

## **Sermon- I Have an Announcement!**

Scripture- 1 John 1:1-2:2, CTW PS 133

Hymns- 261, 208, 437

Theme- By the time John wrote this letter, Christianity had been around for more than a generation. It had faced and survived severe persecution. The main problem confronting the church was declining commitment: many believers were conforming to the world's standards, failing to stand up for Christ and compromising their faith. Sound familiar?

### **I. Some Background on John**

**A. John is a passionate writer.** Maybe he realizes that he's coming to the end of his life and he doesn't have much time left to get his message across. Maybe he looks around at the church and realizes that the inexorable drift from the gospel to religion is impacting on those he's spent his life pastoring.

It seems that at the time John was writing this letter there were some in the church who were suggesting that there were other ways of seeing things than the way the apostles had taught them.

These people were saying let's not worry about all that gospel stuff, let's just get on with our spiritual life. They were looking for deeper spiritual experiences. They wanted to be transported into the seventh heaven, removed from these earthly realities, set free to worship and enjoy God.

But it wasn't as simple as that. Sadly, the result of their false teaching was that people were confused. They began to question whether they were really saved. Was this new spirituality correct?

Were they missing out on something extra? Nothing's changed in 2000 years has it? What's more, this false teaching affected their evangelism. Why tell people about the cross of Christ, if there were other ways of coming to God that were just as effective, if not more so? Why worry about knowing Jesus and the cross, if all we have to do is work your way to salvation by trying to do our best at following moral rules and behaviors?

I have recently ordered a movie titled "Time Changer" for us to view on a Movie Night (date to be determined), that paints a picture of a world that does not teach the life of Christ, but only focuses on people deciding to do good whenever they can. This is what John is really talking about in His letter...he sees the trouble of people forgetting the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.

**B. You get a real sense of his concern for the people he is writing to by the way he addresses them.** There's a sense of affection in his words. (**1 John 2:1**) "My little children, I write this to you so that you will not sin." (**1 John 4:7**) "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;" And he writes to assure them of their salvation: (**1 John 5:13**) "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

There's a real warmth of pastoral concern in what he writes, yet at the same time there's a solid assurance of the truth of what he writes. In fact there's a hard edge to much of what he says. For John, truth matters. As we'll see in a moment if we don't hold to the whole truth, then we can't really have fellowship together.

Remember it was John who reported these words of Jesus in **John 17** talking about his disciples: "Father, they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." (**John 17:16-17**)

He also reported these words of Jesus, talking to the Pharisees: "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (**John 8:44**)

So John says that whole truth is vital if we're to be in fellowship with God and with one another, and one of Satan's greatest weapons is to use lies to turn us away from the right path.

That's why John addresses the issue of how we're to have true **fellowship** with God and with each other, always made possible by the salvific nature of the actions of Christ.

In fact John says that there are 3 things that are necessary if we're truly to have fellowship with one another, and with God: we must believe the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, truly human and truly divine; we must walk in the light; and we must admit our sins and ask God to forgive us and cleanse us from them.

This is John's TRUTH for all of us!

## **II. Belief in the Apostolic Witness.**

John begins his letter by reminding us of the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ: "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."

### **A. Can you see what's at the center of the proclamation of the gospel? It's the Word of life. The Word of life who's become one of us. The Word who's lived among us.**

John wants us to focus on the 'hands on' nature of his witness, doesn't he? What he's witnessing to he's heard, he's seen with his eyes, he's looked upon, and he's handled. He isn't passing on a mythology or describing how the early church understood their spirituality. He's speaking of what he's witnessed in the flesh.

What's more, what he's witnessing to isn't just a man who lived on earth for a short time. No, he's witnessing to much more than that. He's witnessing to the one who is the word of life. Jesus wasn't just a man, he's life incarnate.

John says in verse 2: "this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us."

He deliberately echoes the opening of his gospel, using similar wording to remind us of how his gospel starts. When he speaks of the "Word of Life" we're meant to think of the message that brings life; but at the same time to think of the one who is the "Word", who is the "Life".

When he says "what was from the beginning" it's both a reference to the apostle's witness to Jesus Christ, but at the same time a

reference to Christ himself, the Word who was in the beginning, who was with God and who was God.

**B. You see, what John's trying to get across to us is the profound mystery of the gospel. Here is something we'll never quite grasp.** We have seen him, and watched him, and heard him, and touched him, he says, but that doesn't mean we have a handle on him. This is impossible to imagine. Jesus is eternal life personified.

That, of course, is one of the major themes of John's gospel. You find it in chs 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 14 and 17, with the ultimate statement being **John 14:6**: "Jesus said to him, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** **Jesus has come not just to show us the way to God, but as the way itself, as life itself.** Why? Because eternal life is bound up with a relationship with Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

But notice why John tells us all this. **In verses 3 and 4** he says "we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

These things matter, because they are the basis of our fellowship with one another and with God. In other words, if we don't agree on these things, we can't really have fellowship together. Does that sound hard? Uncompromising? Intolerant? Truth is, it's no use claiming to have fellowship with other Christians if you deny the basic truths about Jesus Christ.

What do you understand by the word fellowship? It isn't just a matter of mental assent. Just believing the right things isn't enough. What matters is that we have a relationship with the one who is life.

The purpose of telling us about Jesus, isn't just that we'll know about him. It's that we'll know him personally. That we'll come into a personal relationship with him.

This is what we have in common as Christians. That we have a personal relationship with the true and living God and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, believing that Jesus truly walked on earth,

that he died and rose again, and will return to take us to be with him forever.

### **III. Walking in the Light**

**A. But there's more to our fellowship with God and with each other than simply entering into that relationship in the first place.** Part of the proclamation of the gospel is this fundamental truth: John says in **verse 5: "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all."**

This was an important statement for John's readers because they lived in a world where people believed one of two things about good and evil: Either they saw the reality behind the universe as being essentially unitary, with both an evil and a good side, or else they saw it as dualistic, with good and evil battling it out for supremacy.

Every Star Wars fan knows about 'the Force'. Luke Skywalker depends on the good side of the Force, while Darth Vader gets his strength from the dark side of the Force. They are each portrayed as complementary parts of the one reality.

The second view is seen in those who believe that the material world is evil and we need to escape it in order to reach spiritual purity. There's an element of that in **Buddhist** teaching.

But the message of the gospel is that neither view is true. God, the one who created the universe, is pure light. The origin of life is 100% good.

Just to emphasize it John repeats it in the negative: 'in him there is no darkness at all.' This is not just speculation. This is not just another philosophy, another opinion on the same level as all other human theories about good and evil. **No, this is the message we've heard from Jesus himself.** This is a truth that God has revealed through Jesus Christ his Son.

**B. Well if this is the case, how is the Christian to respond?** Well, it's pretty simple isn't it? If we claim to have fellowship with him who is light, we can hardly expect to be able to walk in darkness, can we, and still maintain that fellowship? If

we do we're fooling ourselves. We're living a lie. John would say we are in denial.

But what does it mean to walk in the light as opposed to the darkness? Well, it means shunning **all that's evil in the world**. There are plenty of lists in the New Testament that show us what that means.

According to **Colossians 3** it means turning away from sexual immorality, impurity, evil desire and greed. It means getting rid of anger, rage, slander, malice, envy, and lying. It means putting in their place compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. It means bearing with one another, forgiving them when they wrong us, showing them love in all things. It means living in peace and thankfulness.

**Walking in the light implies being open to the scrutiny of those around us, particularly God.** I remember when I was a teenager - back in the olden days. We'd go to a party and they'd have a "blacklight" in a darkish room. And when you walked under it, anything white and neon colors glowed brightly. Well, that was fine if you were wearing white, but if you were wearing something dark, what it did was to show up all the bits of fluff and dandruff.

That was a bit embarrassing! Well, that's what it's like to walk in the light. There's a transparency of life that's implied by living in the light, because if you live in the light, you can't hide your faults.

#### **IV. Confessing That Our Sins are against Jesus**

**A. The third thing that's necessary if we're to live in fellowship with God and with one another, is an attitude of repentance.** There are three false responses to being exposed to the light of Christ. **The first**, as we've just seen is to live in denial, to pretend that it doesn't matter how we live.

The **second** is to claim to be without sin (**v8**). Again those who say that are fooling themselves.

The **third** response is to say that we haven't sinned, either because we've reached such a state of spirituality that sin no

longer has any power over us, or because we deny that there's any such thing as sin.

John says simply that in either case we make God a liar (**v10**). Why? Because God says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

No, If we're truly walking in the light, then the light will show our failings and we'll admit them. We'll be open to God's gaze, God's scrutiny of our lives.

**B. So in conclusion, what are we to do then? Put simply we are to take God at His word.** We're to confess our sins and trust him to do what he says he will...to forgive us and cleanse us. Notice that God is faithful and just in doing this. He's faithful because he does what he's promised to do. And he's just because although he forgives our sins the punishment for them is still paid. That is, the punishment that was due to us has been placed on Jesus.

Now don't miss this. What he says here at the end of chapter 1 is critical for understanding what he says later, about righteous living. **First we come to faith in Christ.** We come to **him** for forgiveness and cleansing, and **then we seek to walk in the light as he is in the light**, knowing that we'll continue to fail, but that **when we do we can come back to Him for forgiveness and cleansing.**

The forgiveness Christ offers can never be taken for granted. That's where we started this message, and notice what he concludes in **Chapter 2, verses 1 and 2:**

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>He is the **atoning sacrifice for our sins**, and not only for ours but also for the **sins of the whole world.**

It is not about following some rules and regulations set by man in some sort of a moral code. If we don't have Jesus we have nothing, and like the movie portrays, we will fall far away from the life He lived and died to give us.

Amen? Let Us Pray...