

## “We Walk in the Light”

1 John 1:1-2: 2

I'm sure already that we've all noticed that this Sunday is a little different from last Sunday. The energy is just different. We can look around and notice that our Easter decorations even seem a little different. You know, kind of like after a great party, those once celebratory decorations start to look a little weary and worn. Even the remaining lilies are starting to droop a bit.

Last week was the great celebration, the big party and this week, we find ourselves on clean up duty, a somewhat depressing job. Even as we begin to pack away the lilies and the candles, we wonder how do we move on after the party? How do we move forward after the good news of the resurrection? How do we live out our faith now that the celebration seems over?

We find ourselves in this gap between the Easter proclamation and our present situation, a gap that needs to be bridged so that the resurrection will continue to remain real for us, so that we can continue to walk in the light as disciples of Christ, a gap similar to the one that John's community found themselves in those years ago.

For John's community, the resurrection seemed like a far off event. All they knew about the actual resurrection of Jesus was what someone had told them. They

kept hearing about what an amazing event it was and how it transformed lives. They kept hearing about how death did not win and how the light had overcome the darkness. They kept hearing about how pain and hurt were not in control anymore but every time they looked at the world around them, they saw a different picture. In their present situation, it seemed like the resurrection was a distant memory because everywhere they looked, the darkness was threatening to overtake the world, that death had won, and that the light was in danger of being extinguished. In their present situation, it seemed like someone had thrown this really great celebration that they had not been invited to until after it was over, and then it was only so that they could clean up after the celebration. In John's community's present situation, it seemed like all they could do was guess and wonder what really happened on that Easter morning.

So John writes them this letter to remind them that the resurrection wasn't just a one time event that they had missed out on. They had heard the stories, true, but they had also experienced the resurrection in their own lives. They had seen it, heard it and touched it. The party was still going on and they were invited to join in as Beloved Children of God.

John tells his community that although they may not have been at the empty tomb that first Easter morning, they were still able to experience the resurrection in their lives, in their present day situation, because every time they gathered

together, the Spirit of the Lord was among them, transforming them and challenging them to become the people that God created them to be. Every time they gathered together became an opportunity to set aside fear, to set aside disappointment and experience the Spirit of God working in them and through them to bring peace and wholeness.

John wanted his community to realize that their fellowship was more than just an opportunity to gather with people that they liked and a time to enjoy each other's company. Their fellowship was more than just getting together with people who they had a good time with as friends.

Their fellowship was the living evidence that God's Spirit was still working in the world. It becomes an opportunity to see that God's grace was everywhere and available to all. Their fellowship, every time they gathered together as a part of the Body of Christ here on earth, becomes an opportunity to walk in the light of God by loving one another as God loves, by sharing that love with their neighbors, not just those people who acted like them or even agreed with them. Their fellowship becomes an opportunity to embrace the good news that we don't have to be perfect to be embraced in the arms of God's love. Their fellowship becomes an opportunity to show that they needed each other to truly become the people that God created them to be.

Johns wants his community to realize that their fellowship is more than just being with people that they like. When they gather, they gather as disciples of Christ, as people who are called to certain behaviors, behaviors that reflect the love of God, behaviors that call them to move beyond fear and create genuine relationships with the people gathered there and beyond.

The beauty of John's letter to his community is that he is very honest with them. He knows that the resurrection calls them to live in community with one another and at times, that is not going to be easy. He wants them to realize that just because they are disciples of Christ doesn't make them perfect nor does it mean that they won't make mistakes. John knows that it is difficult to live and be in community with one another . John knows that it is difficult to love one another as God loves and that human, there is a tendency to stay in our comfort zones and be with the people who think like us and act like us.

That's why John tells his community that they have a choice: either to let go of the fear and step out into light or stay in the darkness. Because as disciples of Christ in fellowship with each other and with God, they can't have it both ways.

John reminds them that once they decide to walk in the light, there is good news. They are not alone! The Spirit of God will be there guiding them and leading them and yes, advocating for them on their behalf. The Spirit of God will be there

working in and through them for peace and wholeness. The Spirit of God will be there making the resurrection real for them in their lives.

The thing John wants his community to understand and embrace is that they are not on clean up detail after the great celebration has ended. The celebration is still going on! It has just moved beyond the empty tomb and now is happening all over the place.

John bridges the gap between the proclamation of Easter and his community's present situation by reminding them that the work of the community is to walk in the light: to love one another, to realize that we need one another to grow on our faith journeys. The work of the community as disciples of Christ is not clean up detail after the fact. We are invited to the party! And we are called to celebrate by living out the Kingdom of God in our lives. We are called to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is in our midst and that regardless of our present situation, we will hold on to the promises that we have experienced the resurrection in our lives as truth.

Now that we realize that we didn't miss out on the party and celebration, the true work of the community begins by walking in the light of God and showing that God is still working in our world, bringing about peace and wholeness, and showering all of God's children with grace and love.

That was the good news for John's community then and that is the good news for our community now. The resurrection experience is real. We've seen it. We've heard it. We've touched it.

Yes, this Sunday is a little different because now the real work of the Kingdom begins!

When people see us gathered here on Sunday mornings, or coming together on a mission project, or breaking bread with one another, or going out into the community transforming fear into genuine relationships, they will be able to see the Light of God. It will be reflected through our words and through our actions.

They will see that even when we agree to disagree, we support one another as brother and sisters in fellowship with one another and with God. They will see the incarnational evidence that God's Spirit is among us, challenging us not to settle for our present situation, but to continue growing and becoming the person that God created us to be.

When people see us gathered in fellowship, in service, in worship, as a community of believers, they will see that the celebration is not over, that it has only just begun! They will see that we are walking in the Light of God, bridging the gap between the Easter proclamation and our present situation, keeping the resurrection experience alive in our hearts and in our mission, moving beyond the empty tomb, and celebrating that the Kingdom of God has come near.

The good news is that we are not on clean up detail after the party is over.

The good news is that we are invited to do the work of the Kingdom of God, work that changes our lives, work that gives our life meaning, work that in reality is more celebration than work. The good new is that even though we have moved beyond the empty tomb, the celebration continues and we are invited to the party.

The resurrection becomes real for us in our present day situation when we serve, worship, and fellowship together as part of the Body of Christ here on earth, loving one another, sharing God's grace with all of God's children and by continuing to move beyond fear and creating genuine relationships with those gathered here and beyond.

We are called to walk in the light of God, celebrating, singing, shouting: The party is not done. It has only just begun!

May we feel the truth of the resurrection in our lives always. Amen.