its indelible stain.

Later in our text John wrote:

1 John 1:8,10 "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ... ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Denial doesn't make matters better. If we allow ourselves to be deceived by the world's morality and claim innocence while living in sin we aren't fooling God. We are only deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we protest and claim the Bible is old fashioned, the church has to get with the times; we are calling God a liar -we are calling GOD a liar, and His Word is not in us. We are making it up as we go along and falling for the devil's deception. Sin's stain leaves its mark. Our flesh is corrupt and tripping us up with its sinful desires and false rationalizations. We are filthy from sin.

But there is a solution. And it's not Oxi Clean. This stain of sin is one tough stain that no man can cleanse. We need --

II. The Cleansing Power of Christ's Blood.

It starts by getting into the light; that means getting out of the dark. The way of the world is darkness. Isaiah spoke of the time beginning with of Christ's coming. "*Darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.*" (Isaiah 60:2) With Christ coming into the world the lights have been turned on. The world likes the darkness. You can't see the stain of sin in the dark. Self-

deception is much easier in the dark, but it ends in destruction.

But the Lord has called us out of darkness into the light of Christ. Paul wrote: *“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 4:6)

So in our text we read:

1 John 1:7 “But 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.”

Walk in the light, in God’s light, in the light of the gospel. In that light the stain of sin is not just revealed, it is **removed**. The blood of Jesus shed upon the cross cleanses us from the stain of sin. Our robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb of God. Yes, I know it sounds like a contradiction. How can anything be made white by being washed in blood. This isn’t just any man’s blood; this is the blood of Christ Jesus, the holy, innocent blood that was sacrificed to atone for our sins. And yes, it is Jesus’ blood and only Jesus’ blood that removes sin’s stain.

How effective is it? Consider the wonder of this gospel which comes to us from heaven above.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

It starts with us humbling ourselves before the Lord. It starts with owning the guilt and not trying to pass the buck, or rationalize away our sin. If we confess, say to the Lord, “Yes, I did it, I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,” then God forgives for Jesus’ sake. Not because we are so nice, and the cause of God’s forgiveness is not found in our confession. It is found in

Jesus. Because it is found in Jesus this gospel; of God's love and forgiveness becomes our Rock of salvation.

Consider carefully what we are told here. If we confess our sins God is **faithful** to forgive. I'm not always faithful in keeping my every promise. Because of that maybe someone might think God will not always forgive. Dismiss that thought completely! We are assured that **God is faithful to forgive**. God forgives day after day, year in and year out. Each and every time that we turn to God through the cross of Christ, confessing our sin and unworthiness and pleading the merits of Christ, God will forgive. **God is faithful!**

But wait, this is the blood of Christ, God's Son! What exactly was God thinking in sacrificing His Son? Only the precious blood of God's Son is precious enough to pay for the sins of the whole world. The assurance of forgiveness we have given to us is that God is **just** to forgive. **God is just**. He couldn't look the other way and let sin slip by unanswered. Sin had to be paid for, and it was paid for, once and for all, that is ONCE AND FOR ALL by the death of His Son.

When we confess our sins pleading for forgiveness through the merits of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus' blood, God will forgive, God must forgive; it is the only JUST thing for God to do. God *"is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (v.9)

What can we do in response to such forgiving grace but seek out the light, and walk in the light of this wondrous gospel all our days.

But are we capable of doing that? We mark Jesus' words from Gethsemane, *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Matthew 26:41) So with our strength we cannot succeed, but with the Holy Spirit's power we can walk in

the light with Christ and our fellow Christ believers as we travel together on the road to heaven.

1 John 1:7 “But 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.”

AMEN.

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