

REFLECTIONS



April 11, 2021

1 John 1:1-2:2

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us-- we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

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GOD IS LIGHT

by
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On this Sunday, we begin a series of reflections on the First Letter of John. In today's reading, we encounter one of the most intriguing definitions of God, God is light.

When you think of the two most popular one-word descriptions of God (God is light and God is love) what becomes apparent is that God is a life-giving and life-nurturing action and given these descriptions, God is defined as a verb. When we say God is love, we're not describing the mere concept of love, we're describing God as constantly loving. When we describe God as light, we are describing God as constantly giving light and thereby constantly creating and sustaining life. There is no life without light and there is no life-nurturing meaning to life without love.

This morning, I invite us to spend some time with this description of God as light. What we know of the connection between light and life makes it clear that God is also Life. In truth, by definition God is the fullness of life. As mind-bending as it sounds, given the premise that in God there is no darkness at all, non-existence doesn't exist where God is concerned; that God is the unbegotten and the unending source of life or, simply put, God IS. This is more than mere metaphor. The resurrection of Jesus gives witness to it and to what one might call a greater, a clearer, a brighter reality.

On this Second Sunday of Easter, we continue to ponder the mystery of the resurrection; that death is not the final end of life but rather that from death comes life. The apostle Paul put it this way in his first letter to the Corinthians:

“So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.... It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed...”

When these letters were being written the tendency for the people living at the time was to think that this change would happen in their life time. Both John and Paul tempered their expectation without tempering their hope. Paul, in particular, reminds us that our flesh and blood existence is linked to the first Adam, our first parents and takes us back to their story to remind us that we are still living in a world that continues to follow the script started by Adam and Eve; that we continue to follow and contribute to its original plot line which always ends in death.

Perhaps the greatest lie of the serpent was, “You will not die.” As with all effective lies, there was a grain of truth in it. There was always the Tree of Life available to Adam and Eve, but as the story goes, God, out of mercy, drove them out Eden and guarded the Tree of Life until it emerged as the Vine of the risen Christ, the new Adam.

God knew what Adam and Eve were not able to comprehend, that with the ability to write our own script, we would inevitably have created not only a living hell on earth but also a perpetual hell in which faith, hope, and love could not have existed and where life would have been utterly meaningless.

Death remains a fact of this life for us as well as it was for Jesus. Death is not only a tragic reminder of the frailty of this life, but as we see in the light of Jesus' resurrection, God, in his mercy, made it serve as an entrance into the fullness of a new life in Christ, and not for us alone, but as Paul says, "*we will all be changed.*"

Paul's use of "all" literally means all, everyone and everything will be changed. In God there is no waste and since we are all part of that being in which we live, move, and have our being, we are assured that the script of our making will not effect the original script of God's creation.

Science tells us that while physical life emerged as a byproduct of the Sun's light filtered through our planets atmosphere and hydrosphere, should our living flesh ever be exposed directly to the Sun's pure unfiltered radiant light, it would be destroyed. It is interesting and perhaps not so coincidental that God is often depicted in scripture as a pure, radiant light; that no one could look into the face of God and live.

Moses was one notable exception and after being in God's presence, he had to cover his own face because it radiated with the light of God that no one could look him in the face. Jesus in his transfiguration radiated with light. Paul was blinded by the light of the risen Christ. Perhaps it was his encounter with such a light that caused Paul to write, "*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The perishable cannot inherit the imperishable.*"

John reminds us as does Paul, that while we are living into Christ in this world, we remain very much the offspring of our first flesh and blood parents. As such we are not entitled to say we are no longer sinners or that being freed from the effects of sins, we are free to sin, quite the opposite.

In the light of God's mercy and grace, we need to acknowledge that we are sinners; that we do not always love God or our neighbors, that we do things that we shouldn't do, and fail to do the things we should. While we remain very much the flesh and blood offspring of our first parents, by God's grace, we are called to follow our brother Jesus and walk in the light of God.

Walking in the light of God means living in humility, acknowledging who we are and whose we are.

Walking in the light of God means allowing the light of God to filter through our lives, to be a life-giving and life sustaining source for all God's children.

Walking in the light of God means to shed the light of God in those dark places where hope, faith, and love struggle to survive, so that those who have lost hope, faith, and love may be drawn to it.

So, let us walk with Jesus; walking in the light and in the love of God. Amen.

LET US EVER WALK WITH JESUS

***Let us ever walk with Jesus, follow his example pure,
through a world that would deceive us and to sin our spirits lure.
Onward in his footsteps treading, pilgrims here, our home above,
full of faith and hope and love, let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where you guide.***

(Sigismund von Birken 1628-1681)