

No Darkness

1 John 1:1 – 2:2

Introduction

It has been a rainy and dreary week, hasn't it? Tomorrow we get sunshine... only for the solar eclipse to happen! Amazing.

- We give our Grace staff the Monday after Easter off as a holiday, so after these last several weeks of office time, I was really looking forward to getting some outside work done that day. But the rain changed those plans.
- Tuesday we were under a severe weather alert that turned out to be not so severe after all. Some rain, but thankfully nothing overly concerning.
- There have been flood watches and warnings all week long.
- Grey skies and lots of water.

Outside my office window I could see the puddles and ripples that were created with each drop of rain. So, when I began to prep this sermon, this line from a commentator caught my attention:

John has thrown a great stone into the water and the rings that encircle the stone are moving out in all directions. (Earl Palmer)

The "John" in this quote is the same John who is the author of two of the three readings for today, the John known as the "beloved disciple" of Jesus, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James and one-half of the "Sons of Thunder" dynamic duo we read about throughout the Gospels

- Of the twelve disciples, this John was the only one to show up at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified.
- It was this John who Jesus asked to take care of his mother Mary.
- It was this John who was the first disciple to arrive at the empty tomb. Peter went in first, but John ran faster and got there first.
- It was this John who, with James and Peter, was a part of the first life-to-life group with Jesus – the ones He pulled aside from the rest of the disciples to give more intensive training.

This John was able to see the ministry of Jesus front-and-center. That's what he tells us when he begins to write this letter:

... which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched (1 John 1:1)

And from that front-and-center vantage point, John was able to see how Jesus changed the course of people's lives.

- So, to use the imagery of this commentator, John writes these words to describe the "ripple effects" in the life of a person who follows Jesus.

Picture that imagery. One stone creates that first ripple, which leads to the second one, and to the next one, and to the next one ... on and on and on. The victory of Jesus that we celebrated on Easter Sunday has a ripple effect!

We will be looking at several such ripples in this series of sermons. Each sermon will be built around a you have known all your life:

NO!

Today, based on 1 John 1:5, we see that:

In him (God) there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5b)

We lose it in the English translation, but this word "NO" as it reads in the original Greek communicates the strongest possible negation:

no darkness at all—strong negation; Greek, "No, not even one speck of darkness."

There is no ignorance, no error, no untruthfulness, no sin, no death. None. Not even one speck. God has no shadows. He is pure light. John heard that truth taught by Jesus and saw it lived out in the life of Jesus, and so he repeats it for his readers:

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

So the ripple effect John addresses here in verse 5 is the ripple of "no darkness." And with that first ripple comes two additional ripples.

RIPPLE #1: WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Look at verse 6:

If we claim to have fellowship with Him (God) and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. (1 John 1:6)

This is an amazing ripple! Jesus came, died and rose again because if He didn't do that we could never have "fellowship with God!" And we were created to have fellowship with God.

That's the story of the Garden of Eden. Remember it? God created man and woman in His own image. The Genesis story tells us how God used to come to the Garden of Eden every day to have "fellowship" with the people He had created:

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day ... (Genesis 3:8a)

But darkness came over Adam and Eve because they disobeyed the expressed will of God. And because of the darkness now in their lives, the first couple ...

... hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8b)

In John's Gospel Jesus describes it like this:

Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. (John 3:19-20)

God is light, and because of their sin Adam and Eve were now infected by darkness, so rather than walk with God, they hid. They had to hide. Because if the light is there, either your darkness is exposed or you have to hide. They chose to hide.

But the God who is light desires fellowship. He is always seeking us out for fellowship with Him. In the Genesis story God asks them the same darkness breaking questions He asks each of us:

Where are you? (Genesis 3:9)

What is it that you have done? (Genesis 3:13)

Does anybody here think God didn't already know the answer to those questions? Of course He knew! Just like He knows the answer when He asks those questions of you?

- That thing "that I have done" is darkness that always interrupts my fellowship with God. It causes me to hide.
- My prayer life suffers. I find it hard to read the Scriptures. I hide.

And God comes to us ... seeking fellowship ... and asking "where are you?"

- That's the first ripple.

#2: WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER

Look at verse 7:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another ... (1 John 1:7)

I was able to attend the annual Men's Breakfast hosted by a local outreach ministry known as "The Gathering." The speaker talked about the need for men to live without the masks that hide our hearts. He made the point that 15% of all men today do not have a close friend. Most men have three or fewer friends.

- He described that friendship as "knowing each other's hearts."
- He said that if that friend doesn't know your story – even the hidden parts of it – they really are not your friend.
- I think his statement applies to both men and women.
- And it certainly resonates with this text.

You see, not only did God create us to have fellowship with Him, He designed us to have fellowship with other people. The Scriptures are filled with that teaching!

- We are the Body of Christ – each one contributing the health of the entire system.
- We pray to “Our Father who art in heaven.
- And get this one ... We are told to ...

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

But when there is darkness in me, I won't let you close enough to see it. And so we end up with ...

A relationship that is not fellowship.

Because the God who is Light is kept away too.

- That's ripple #2.

APPLICATION

So, what is the solution? How do we bring our lives back into fellowship with God and one another. That's verse 9:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Simply put, that verse says that God brings us back into His Light. The God in whom there is not one speck of darkness cleanses us from all unrighteousness. And fellowship is restored.

Our part is to confess.

- You might remember from high school English that the prefix “con” means “together with.” “Fess” means to “declare or acknowledge.”

So when God asks us the same question He asked Adam and Eve:

What is it that you have done? (Genesis 3:13)

We are able to “acknowledge together with” Him exactly what it was. We let His light shine so there is absolutely no question about it.

- That is why we Lutherans begin our worship service with a time of confession.
 - The God who created you wants to spend this hour in fellowship with you, so we begin letting His Light shine into our lives.

A fisherman who was out of fellowship with the Lord was at sea with his non-Christian buddies when a huge storm came out of nowhere and was close to destroying their small ship. His friends begged him to do anything, even pray. But he said to his buddies,

"It's been a long time since I've done that or even gone to church. I don't even remember what to do."

But they were desperate for anything, so he agreed and then prayed, "O Lord, I haven't asked anything for you for 15 years, and if you help us now and bring us to safety, I promise I won't bother you for another 15 years!"

That is not what God seeks. The God who created you wants to walk with you every day of your life.

Amen.