

WELCOME 15 April 2018 – 3 Easter '18 B

1 John 1:1-4

Good morning! and welcome to our on-going Easter celebrations! Never forget... Easter is not just a day...it's not only a season...Easter is a way of life! We as a church make that life visible as the church...And it is great to have you all here this morning. Please stay with us for morning tea after worship so we can all get a chance to know one another better...

Fake news!...misleading or deliberate misinformation spread through any medium designed to shift public opinion in a certain direction for/against a person/institution. Unless you've been living under a rock ...you've heard that term. But not just the news can be fake: fruit juice that's not really made from fruit; burgers not really made of meat, photos that are more photoshop than photo, relationships on social media, body parts from hair extensions to well... almost everything from the functional to the frivolous...

Fake churches/fake faith are no exception...But the beloved disciple, John, now an old man & grandfather of the early church takes us back to what's real: *"We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life."*

Over the course of these 5 weeks, we'll see John point again/again to the One who is real & certain & can be trusted for life itself forever: Jesus...Jesus crucified, risen & ruling over all things comes to us to give us the confidence, boldness, & assurance to make visible His life in our daily lives no matter what we encounter. It is Jesus who stands triumphant over all the fake & pretend & dying things of this world to bring us to life with the Father.

And we'll explore & experience that together today... LWKids is on holidays but it will be back in a few weeks...

Let's pray...

God of victory over death, your Son revealed himself again and again, and convinced his followers of his resurrection. Grant that we may know his risen presence, be fed from your abundant provision, pursue your purpose on earth feeding your sheep, tending your lambs & seeking the lost of your flock, until we join the hosts of heaven in worship and praise of your who alone are worthy of blessing and honor, glory and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

3 EASTER '18 B A – VISIBLE CHURCH: VISIBLE LIFE – 1 JOHN 1:1-4

- FAITH CHAT:** 1. Think of some people you trust without question. Who? Why?
2. Think of some people you DO NOT trust. Why? What's the difference?

"Trust but verify" Fmr US President Ronald Reagan's favourite old Russian proverb He used it in his nuclear arms reduction talks/treaties. T-b-V...suggests that in any agreement the personal trust required to make that agreement work is backed by evidence of good faith/trustworthiness that one is keeping the agreement.

Now we might think it odd if I started showing up at WWHS to "verify" that Leonie was on the job not at the pub...but everyone of us just affirmed that we trust most & most readily those who have a track record...verified history...lived examples of trustworthiness, kept their word, did what they said they would do. T-b-V (Dr)

John knows that as he writes what we just heard...*BIBLES...We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard & seen. We saw him with our own eyes & touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, & we have seen him. Now we testify & proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, & then he was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen & heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father & with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.*

1-2-3-4-5-6-7 times John repeats what only he can attest...what is his sole authority: Lived experience of Jesus Christ – God in human flesh – crucified – dead – buried – risen – ruling over all things. Seven times in 4 verses John gives us his "verified." I'm telling you, he says, what I have experienced in my own life...you can trust THIS.

Peter would write in a similar way...*2 Pet 1:16-17 – "For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendour with our own eyes when he received honour & glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, 'This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.' We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain."* Again...we're not making stuff up...sitting around a campfire drinking beer & telling stories...this is what happened to us.

This letter/essay from John was written late 80's-early-90's...John is a "dinosaur." He is the last living apostle...the rest are dead...some 30-40 years dead. Even the "500" witnesses to the risen Jesus Paul notes in 1 Co 15:6...probably all gone. From this point forward...this is no longer possible so John wants to be sure that we know we can bet our lives on his witness...stake our very existence on the One he proclaims.

Everything else John writes...in the gospel he has previously written, in his 3 letters, in the Revelation...wraps around the axis of this intention: *We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen & heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father & with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.* In recounting the resurrection, John had told us why he wrote the gospel/biography of Jesus: *Jn 20:30-31 - The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, & that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.*

The heart of the good news that we dare never lose, Life, in relationship with God the Father, is possible only through Jesus Christ the risen Son of God. *He is the Word of Life...you will have life by the power of his name...we proclaim this to you so that you may have fellowship/relationship with God the Father/Jesus Christ the Son of God & us/all who are called to be his through his life/death/rez/rule.* Why is this so critical for John that in the last decade of his life he writes again & again for that one purpose? As we read the NT, we discover the pain present in the early church because early on it was beset by the twin demons that destroy Christian community...You know what those are...legalism (you must do it like we do it or you're going to hell) & laxity (it doesn't really matter what you believe just so long as you're nice & tolerant of others) Those 2 have plagued the church from its earliest days...still do.

John had seen & heard & laid hands on the very Author of Life. The hands of the Creator had washed John's feet. The hands that spun the galaxies had put bread & wine & multiplied loaves & fish in John's hands to eat. Paul had written, *"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God...God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, & through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven & on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross."* John wrote: *"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, & the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, & nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created..."* The NT is locked in on this truth: Jesus reveals to us the mind & heart of God...the very essence of God. Jesus is the living communication between God & us. He is God's Word to us. John was very intentional about identifying Jesus because if we get Jesus wrong we get God wrong. Jesus is the final & complete revelation of God & we get shipwrecked if we don't hang on to Him for our very lives. How do you know God exists? Jesus

All around us are all sorts of mis-interpretations of Jesus: great teacher, moral leader, SJW, spiritual figurehead, prophet of a greater/late revelation, one way among many...BLAH!

The heart of the good news that we dare never lose, Life, in relationship with God the Father, is possible only through Jesus Christ the risen Son of God. But a clear & direct result of that good news...the question...Does your life reflect that gift that you have received? Does your life reflect life in Christ? Does your life reflect that relationship/fellowship with the Father & the Son? Does your life reflect that joy in the company of all who are in the fellowship of Father/Son? *We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen & heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father & with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.*

At stake for John is not simply right doctrine or proper belief. Rather, at stake is whether our lives testify to the life in Christ we confess...whether our lives line up with our proclamation. Acc to John, truth is not just something we think/believe acknowledge/discover, it is something we live. Notice...John never says this is what you do to "be saved." What Christ brings/offers as a gift, salvation, is never a just me-n-God proposition...it is always as a relationship in the fellowship of Father/Son/Holy Spirit. Life in Christ with the Father leads to life in Christ in community. A right relationship with the Father through Jesus is evidenced in right living in the world among the community of disciples. Not in this all alone...not me-n-God...It's *US*... shared fellowship – shared joy

John had recorded Jesus praying on the night of the Last Supper: *Jn 17:3 & 20-23 – "...this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, & Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth...I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you & I are one—as you are in me, Father, & I am in you. May they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them & you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me & that you love them as much as you love me."* Life in Christ with the Father leads to life in Christ in community. A right relationship with the Father through Jesus is evidenced in right living in the world among the community of disciples...toward the goal of demonstrating before the world the life, love, & joy of life in the fellowship of Father/Son/Spirit.

Back in my much much much younger days, when I travelled in some pretty rabid evangelical Christian circles, we would often start conversations with folks like this: "If you died tonight, would you go to heaven?" I think that was the wrong question. I think a better one might be this: When you wake up tomorrow morning, why will you get out of bed? gotta go to the toilet is not a good enough answer...I hope it's this...

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard & seen. We saw him with our own eyes & touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, & we have seen him. Now we testify & proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, & then he was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen & heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father & with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

You get out of bed for Jesus...to make his life visible in you...to allow him the reins of your day....Jesus crucified, risen & ruling over all things comes to us to give us the confidence, boldness, & assurance to make visible His life/love/joy in our daily lives no matter what we encounter. It is Jesus who stands triumphant over all the fake & pretend & dying things of this world to bring us to life with the Father in the company of His people.

Let's pray for God's work to continue uninterrupted until it is complete...Father, you call us to be your family through your Son Jesus Christ. Fill us with his life that we may be confident in sharing the good news not only in words but through our lives, that those around us may experience your love & life that are eternal & are woven into fellowship with you that endures in all circumstances in joy in your presence. In Jesus' Name...Amen