

Text: 1 John 1:1-2:2

¹That 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. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete. ⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by 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, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. ^{2:1} My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Prayer of the Day:

O God, by the humiliation of Your Son You lifted up this fallen world from the despair of death. By His resurrection to life, grant Your faithful people gladness of heart and the hope of eternal joys; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Our hearts were burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us. Alleluia. (Luke 24:32 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

Nyctophobia, I'm guessing most of us have rarely if ever heard the term. But I'm guessing you have heard, maybe even contended with, its English counterpart, fear of the dark. I can still remember as a child I went through a spell where I was not so keen on darkness. Though I was an only child, I had bunkbeds so that friends had a place to stay when they came over. For some reason, I figured if the monsters attacked in the dark if I was sleeping on the top bunk, they would struggle to find me. In fact, when friends came over, I made sure they slept on the bottom bunk. It wasn't incredibly brave but I figured the creatures lurking in the night would eat them first and I'd be able to get away. I've since grown out of my irrational fears of bumps in the night. But I will still admit that it's better to be out in the dark with a flashlight than stumbling through the thick black darkness without any knowledge of what might be out there with me.

Today in the words of our second lesson from 1 John that encompasses all of the first chapter of the book. The Holy Spirit inspires our writer to employ an often used picture for sin and God's unfathomable love and forgiveness expressed no where better than in the life, death and resurrection of our Savior Jesus. He comforts us by reminding us that **the Light of Life Has Appeared!** He then encourages us to **Live in Christ and not in the darkness of sin!** And to **Flee to Christ when we see the reality of sin in our lives!**

John opens up by recapping all that God has done for us. It is his goal to recount for us all that he has heard and seen about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He calls Him the Word of life. When we see it, when we are minded of the unfathomable love which God has poured out on us in Him, something amazing happens. The New Man brought to life in the eternal life wone for us in Christ recommits itself to living in the light of Christ.

We heard it said in the fifth chapter of the book last week in worship. *This is love for God: to obey his commands* (1 John 5:3). John really was simply repeating there what he says in our lesson today, *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin* (1 John 2:1). It's not an overly difficult concept is it? The Christian sees clearly the love of God on display in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Perhaps Luther summarizes this section best when he writes in the explanation to the third article, *the Holy Spirit has enlightened me with His gifts*.

What's the point? You and I were stumbling around in the darkness of unbelief. We were hopelessly lost and unable to make our way on our own. God shone the bright light of His Word upon us in the in work of Christ so that we now have a flashlight in the darkness of this world. It would be foolishness for us then to turn of the light and continue to stumble around in the darkness of sin. Again, John says it so well by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.* ⁶ *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.* 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, his Son, purifies us from all sin* (1 John 1:5-7). To go on living in the darkness of sin is a denial of everything Jesus has done for us. To treat the commandments of God as a worthless or outdated bunch of sentences which have lost all relativity in the modern world is the very height of folly.

But you and I have a very big problem. While the new man is alive and well in each of us, the Old Adam, who loves and clings to sin with every fiber of his being is right there with us. Paul laments it. *So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death* (Romans 7:21-24)?

John answers the question today, ⁸ *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* ¹⁰ *If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.* ^{2:1} *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* ² *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

As God's children, purchased in the blood of Christ and therefore dearly loved and enlightened by the Spirit we have seen the light of life. In our foolishness and the darkness of the sin that rages without and within we often extinguish the bright flame of the gospel of Christ. The commandments fall like dominoes in our anger, in our lust, in our pride, and in our selfishness. And when we see the reality of our sin, God would have us flee to the only one who can help us. He would have us flee to Christ.

Dear friends, remember why He came. He came to live our lives for us, to provide for us a righteousness we neither earned nor deserved but which was given non the less in the love of God displayed in Christ. He came to die our deaths, that God's righteous anger over our sin might not

be sweep under the rug or cast aside in injustice, but that it might be paid for in full in the suffering which He endured on the cross. He came to rise again, all that you and I might have the assurance that our sin has been handled, atoned for, and that payment accepted by our God.

All of this is made ours through the light of the Gospel of our Savior Jesus. He hands it to you through His means of grace, in His Word and in His Sacraments. There he not only speaks our forgiveness but give it again and again: every time you hear of the forgiveness Jesus won for you, every time you return to Your baptism where God announced to the world that you belonged to Him, washed clean through the gift of faith which grabbed hold of Christ's work and refuses to let it go, every time the body and blood of Christ reach out nail pierced hands and touch your lips with the gifts they earned, forgiveness, new life, salvation. The light of life shines brightly around you, within you, for you.

When the fear really started to overcome me as a child, I would always do the same thing. I would muster up the courage to make my way to the light switch on the wall. Once I had flipped it on, the darkness would flee. Every spooky shadow, every strange noise, every overblown fear could be safely investigated and put to rest. Having dispelled the fear I would be able to turn of the light, return to bed, and sleep in peace. Brothers and sisters, **the Light of Life Has Appeared!** May we always **Live in Christ** and the light He gives **and not in the darkness of sin!** And for all the times that we stumble and fall back into the terrors of the night, **when we see the reality of sin in our lives, Flee to Christ.** Amen!