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Sermon

April 18th, Second Sunday after Easter

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev 1:5-6 NKJ)

Our sermon text for this Sunday is taken from John's First letter, The first Chapter and the first couple of verses of chapter 2:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have observed and our hands have touched regarding the Word of Life— ² the life appeared, and we have seen it. We testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We are proclaiming what we have seen and heard also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write these things to you so that our joy may be complete. ⁵ This is the message we heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him but still walk in darkness, we are lying and do not put the truth into practice. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, just 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. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us.

^{2:1} My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.

This is the Word of the LORD!!!

Mercy, Grace, and peace are yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of the King...

What is your most recent "status update"? We do a lot of different updates online now-a-days. For instance, this past week, I was in Spokane. I could have posted about my trip, added pictures of my family in the car on the way there, and once I got there posted about the weather or how I was feeling, etc. There is a lot of things which we update that really don't matter.

People share all kinds of things on social media. Pictures and videos of their kids and pets. Posts about facts or more frequently about opinions. But one of the things that really stood out to me when I was new to social media was the "relationship status". People would share whether or not they were in a relationship, and with whom. Back in the early days, you would classify this in one of three different ways.

You were either single, in a relationship, or you would describe it with the ambiguous term "it's complicated".

What is your relationship status? There is only one relationship that truly matters, and your status in that relationship is the only update that is important. What is your relationship status when it comes to Jesus Christ? Are you single? (That is, do you not have a relationship with Jesus?) Are you in a relationship with Him? Or is it complicated? Which of those statements do you make about it? Today we will look to 1 John to see what our relationship status with Christ is. We pray: LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!

Our last sermon text came from the second to last chapter of John's Gospel. This one comes from the

beginning of his first epistle. Almost every time in these epistles, the human author introduces himself. Quite often, the very first word of the letter tells us who is writing this. **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:1 NKJ)** This is quite common in the first couple of verses of an epistle. The author identifies himself and usually addresses to whom he is writing.

But this is not the case in first John. He never mentions his own name. This would be strange, but not for John. John takes himself out of the picture. In second and third John, he describes himself not as “John the Apostle”, but rather as “the elder”. In his gospel he also doesn’t mention himself by name. Rather he described himself humbly as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

We clearly can see that this is John writing. Why? Because it looks and sounds so very much like his gospel! **That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have observed and our hands have touched regarding the Word of Life— ² the life appeared, and we have seen it.**

This sounds very much like how John kick starts his gospel. John is very much a subscribing to the thinking of “the beginning is a very good place to start”. What beginning he’s talking about is THE BEGINNING, that is, creation. **That which was from the beginning...** Doesn’t that sound very much like John 1:1? **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (Joh 1:1 NKJ)**

What he points out in the first verse of his gospel is the same thing that he reiterates here. In the beginning was the Word, Jesus, who simply was when time began. Jesus was with God and was God. He then describes how that Word came to the world and had a relationship with it, people such as John. **That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have observed and our hands have**

touched John heard, seen, and touched Jesus. He did this before Jesus died, and he did this also after He rose from the dead.

John, as well as others, had that relationship status with Jesus. Our relationship with God is all based on our relationship to His Son, Jesus. If we don’t have a relationship with the Son of God, then we don’t have any relationship with God Himself. **God is light. In him there is no darkness at all.**

John heard it from the source, Jesus Himself. What did he hear? God is light. In Him, there is no darkness. What is the very first thing that God created? **Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.** At the very beginning, God created light, and divided it from the absence of it, darkness. The light He called Day, and the darkness He called night. These concepts define everything we know.

They also provide a stark picture of our relationship to God, **the Father of lights (Jam 1:17 NKJ)** God is holy, God is light. The absence of God is darkness, or sin. This is a concept that is very foundational to Christianity. Have you ever seen the symbol know as the “Ying-yang”? It is a circle, half light and half dark. But inside the dark is a little light, and inside the light is a little dark. This symbol basically trying to touch on what John says here. But there is a fatal difference. There is no darkness at all found in light. **In him there is no darkness at all.**

What John is saying is that there is only goodness and holiness in God. The same is true about Jesus. In Him, there is no deception or evil. Only good, only holy. This presents a problem and an obstacle when it comes to our relationship status with God. **⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him but still walk in darkness, we are lying and do not put the truth into practice. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

If you say you have a relationship with Jesus, and yet you live in darkness, then you aren’t speaking truthfully. If you had fellowship with God, you wouldn’t have darkness, rather you would have light. These are very stark remarks. It’s black and white.

What eliminates us from having a relationship to God? What limits us from a relationship to the light? It is darkness, it is sin. If we claim to have a relationship to God, and yet still have a relationship to darkness, then our claim is false. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6: **For what partnership does righteousness have with lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? 15 And what agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer share in common with an unbeliever?**

What do those things have in common? NOTHING! Not one thing. That is why our relationship status to God is not a status at all. We are sinful, He is holy. If we say that we can have a relationship to God, and yet we sin, then we are lying. If we say that we have no sin, then we are lying. This is what John is trying to get us to see.

And yet, we do have a relationship with God. Our relationship status is one of "in a relationship". **7 But if we walk in the light, just 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. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Yes, our sin separates us from our God. He is holy and we are sinful. You can't have a relationship on the basis on those statuses alone. There is nothing grey about it.

But, there is blood. The blood of the lamb takes us out of the darkness, and it brings us into the light. It redeems us. As Peter wrote **knowing that you were ...redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1Pe 1:18-19 NKJ)**

The problem is what we say about sin or how we treat it. The point is not to overlook sin, but rather to call it what it is. Don't think less of your sin or try to not think of it at all. Admit it! Confess it and turn from it. That's how we gain entrance into the light. It's not by

ignoring sin, downplaying it, or down right denying it. Rather, it's admitting it and turning away from it!

There is an age-old question. When you get to heaven, and Jesus is at the gates and asks you, "Why should I let you in?" what would you say? Would you say, "Well, I've been a Christian all my life, so..." Or would you say, "You know Jesus, I've always done my best..." Or would you say, "I'm a really good person." None of those answers gain entrance.

What is the right answer to that fictional question? The fact of the matter is that we will not be asked this. But in that scenario, how should you answer, "Why should you be allowed into heaven?"? The answer is "I SHOULDN'T!" We shouldn't be allowed in. We have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And yet we will be in heaven. Why? Because that sin is paid for by the blood of the lamb.

Again, it's all about sin. All those answers don't admit to sin. They don't mention it, instead they try to look to something else about us. Whether we have been a lifelong Christian, or have tried our best, or are a good person, all that doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because it doesn't address the sin. We shouldn't get into heaven, but we do because Jesus has removed that sin from us forever!

So admit sin. Call it what it is. Repent of it, go and sin no more! **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us.**

And yet, it's complicated, isn't it? Why is it complicated? Because we live in this sinful world. We are still sinners. Even though we know that if we confess, He forgives, we still sin again.

John knew this. He knew the sinful condition of men. Those to whom he is writing to were sinful. He was writing this letter so that they would sin no longer. **2:1 My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the**

Righteous One. ² **He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.**

He was writing these words so that those hearing them would listen. SO that they would stop doing the things of the darkness and repent. But he also knew about the sinful nature that remains inside of everyone. His purpose is to get sinners to stop sinning. But his purpose is also to get sinners to see that if they do sin again, they have an Advocate and Atoning Sacrifice, JESUS!!!

John writes very much in the same way the James writes. To get Christians to see that if they are Christians, they would live like it. Saving faith saves us alone, but that saving faith is never alone. That faith produces works of faith. James writes, "**Faith without works is dead**", and John is very much of the same opinion. He just comes at from the opposite angle. He comes from it from the perspective of love.

And that is why our relationship status with Jesus is complicated. It's not complicated because of Jesus. It's complicated because of us!

Whenever someone had that designation of "it's complicated" as their own relationship status online, it would be a way of saying their relationship wasn't simply one or the other. It was a grey matter. If you were in a relationship with someone, and you discovered their online status read, "It's complicated", wouldn't that raise some red flags? "Why is it complicated? I thought we were in a loving relationship?"

Our relationship to Jesus is complicated because we complicate it. Whereas He is dedicated to us and always loves us, we love others more instead. We love ourselves more than Him, we make other things more important to our lives than hear His word. We like to have a part in Jesus, but only when it suits us. If He says what we are doing is wrong, we don't listen to that part, and instead focus on His words of love and not law.

Dear Christians, uncomplicate it! Remove the sin and darkness and live in the light. Love your neighbor

same way He loves you! Love Him and make Jesus your one and only relationship. Serve Him. Love Him. Do what He tells you to do!

And... we fail time and time again. But there is a difference. Yes, we are sinners. We will continue to be sinners until the day we die. But don't let that discourage you. Don't give into sin because it's inevitable. It's not, not with Jesus as our Savior! **What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (Rom 6:1-2 NKJ)**

We need to practice what we preach. We need to turn from sin and don't go back to it. But when you do stumble and fall, once again admit it and renounce it. Every time we do sin, we need to stop, and look to Him as our advocate and payment. We confess our sin, and He is indeed faithful and just to forgive it.

What is our relationship status with Christ? If we were single, then we are alone and we would be alone forever. But if we have a relationship with Him, we enjoy the benefits of Him connecting us to God. We complicate the matter when we go back to sin. That is why we strive to let the light He put in us shine. It shines for Him, and it shines His name to others. Don't be satisfied with single or complicated status. Rather boast that He is your God and Redeemer. That He has paid for your misdeeds and He is your hope!

John saw Jesus. He heard what He said, and he repeats it to us here today. Hear it! Do it! When you don't, repent and don't return to it. When you repent, you won't find a reluctant Jesus, weary of being burn by your possible future misdeeds. Rather a loving Savior with open arms. That's the beauty of His grace.

It really isn't complicated. Our sinful nature complicates it, but His holy and loving nature uncomplicates it real quick. **I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.** He loves me. His love is our motivation for life and our salvation into eternal life. He is our Savior. God be praised! AMEN!!!