

“Revealed”
1 John 1:1-2:11
Sermon #96
Easter II
57th Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic
4.11.21

1 John 1:1-2:11 CEB

1 We announce to you what existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have seen and our hands handled, about the word of life. **2** The life was revealed, and we have seen, and we testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. **3** What we have seen and heard, we also announce it to you so that you can have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4** We are writing these things so that our joy can be complete.

5 This is the message that we have heard from him and announce to you: “God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.” **6** If we claim, “We have fellowship with him,” and live in the darkness, we are lying and do not act truthfully. **7** But if we live in the light in the same way as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. **8** If we claim, “We don’t have any sin,” we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong. **10** If we claim, “We have never sinned,” we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I’m writing these things to you so that you don’t sin. But if you do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. **2** He is God’s way of dealing with

our sins, not only ours but the sins of the whole world. **3** This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commandments. **4** The one who claims, "I know him," while not keeping his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in this person. **5** But the love of God is truly perfected in whoever keeps his word. This is how we know we are in him. **6** The one who claims to remain in him ought to live in the same way as he lived.

7 Dear friends, I'm not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the message you heard. **8** On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light already shines. **9** The one who claims to be in the light while hating a brother or sister is in the darkness even now. **10** The person loving a brother and sister stays in the light, and there is nothing in the

light that causes a person to stumble. **11** But the person who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and lives in the darkness, and doesn't know where to go because the darkness blinds the eyes.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

I don't know about you, but I hate receiving notes without a name or a letter where the person and address of origin are absent on the

envelope or package. Seriously, I have received some Christmas gifts that had no name or address attached to them in the mail, but I was eventually able to track the people down. Yet, here we are with 1 John. It's considered a letter, yet there's no one who claims a name to be the author. It just gets right down to business. No name. No greeting. Nothing. But, it's considered part of a body of letters that make up 1-3 John. 2 and 3 John are written by a person named "the Elder". Possibly someone named John the Elder who was influenced by the Beloved Disciple, John.

Yes, there are some similarities with John's Gospel and the tendency is to lump 1-3 John with the Gospel of John. Yes, there is the short prologue in 1 John that has overtones of John's opening prologue. Yes, the dualities of light and dark and life and death are very much present in this epistle, much like John. Yes, the closing

verses of both share commonalities with phrases like “I write these things so that you might believe...”.

However, it's best to separate the letters from the Gospel. Reading 1-3 John apart from the Fourth Gospel. There are internal forces at work in the epistles that seek to harm the Church in 1 John, whereas there were external forces at work in the Gospel of John. There is also a stronger vision of the future for Christ's return in the epistle.

There is a paternal tone in 1 John. While we don't have a name for the author, the recipients are called “little children”. There is this relationship of parent and child or student and teacher.

Some of today's verses may also seem familiar to you. Possibly verse five of chapter one: "God is light and there is no darkness in him at all." Or further along in verse eight: "If we claim, 'We don't have any sin,' we deceive ourselves...". These verses and others point to internal threats in this community.

The internal forces in this community believe they are walking with God, but the author is calling them out on their bogus claims. The author, whom I will refer to as the Elder from here on out, is helping this community of believers sift through the fake and the real. The opponents of this community are content in their own mess. They are content groping around in the bleakness instead of facing the reality of God's light. These opponents are tricking others to join them.

Methodically throughout this letter, the Elder attacks the position of the opponents. And what better way to attack one's opponent than to quote them? Verses six, eight, and ten help present the Elder's case:

If we claim, "We have fellowship with him,"...

If we claim, "We don't have any sin,"...

If we claim, "We have never sinned,"...

These opponents to this community have convinced themselves that they have fellowship with God. Yet, they claim they don't have sin. To add to the ridiculous alternate reality these opponents live in, they also claim, and probably believe, that they have never sinned.

The Elder has a lot of ammunition to use against these opponents. Their claims are bogus. Their claims are unfounded. And the Elder is calling them out on it.

To counter the poison the opponents have been spreading among the community, the Elder presents to us chapter two. Heck, he even starts out in verse one of the second chapter that they are being written these things so that they don't sin. And even IF, or rather WHEN, they sin, they have an advocate found in Jesus Christ. In other words, the Elder admits that the people are in need of a Savior. The opponents claim that they don't need a Savior and are masters of their own destinies.

And how does one know if they or someone else are truly walking in the light of God? It's by their actions. And the Elder continues his argument against the opponents in chapter two that those who truly live in the light keep God's commandment to love. They love God, they love their neighbors, and they love themselves.

This commandment isn't anything new! In fact, it goes all the way back to the beginning in the Garden of Eden to tend to the garden. It continues with Moses and the Hebrews when they were given the Ten Commandments. It moves along in the prophets who called the people to change their hearts and lives. It is lived out in the ministry of Jesus who preached the Good News that God was and is on the loose.

This community that the Elder is writing to knows these stories all the way back to Genesis. They've heard the commandment to love God and each other. What they haven't heard or maybe they have forgotten, is that holding resentment or even the hatred of a sibling is not God's will. Yet, their opponents are fine with that. Maybe they have been accustomed to holding onto the hurt another sibling in the community caused, whether intentionally or unintentionally. And this harmful practice spread in the community. Or maybe people were so ashamed of their own shortcomings that they refused to admit that they did anything wrong and that habit, too, spread around.

Something Peter Rhea Jones in his commentary on 1 John says about holding onto resentment and hatred got my attention this week.¹ Obviously, hatred harms the community. We've seen it

¹ Peter Rhea Jones. *1, 2, & 3 John*. Smyth & Hellwys: Macon, 2009, pp. 69-70.

happen when relationships fall apart or when bigots gun down people based on their skin color or faith. And hate harms the individual. Even if a person doesn't actively harm the community through physical violence, brooding over resentment or hatred against someone is bad for one's own physical and mental health! It creates barriers. It distorts one's own view of others. It keeps people distant. It clouds a person's vision. It fuels obsession.

Yet, there is a better way! The Elder points us to it: Stay in the light of God. Live in the light of God. Yearn for the light of God. When there is resentment and hatred, give it over to God. Talk with anyone you are having issues with and be open and honest. No one has time for resentment and hatred. It's unhealthy and it's godless. There is nothing lifegiving about it. Yet, when we do sin and when we do have those moments, we have an advocate,

Jesus Christ, who by his life, death, and resurrection, defeated resentment and hatred.

My beloved siblings in Christ, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer. Amen.