

WELCOME 22 April 2018 – 4 Easter '18 B

1 John 1:5-2:17

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...

Post-Modern - You know you've heard it in the news or read it somewhere...We're told we live in a post-modern era where the old ideas of truth don't hold any more. Rather than being a fixed point...Truth is relative. Truth is personal...you have yours & I have mine. Truth is subjective...it depends on circumstances. Truth is cultural...what is seen as true in 1 society or time is not in another...Even saying that aloud...just hearing truth described that way...you know better.

Some things are just true...the surface of the sun is hotter than the surface of the earth...the table we use for an altar at LW is made of wood...DNA is a double helix. These are not hypotheses awaiting verification, or temporary approximations of an ever elusive truth, not local truths that might be denied in another culture. They are just plain true. This also is true: *"If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves & not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins, God is faithful & just to forgive our sins & to cleanse us from all wickedness."* – 1 Jn 1:8-9

The truth is we & our world are broken by sin & can only be put right as God desires in relationship to him by Jesus Christ. *"For God has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness & transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom & forgave our sins...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."* – Col. 1:13-14, 20

It's that truth of what God has already done for us through His Son Jesus Christ that John...the beloved disciple & grandfather of the early church...lifts up again for us. That truth of God's eternal love for us in Jesus can be trusted for life itself forever: Jesus crucified, risen & ruling over all things comes to us to give us the confidence, boldness, & assurance to make visible the truth of his love in our daily lives.

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

Let's pray...

In the presence of the Holy God whose word has called the universe into being, we stand in awe. In the presence of the Spirit's wind that stirs within us and causes our hearts to thirst for love, we stand in need. In your presence, Lord Jesus Giver of life, we come to worship. Open us to truth and love and wholeness. Amen.

4 EASTER '18 B A – VISIBLE CHURCH: VISIBLE TRUTH – 1 JOHN 1:5-2:17

- FAITH CHAT:** 1. Did you have a favourite make-believe game as a child? What was it?
2. When you were younger...what did you want to be when you grew up?

We grow up playing pretend. We play house...pretend to be mum/dad. We pretend to be cops & robbers...in Tx cowboys & Indians. Some play dress-up. There are pretend friends. Pretend pets. Pretend families (husbands, kids) My kids are holding their breath to see if I'll name names...nah There are pretend jobs. Pretend adventures. Pretend travels...1000's of pretend deaths. Pretend sports victories.

Some folks become famous by pretending...Rich Little *the man of 1000 voices* made his living on TV & the Vegas nightclub scene as an impressionist. He did a comedy routine using the voices of famous people. You know this lady: Dame Edna/Barry Humphries' alter ego...He's famous for being her. Then there was Frank Abagnale...the bald guy on the left. He is one of the most famous pretenders ever. ^{b/t} the ages of 15/21 he assumed no fewer than 8 identities (incl pilot, physician, a US Prisons Bureau agent, & lawyer). In reality...he was a fatherless teenaged con man. The movie *Catch me if You Can* w/ Leonardo DiCaprio & Tom Hanks told the Hollywood version of his life of crime...security consultant now

We pretend about any number of things...to be listening when someone else is talking...like right now? To be interested in a topic of conversation among friends...To like a popular movie/TV show/book...To agree with someone who's complaining about something...I've known people who pretended to be Christian...they were pretend disciples. They could find a church now & then. Sing a few songs. Say some prayers. Sometimes give \$\$\$. It's easy to pretend faith...really it is. You can paper over the pretense with relative ease. It happens.

In fact, it was precisely that sort of pretense that John speaks to in his letters. **BIBLES** Last week *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...we testify & proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life.* John's clear His witness is based on actual experience w/ Jesus...lived experience in relationship w/ the Word of Life. No one else was alive any more who could offer that unique verifiable trustworthy witness. There were & ARE phonies/fakers who claim all sorts of visions/insights/wisdom/gifts but John with force says trust only those who bear the apostolic good news...Luther- 7-yr old child armed with the Word of God is superior to all the popes/bishops/councils because we know those chuckleheads make mistakes!

What did we just hear? *This is the message we heard from Jesus & now declare to you: God is light, & there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, & the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.* This is huge...hear this in context. John starts by saying "I have a lived relationship with Jesus. In that relationship w/ Jesus, Jesus told me what I am about to tell you..." *God is light & there is no darkness in Him at all.* Which means?

Light illuminates reality & reveals what's hidden. Light enables people to work. Light produces growth in plants & people. It reveals beauty & provides safety. Light, as the first thing God created, is "good." Light is good, pure, true, holy, & reliable. To say God is light unblemished undarkened unshadowed is to say that God's very essence is perfectly holy & true & good.

Then John makes a series of "If...But if..." contrasts...God, whose essence is light unblemished undarkened unshadowed...demands a moral choice. **Vs 6 - IF** I claim a relationship/life in God who is light but I live darkness...not just I do *bad things* but I choose self over others – I make my decisions based on convenience, pleasure, what's popular, easy, personal gain & not sacrifice, service love or imitation of Christ... Sin/Darkness is always "what do I get" – I/me/mine – you must serve me. Then my claim is a lie.

BUT IF...*we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship w/ each other, & the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin...*In the light you can't hide...in your secrets darkness you can cover up your failings & falterings but in the light...you are open, vulnerable, exposed...Light demands honesty...calls for transparency & integrity... "For God has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness & transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom & forgave our sins..." Col 1:13-14

Now...did John just say "Followers of Jesus don't sin"? No...he did not say that. What he said was when we walk in the light, every time our heart wants to rebel, every time the old self rears up & demands its way, every time we find ourselves choosing to live less than who we are as God's children...stuck in those same old ruts, going back into the pig wallow again & again...We stop & take stock of our hearts. We acknowledge the idolatry & wickedness that is there. We confess/repent/start again And you'll do that until you die. The 1st of Luther's 95 Theses - When our Lord & Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent", he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance. Repentance is how we grow. Confession/repentance is a mark of maturing faith. Sin is like a wart...you know you file it down freeze it burn it pray over it anoint it oil & then spray it with Windex...& 6 months later there it is again! But when you live in the light rather than blaming someone else for that wart you bring it to Jesus & trust that his death & his rez & his love & his grace will make you whole again because that is precisely what he has promised...So rather than turning off the lights hide deny blame...you go to Jesus whose blood is for

you. As we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin so that we can have fellowship with the Father & with the disciples all around us.

A Christian is not someone who never goes wrong, but someone who is enabled to repent and pick themselves up and begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside them, repairing them all the time, enabling them to repeat (in some degree) the kind of voluntary death which Christ Himself carried out.” ~C.S. Lewis

Then there’s a matched set of “If...But if...” **IF** we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves & not living in the truth. **BUT IF** we confess our sins to him, he is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Then...**IF** we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar & showing that his word has no place in our hearts. My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. **BUT IF** anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins — not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

I cannot pretend that I am somehow exempt from sin...either at this very moment or throughout my past. I cannot pretend that I am somehow untainted by the evil I so readily denounce in others. I cannot point in scorn at the speck in your eye without first acknowledging the log in my own. If I do those things...the only person deceived by that lie is me. I cannot hide behind my excuses or justifications or rationalizations...

The question John forces us to face: Is your life submitted to Jesus Christ? Are you allowing God’s word to make every thought captive to Jesus Christ? Are you facing the reality of your own on-going brokenness & need for healing honestly openly truthfully so that you can continually be remade into the image of Jesus Christ? How does John say it? “*And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments.*”

This is not about perfection...Let’s not make perfect the escape hatch for simply living what we profess. Well...I guess since I can’t be perfect I may as well not try. What rubbish! Never forget...look at these 3...see the power of grace at work. *But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, & the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.*

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & to cleanse us from all wickedness.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins — not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

I know I have said this before & I forget who I heard say it first: Grace is not only pardon it is also power. Grace transforms this dead sinner into a living image of Jesus Christ. Flawed & imperfect in this world but fully like him on that great day when all things are made new...the last word is always grace...forgiveness...cleansing...restoration...healing...

Some things are just true...Here’s a word you can take to heart & depend on: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I’m proof—Public Sinner Number One—of someone who could never have made it apart from sheer mercy. 1 Tim 1:15 MSG

This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all.

That is not a hypothesis awaiting verification, or a temporary approximation of an ever elusive truth, or a local truth that might be denied in another culture. We & our world are broken by sin & can only be put right as God desires in relationship to him by Jesus Christ. “*For God has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness & transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom & forgave our sins...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.*” – Col. 1:13-14, 20

American author Kurt Vonnegut once wrote: “We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” If all we ever are is pretend...then we die far from the real life Christ came to give. If all we ever do is pretend...then we die far from the love & joy that Christ came to make flourish in our hearts.

But it is that truth of what God has already done for us through His Son Jesus Christ that sets us free from pretense & grows in us God’s eternal love for us & gives us the power to trust Jesus for life itself forever. Jesus crucified, risen & ruling over all things comes to us to give us the confidence, boldness, & assurance to make visible the truth of his love in our daily lives.

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, thank you that your Word is true in all times in all ways. Let it expose and heal our broken souls. For those of us that have wandered off into lies, I pray that you would reveal it very clearly to us so that we might confess and repent and return to you. Give us a clear view of our heart where we have delayed or refused obedience or where we have no intent of really lining up our lives to you because at that place we will find mercy because of the blood of Your Son, Jesus. Help us now. We pray in Jesus’ Name...Amen