

## Walking in the Light - 2

(1 John 1:5-10)

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

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. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:5-10)

We can probably all think of a situation in our own life, or in someone else's life where they started to realize that something wasn't right. Something didn't feel right in their chest. That lump just never seemed to go away. My emotional state just seemed to get more erratic. I could barely breathe walking up a flight of stairs. The road signs have been getting blurrier and blurrier as I drive.

Whatever the situation that came to your mind, the reality is that something was revealed to you (or that person) – that something wasn't quite as it should be. The truth – that something isn't right – was revealed.

Over ten years ago, I had a lump in me through that never seemed to go away. It didn't affect much, but it just seemed to be there. Once I finally asked a doctor about it, I discovered that I had an underactive thyroid. I was prescribed medication to help offset what was happening. And I remember asking what happens if I continued to do nothing for it. And his perspective is that it could have dire ramifications for my life. It was revealed to me that something wasn't right with my body. The truth – that something isn't right – was revealed. And until I affirmed that reality, nothing was going to change. I needed to accept the reality that something wasn't right – to be willing to take any kind of step for the problem to be addressed. In my particular situation that meant being willing to start taking medicine to regulate something in my body. Until I asked the doctor about the lump in my throat, I was aware that something wasn't quite

right. But, like many, I kept on living in a state of denial – thinking the lump might just go away. Or, believing that I could just get used to my throat feeling different.

While we are familiar with people who live in denial about their health status, the same is true of how we can live in denial about our need for Jesus. It's no secret to many of us that we live in a world where Jesus is not believed to be the authority in all things. We live in a context where we are tempted to believe that Jesus' way of living is not the only way to experience the fullness of life. That his way is antiquated. That his way is too rigid. That his way is too idealistic and unattainable. That his way is uninformed.

We can probably all think of adherents to various: behaviors, lifestyles, or beliefs – who would use one of these arguments to disregard the truth of Jesus' teachings and way of living. That what is truer than Jesus is that: A new way is better. A less rigid way is better. A watered-down way is better. A more enlightened way is better.

We all, believers or unbelievers in Jesus, are tempted to live in denial about the truth that we need Jesus to live life to its fullest. But God's word reveals an alternative to living in denial of the truth. God's word reveals that living apart from Jesus is keep us from living life to it's fullest. And only by affirming the ways in which we live apart from Jesus, can we begin to live into the fullness of life that Jesus modeled. Only by confessing our sins, can we affirm the truth that we need Jesus.

**Confessing sin affirms the truth that we need Jesus.**

### **PICTURE OF GARDEN**

This summer, we (mostly Julia) have been trying to add more flowers and fruit and vegetable plants to our property. As much as I know that plants need sunlight to grow. This summer that reality has struck me all the more starkly. Many plants require a number of hours of constant sun exposure. And I quickly realized there are few places on our property that fit that criterion. Sure, all areas get some sunlight. But many areas are shaded longer than they receive direct sunlight. The reality is that a plant's direct exposure to sunlight is what leads to the life development of that plant. The same is true of all life in relation to God.

The first letter of John reveals this truth: God is light. This is not to say that when we see light, we are seeing God. For light is a created reality. Rather it is a metaphoric way of capturing

God's distinctive relationship to created life. If God created life, then he can see it for what it is intended to be. Nothing is hidden from God's sight. In his presence, all of life is seen in its fullness. God lights the way to see life as it's meant to be. The ethical and moral standard for life is determined by God, not anything else. That God is light – is to point to God as the source of life and the source of seeing life for what it's meant to be.

But emphasized in 1 John 1:6, is the reality that if God is light, then in him there is no darkness.

**To be in darkness is to be in a state of disconnect from God.**

### **PICTURE OF POWER LINE**

Recently we've been watching the show, *Homestead Rescue*. This family from Alaska travels to struggling homesteads to help them survive and thrive. One of the problems that they often have to address is a homestead that has an iffy connection to the power grid. Or a homestead that is off grid will no alternatively power system to tap into: wind, solar, hydro, gas, etc. To be in the darkness is to be like a homestead disconnected from a power source. To be in the darkness is to live disconnected from the life of God revealed in Jesus.

**To live in the darkness is to live disconnected from God, the source of life.**

It's this contrast that the first letter of John points out as the reason someone can't claim fellowship with God, while also walking in darkness. Someone can't be connected to God while living in the darkness. For someone to think they can is to live in denial of the truth. It's like placing a plant in the shade and deceptively believing that it will still be able to get life from the sun. The stark point is that

**Life thrives when connected to the light of life.**

Or, the stark point that

**Life deteriorates when disconnected from the light of life.**

Only by being in the light of God can we experience the fullness of life that God created for us to experience.

## **PARENT TALKING SERIOUSLY WITH CHILD**

I've heard it said before, in regard to parenting. You may have heard this from your own parents. And I've used it, myself, with my own kids. The phrase: *No matter what you did, if you tell the truth, it will be better for you than if you lie about what you did.* The point being that lying about a wrong-doing or failure, is worse than the wrong-doing or failure. The truth of that statement is that the person is living in a fantasy, in a delusion about reality. And dealing with the wrong-doing or failure would be more beneficial to everyone involved – than acting like the wrong or failure didn't happen.

## **PICTURES OF BOTH TRUMP AND BIDEN**

This is what we criticize public officials for all the time, right? *Why can't someone just admit that their course of action was wrong or a failure?* In general, I think we would be willing to accept a secondary course of action from that person, if they could just be honest about what came of their first action. Instead, the tendency is to double-down and project that the first action, actually did work, or act like the action wasn't even taken to begin with. Which is a lie, a deception. It's trying to live in the light by also perpetuating the darkness. The two can't realistically co-exist. It's one or the other. And

## **Light will always displace the darkness.**

The scenario of parenting or of politicians fits in step with what we encounter of

## **PICTURE ADAM & EVEN Genesis 1-3**

In Genesis 1-3, we encounter God telling Adam and Eve to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Based on the deathly ramifications that came from eating of it, God is telling Adam and Eve the best way to live, which was to eat any fruit but this one. Adam and Eve disregard God's directive, and eat the dangerous fruit. And in doing so, they disconnect themselves from God – acting as if they knew better than God. Think back to earlier: Their new way is believed to be better. Their less rigid way is believed to be better. Their watered-down way is believed to be better. Their more enlightened way is believed to be better. But once they ate the fruit, they discerned something changed – that something was different – that something was now wrong. Because they hid from each other (leaves to cover themselves). They hid from God. They blamed another for their choice (Adam -> Eve; Eve -> serpent).

When God first comes to them after they eat the fruit, God simply asks them to tell him what they did. But, instead of confessing what they did. They made up excuses. They deceived themselves. They concocted a false reality to believe, rather than the truth of their choice. And in entering into the false reality, they further disconnected themselves from God. Believing their way was better than simply surrendering to God's way. In turn, this does what John's letter describes as *making God out to be a liar*.

**"If we claim we have not sinned, we make him [God] out to be a liar and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:10)**

We become disconnected from the life of God in the process.

### **PICTURE RECOVERING TITAN WRECKAGE**

Recently, there was the tragic implosion of the aquatic research vessel: *Titan*, that was attempting to explore the wreckage of the *Titanic* wreckage. One of the realities that have been highlighted in the search and rescue process of the *Titan* is how powerful the water pressure is, not far down into the ocean depths. The pressure is so intense that the human body can't descend it very deeply, without encountering the imminent risk of death. To descend further, specially designed robotic machinery is needed. It's those robotic machines that have helped recover wreckage from the imploded *Titan* submersible. The powerful pressure of the ocean at such depths gives a helpful imagery for how life disconnected from God.

Living life differently than how God designed it, is like trying to descend into the extreme water pressure of the ocean by one's own power and ability. The reality is that it's not possible. The reality is that the impossibility first, needs affirmed, before a person will begin taking steps to get help in exploring deeper into the ocean. And in this example, simply adding help to the human body alone, won't help a person dive deeper in the ocean. Rather, an entirely different body (in this case, a robotic machine) is needed to deal with the power of that kind of water pressure. A person must affirm their need for something better than themselves – to overcome the force they are encountering. This is how sin – living apart from the way of God's life revealed in Jesus – is. Sin is like a cosmic flywheel of history's compounding choices disconnected from God.

## **The more disconnected from God, the more powerful is sin's pull.**

It's so powerful that we cannot overcome it on our own. Rather, we need what only Jesus can do. We need someone to break sin's pull. And we need transformed into a body that can perfectly live life as God created us to. This is what Jesus made possible through his life, death, and resurrection.

## **We need Jesus.**

Jesus lived-out, in person, the ethical and moral standards of the life God created us to live. But he also exhausted death's cosmic and historic flywheel-type pull. And he is fitted with a resurrected body that is no longer bound by that powerful pull. In Jesus, we see the kind of person, and transformed life that is needed to live life to the fullest, as God created life to be lived. Karen Jobes notes

**"It is only within a life of obedience to God's moral truth that a relationship with God, what John calls fellowship, can be sustained. (Karen H. Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1, 2, and 3 John*)**

And Jesus offers this kind of life to us through his life, death, and resurrection. The first letter of John gives this contrast:

**We are either in fellowship (connected to God) or not. Any other perspective is a denial of truth.**

The way forward given in this first letter of John is to accept the truth that any way of living apart from the way of Jesus is an illusion, a lie, a deception. The way forward is to affirm that life is only found in connection to God. The way forward is to affirm that we need Jesus to make connection with God possible. Confessing the ways in which we are separated from God affirms the truth that we need Jesus.

## **Confessing sin affirms the truth of reality that we need Jesus.**

The idea of confessing one's sins can come with baggage for some. For some it's tied to tit-for-tat kind of theology. Where unconfessed sin, known or unknown, places one at odds with God. For some confessing one's sins has been accompanied with a penalized-type

shame-factor with one's faults being publicly aired. For some confessing one's sins has been viewed as simply just part of one's conversion process. That confessing one's overall short-fallings before God is the entirety of confessing sin. And that any other form of ongoing confession is a disgrace to Jesus' atoning sacrifice and hinging one's faith on efforts of confession.

In some regard there is a nugget of truth in all of these, but they also fall short of discipline of confession that God's word call followers of Jesus to incorporate into our lives. It is true that any way in which our lives are separated from God, keeps us from fellowship with God. It is true that there is an inherent shame and penalty for living apart from God and dealing with the ramifications that from it. It is true that confession is somehow magical and has displaces the need for Jesus' atoning death.

The first letter of John offers some clarity on what confessing sin is. 1 John 1:5-10 expresses in great lengths that sinlessness is a denial of truth. Only Jesus was sinless. And the reality that this first letter of John is addressing Christians to live in the light and not the darkness – indicates that perfectly living the way of Jesus wasn't something that just magically happens at conversion. Rather, the letter describes that Being a Christian place one in lifestyle of formation. Where Jesus moment by moment, situation by situation, issue by issue places his light over our life to expose the lies that we've believed are true. And

**Confessing one's sins is an act of worship that day-by-day, moment-by-moment places us back in the light of God revealed in Jesus.**

### **PICTURE OF MOBILE HOME**

I have this cleaner for my phone, that uses a type of light to sanitize the objects in it. One cleaning doesn't rid every germ or virus from my phone. It involves routinely putting my phone in that process of cleaning. The same is true of what confession does for our relationship with God. Confessing our sins is part of the perfecting process that Jesus began when we first surrendered to him. It doesn't mean that we are starting over when we confess. Rather, we are continuing a process that won't end until Jesus brings it to a conclusion, when we're fitted with resurrection bodies in eternity. Confessing sin an ongoing process of affirming the truth that we need Jesus day-by-day, moment-by-moment.

**Confessing sin affirms the truth that we need Jesus.**

Invitation: Jesus calls all people to be his disciple and to make others his disciple. Simply put that means listening to Jesus and doing what he says; and helping others to do the same.

### **What do you hear Jesus calling you to do in light of what is said in 1 Jon 1:5-10?**

If you've never decided to begin following Jesus – it may be that Jesus is calling you to affirm the false path your life have been on, compared to the truth and fullness of life that his life offers. If that is you, find a follower of Jesus who can help you begin following Jesus and submitting your life to him in baptism.

If you've already been baptized into following Jesus, what is Jesus calling you to do today? Maybe he's calling you to begin a routine process of confessing your sins? Maybe that's during your time of reflecting on Scripture each day. Maybe that's with a trusted follower of Jesus when you meet up with them. Maybe it's confessing sins in a way you've not ever done before. Confessing more than just wrongs you were caught in. Confessing the hidden desires of your heart. Confessing the omissions (we can often focus on things we committed, rather than simply omitted). Confessing fears, feelings, behaviors that you're tempted to believe are worth giving into.

### **What step is Jesus calling you to take in confessing – in affirming where your life falls short of the life and standards of God?**

Disciples of Jesus are called to listen and obey. What step of obedience is God calling you to take today?

### **Confessing sin affirms the truth that we need Jesus.**