

Walking in the Light

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. The New Testament lesson this morning is a reading from the first letter of John, chapter 1, verses 5-10, and chapter 2, verses 1 and 2.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice 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 cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

[1 : 31] 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.

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. This is the word of the Lord.

You can take your seats. So, I just want to introduce our guest preacher today. His name is John Kong. For those of you who aren't familiar with the history of our church, we started in 2006, and part of the heart of this church has been to engage the college students just two blocks down the street from where we worship.

And so, when this church was started, they came with two founding pastors and what's called an RUF minister, a Reformed University Fellowship minister, basically a campus minister to help us reach the students at Cal.

And so, that happened all the way in 2006. Since then, that original founding RUF minister has gone and planted his own church in Oakland, and they're good friends with us. And now we are at our third RUF minister here at Cal, and Christ Church is happy to be supporting this ministry, very excited about what God is doing in this ministry.

[2 : 49] Amy and myself have been able to visit and serve this ministry a few times, and we just always love spending time with the students and hearing the stories of what God's up to at this super formative time in the life of students.

So, I'm going to invite John Kong up, and he's going to deliver the word today. And we're so thankful to have you, John. Thanks, Pat. Well, good morning, everyone.

It is such a privilege to be here and have an opportunity to worship with you all and share God's word with you all this morning. As Andrew mentioned, I'm the campus minister for RUF Berkeley, so I bring greetings to you from RUF Berkeley.

I really appreciate all the prayers and support from this church. And if you would love to learn more about what God is doing in Berkeley through the ministry of RUF, I'd love to chat with you afterwards. So please come find me after worship and say hi.

But as you just heard, Carrie read our passage. We're looking at this morning. It's 1 John 1, verses 5, through chapter 2, verse 2. It's a very familiar, it's a pretty familiar passage to, I think, most of us, especially maybe in verse 9 that you just heard read.

[3 : 56] It's often quoted when we're talking about forgiveness of sins, assuring us of God's forgiveness. There's a lot going on in this passage, but the main thing that John wants to tell us in this passage is how as Christians, you and I are to walk in the light.

And I think that is a timely and important reminder for us. Andrew prayed this during our time of confession, but we don't have to look too far to see how broken and how dark our world is.

You turn on the news, pull up whatever news app on your phone, and you will get inundated with news about the brokenness of our world, from natural disasters, to shootings, to wars that are going on across the globe.

In fact, actually, you and I don't have to turn on the news. We just have to walk around our city of Berkeley. I just have to walk around the campus of Berkeley. And you come pretty quickly face-to-face with the homeless problem, the drug crisis that can ravage our city.

Those are just some of the things that make this world dark. They don't even include the darkness that is within our own hearts. All of us sitting here this morning have dark secrets that we don't want anyone else knowing.

[5 : 11] All of us struggle to walk in the light. But John wants to assure you that, yes, even though you and I are sinners, because of Jesus, our sins have been forgiven.

And because of Jesus, we can have fellowship with God and we can walk in the light. That is the gospel. That is the good news that should bring us tremendous comfort and joy.

And so we're going to look at that through this passage this morning. But before we dive in, would you pray with me one more time? Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, you tell us that your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

And so give us humble and teachable hearts as we receive your truth today. And may your word not only encourage and edify us, but also give us the strength to do what you've commanded. It's in Christ's name we pray.

Amen. I want to imagine you at a grocery store buying groceries for the week. And let's say you have a dietary restriction. Maybe you can't eat gluten.

[6 : 08] You're vegan. Maybe you don't like, you can't eat dairy. And so if you're at a grocery store and you're buying groceries, you probably are spending a good amount of time looking at ingredients.

Looking to see if the food you are by is safe for you to eat. I mean, obviously companies know this. And so a lot of the marketing that companies will do, the branding, the packaging that they will put on their food is they will put in big bold letters a statement about this food.

For example, that this food is gluten-free. This food is dairy-free. This food is vegan-friendly. So you will know right from the outset that this food is safe for you to buy and eat.

They put that in big bold letters. It's a message for their consumer. What John is doing in this passage, he's doing something kind of similar, which is he is putting in big bold letters a message about God, right?

John is putting in big bold letters a statement about God. And that statement is that God is light, that he is darkness-free. That's the main message that John wants to share.

- [7 : 16] If you go back with me, look at verse five, the first verse of our passage. John says this. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you. This is the message.
- In the first four verses of this letter, we didn't read that this morning, but John is preparing you for this message. It's kind of like an intro. Because in those first four verses, John has been saying that he's heard and he saw and he's touched Jesus.
- He's had fellowship with them. He's gotten to know him. He's been with Christ. And he wants to tell you something that he has learned from that time he spent with Jesus. And then in verse five, the first verse of our passage today, he finally comes out and says it.
- And he says, God is light and in him is no darkness at all. This is the message. This is the news that John wants to share with us.
- In the first four verses again, John has kind of said as an introduction that you and I can have fellowship with God. And now in verse five, he says that God is light, which means that for us to have fellowship with God, you and I have to walk in the light.
- [8 : 26] But therein lies our problem. We are not in the light. We are unfortunately in darkness. Light and darkness can't coexist. And so what do we do? How do we react to this message?
- For some of you, maybe you hear that and you think, okay, I need to work really hard to cleanse myself of the darkness inside me. But then you realize, try as hard as you might, you can't do it. And you despair.
- And others of you, maybe you hear that and you think, okay, well then what's the point? I'm just going to live my life how I want because there is no hope for me to get rid of this darkness inside myself.
- There's no point in trying. And John wants to dispel both those notions in his message today. He wants to tell us that because Christ confronted the darkness for you, you and I can walk in the light.
- Right? That because Christ confronted the darkness for you and for me, you and I can walk in the light. And we want to look at this through three points this morning.
- [9 : 28] And the first is God is light. Second is that we need light. And third is Christ brings light. Right? God is light. We need light. And Christ brings light.
- And so first, God is light. When you think about the concept of light, when that word gets used, what images go through your mind?
- Maybe for some of you, you think of like a warm, sunny day at the beach. You're enjoying the sun rays, the sunshine. And so light has the idea of warmth and beauty and life.
- For others of you, maybe you like backpacking. Like Melissa just said, she came back from vacation. She was in nature. And you think of light as like, it's nighttime, it's dark, and light is like a flashlight, lighting your way back to where you're staying.
- And so light then has the idea of safety, of security. Or maybe continue on with that camping thing. Maybe you think of light as like roasting marshmallows by a fire, making s'mores with your family and friends.
- [10 : 34] And so light there has the idea of friendship and love and family. Those are all concepts that can be associated with light.
- And they all convey something different. But they also all have one common thread that runs through them. And that common thread is that light is good.
- And so that's what John wants to tell us. The first thing that John wants to tell us, he wants to proclaim, he wants to emphasize to his hearers, is that God is good.

If someone comes to you, maybe you have a friend or a neighbor who's not a Christian, they say, hey, you believe in God, can you tell me what God is like? I don't know what adjective comes to your mind first when you're describing God.

My guess is for most of us, if we were to describe God, we'd describe him as powerful, as holy, as righteous, as just, as wise. And yes, God is all those things.

[11 : 33] It is important that he is all those things. But how far down the list of adjectives would it take before you came to describe God as good?

It's not that difficult, I think, for people who believe that there is a God to also accept that that God has to be holy and powerful and wise even.

But when it comes to God being good, that is harder for us sometimes to believe, isn't it? When you look around and see some of the injustices that go on in this world, I'm sure some of you have asked the question, where is God?

Does he care? When you hear that a friend of yours or a family member has been diagnosed with a debilitating illness, or worse yet, when you hear that that friend or family member has passed away all too early, do you question the goodness of God?

Scripture reminds us in a lot of places that God is good. 1 Chronicles 16, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his mercy endures forever. Psalm 34, taste and see that the Lord is good.

[12 : 47] In James chapter 1, James says, every good gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of lights. Right there, again, God is associated with being light and with good.

And so similarly, John wants to remind his hearers, he wants to remind you that God is good. He wants to reassure you that even though this world is often dark, that your Heavenly Father is not.

He is light, he is good, right? That's the message John saw with Jesus. That's what Christ reveals when he comes to this earth and that's what John wants to proclaim for you and I to hear.

So the first thing for it, the first thing it means for God to be light is that God is good. But this light imagery also has another aspect to it, doesn't it? Maybe instead of imagining a campfire roasting marshmallows, you imagine light as like wildfires burning through acres and acres of land and so light there has the idea of being maybe even dangerous and destructive.

Maybe instead of like a flashlight lighting your way back to the campground, you imagine light or you think of light as like a police light shining behind you when they've pulled you over on the side of the road and so light there has the idea of embarrassment and shame.

[14 : 16] Perhaps instead of like a sunny day at the beach, you picture light as like one of those heat waves that we've been having and so instead of warm sunshine, you imagine light with the feeling of uncomfortableness, maybe even of pain.

When John says that God is light, he adds a phrase that in him is no darkness at all. Light gets rid of darkness, the two are opposite of one another, God is a good God.

His goodness is better than anything you or I can ever dream of. But that also means that darkness cannot have fellowship with the light. Now that's good in one sense.

We want a God who can get rid of darkness. We want a God who is righteous and just and makes things fair. Right? If you're driving down on the highway and you see someone driving past you way too fast, weaving in and out of traffic, you want the police officer to pull that person over so that the streets are safe to drive again.

If you are in school and you get an email from your professor saying there's been a lot of you in this class who have been caught cheating, you don't want your professor to let them off the hook. You want him to be fair.

[15 : 32] We want a God who won't put up with sin. We want a God who won't be affected by the darkness and instead will remove it. We want all those things until we are the ones speeding down the interstate, until we are the ones who are caught cheating.

We want the light until we realize that we ourselves are not in the light. We're actually in darkness and that's the problem we have. I don't know if you noticed in our passage today but starting in verse 6 there is a lot of if statements.

John has proclaimed this message, God is light and then he works out the implications of that for us in these conditional if statements and in verse 6 he says, if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness we lie and do not practice the truth.

So John first says you and I can't live in both worlds. You can't live in darkness and have fellowship with the light. John doesn't beat around the bush. He says if you say that he calls you a liar.

Now some of you might think, okay well then perhaps I'm not actually walking in darkness. I'm not perfect but I'm not walking in darkness. There's plenty of people out there who are doing worse things than me.

[16 : 47] They're really walking in darkness. I'm not. But John is dismissing that notion. In God there is no darkness at all.

Not even a smidge. Unless you are living a perfect life. Unless there is no iota of sin in you then you are not walking in the light. You do not have fellowship with God and if you say you do then you lie.

Well then some of you might say fine. It's impossible. I'm going to be honest. Say I can't live perfectly. I'm just going to live how I want to live. And John anticipates that too. Look at verse 7 with me.

Verse 7 John says but if we walk in the light as he is in the light. Do you notice John doesn't make a case? He doesn't even try to make a case about whether or not you can walk in the light.

He just assumes that it's possible. John knows that our default reaction as people who sin as people who are not perfect is to hide from the light. John knows this because he heard it from Jesus.

[17 : 52] In the gospel of John John chapter 3 verses 19 through 21 this is right after the famous John 3 16 passage. Right? God so loved the world he gave his only son.

Right after that passage this is what Jesus says. Listen to what he says. The light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed. but whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

We hide from the light because we fear the light will expose our darkness. We fear being fully known. We fear all of our deepest and darkest secrets being shined under a spotlight because we fear being rejected.

We fear being canceled. We fear the guilt and the shame that it would bring on us. And yet we are also somehow drawn to the light.

[18 : 57] We want to be able to walk in the light to not walk in darkness. And John says that we can. And that leads me to my second point.

We need light. More specifically we need to walk in the light. Right? If God is light and we want fellowship with the light then we have to walk in it. And the question is how.

And John highlights here at least three things that we should see happen when we walk in the light. And the first is confession. Walking in the light means living a life of confession.

We see that starting in verse 8 and 9. In verse 8 it starts another conditional statement similar to verse 6. He says, If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. If verse 6 wasn't clear enough, if John had not convinced you yet that you were walking in darkness he makes it crystal clear here.

You have sinned. Now for those of you sitting here this morning who are Christians you know this. You believe this. You confess this.

[20 : 01] But I want to talk to perhaps any non-Christians in the room here this morning for a second. If you're not a Christian here today maybe you're here because you're curious about the claims of Christianity. Maybe a friend has invited you and you've come this morning to check it out and you've been listening to me harp on sin for the last 10 minutes and you're regretting your decision to spend Sunday morning here.

Let me first say we are so glad you're here. I'm so glad you're here. It really does mean a lot to us that you're willing to spend part of your Sunday morning here with us. We don't take it for granted. But I also want to speak with you honestly for a second.

To tell you what our world and what our culture will not tell you. Because if you maintain the belief that you have no sin then you are self-deceived. You are in darkness.

Our world is all about being authentic. Right? Being true to ourself. True to our heart. Being true to who you are. Well unfortunately if you claim you have no sin that is the most unauthentic act you could commit against yourself.

This is why John says in verse 9 if we confess our sins. Again, John is not questioning whether or not you have sinned. He's just questioning whether or not you have confessed it. Verse 9 is probably one of the most comforting verses not just in the book of 1 John but in the whole Bible.

[21 : 23] John wants to assure you that when you confess your sins to God he forgives you. He cleanses you from all unrighteousness. Right? This builds off of what John says in verse 7 that the blood of Jesus cleanses you from sin.

I think confession is a scary concept for us because we often are not sure what happens to us after we confess our sins. And if any of you have been pulled over by a police officer before and you're sitting there on the side of the road and the police lights are shining in your rear view mirror the cop comes up you pull down your window and the cop asks do you know why I've pulled you over?

Maybe some of you are like me. Maybe some of you are like me and when that happens you say I'm so sorry officer I know why you pulled me over I was speeding I was going too fast I promise I will never ever do that again.

What am I doing? I'm confessing. I'm confessing my transgression and the question is why? Why am I doing that? And it's because I'm hoping that the police officer will let me off with a warning.

And sometimes it does work you get lucky you get let off with a warning but sometimes a few weeks later in the mail you get a big fat fine.

[22 : 46] Well John here is saying that when you confess your sin you do not have to worry about whether or not you'll be forgiven. Jesus has paid the penalty for you his blood has already cleansed your sin.

It's like if you got pulled over for a speeding ticket and the cop did not let you off with a warning but actually gave you a ticket but instead a few weeks later instead of getting a large fine in the mail you get a letter saying that that fine has been paid in full.

Friends, God did not shed his son's blood to withhold that from you. Come to Jesus confess your sins and be assured that his blood washes over your sin again and again and again and again.

So walking in the light for us first means living a life of confession but the second thing we should see we see is having fellowship with one another. This goes back to verse 7 John says if we walk in the light we have fellowship with one another.

When God calls us out of darkness and into light he doesn't just call you out individually he calls you into the light with one another. Because if you can imagine if you are walking in the light by yourself surrounded by darkness that can be lonely that can be a scary place.

[24 : 13] But John here is saying that you are not alone that walking in the light means having people around you walking with you being there with you helping you when you falter. And that should make sense especially if our life is already characterized by one of confession.

Because when you and I do life together we unfortunately sin against one another because we're sinners. But when we confess our sins to God we should also confess our sins to one another.

God has given us each other to bear one another's burdens to assure one another of God's promise of forgiveness he has for us. Don't bear the weight of your sin by yourself but live a life of confessing and forgiving one another as God forgave you.

The third thing that walking in the light means is living a life that dies to sin and lives to righteousness. And I get this from chapter 2 verse 1 John says I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

John lays out the purpose of this section he has been saying all these things so that we might live a life walking in the light which means leaving the darkness.

[25 : 33] John and more importantly God wants us to walk in righteousness because sin is destructive it dishonors God and it hurts us. Now you might be thinking alright I know that one God is light and because he is light two I need to walk in the light by confessing my sins by having fellowship with one another by living righteously but man that is that is so hard that is so difficult where am I going to find the strength where am I going to find the motivation where am I going to find the endurance to live like this that leads me to my last point Christ brings light.

John anticipates that question of where you are going to find that motivation to walk in the light and he answers that also in verse 1 of chapter 2 after he said he wants them not to sin he says but if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous and so one way Christ brings us into the light is by being our advocate when we think of the word advocate we think of someone who is on our side someone who supports us who expresses our thoughts and our feelings and our dreams to others advocate has all those connotations but here the word advocate also has a legal connotation kind of like a lawyer John is saying in one sense Christ is like our legal representation I don't know how many of you might have followed this news but around two years ago around this time one of the biggest news items was when the actor Johnny Depp and the actress Amber Heard were in like a defamation trial lawsuit against one another

I don't know if you guys remember this or how many of you followed this it was all over social media at the time but if you did not follow that trial one of the things that came out was that one of Johnny Depp's lawyers her name was Camille Vasquez she became super famous and she became super famous because of the way she advocated for Johnny Depp she was calm cool and collected she asked tough questions on the other side she made sure that Johnny's name and reputation were not dragged through the mud now just as a disclaimer I'm not trying to make a stance one way or another on what ended up in that trial both celebrities have a lot of issues both of them seem to be walking in darkness given a lot of the testimony I don't I didn't know all the details of the cases myself but the point of bringing up this illustration is because public consensus was that Camille did a much better job defending Johnny Depp than the other side and at the end of the trial

Camille did such a good job she did such a good job that she actually got promoted to being partner of her firm but she did such a good job because instead of making Johnny Depp pay like I think 20 million dollars in damages the judge ruled that Johnny only had to pay like 1 million dollars she reduced that fine by like almost 19 million dollars but that means that Johnny Depp still had to pay a 1 million dollar fine so can you imagine if after the ruling Camille then went up to the judge and said your honor instead of Johnny Depp having to pay the fine I will pay the fine for him right no lawyer in their right mind would ever do that not even the best lawyers in the world would ever do that but that's what Jesus did for us Jesus is not only the best lawyer the best advocate we could ever ask for but he also went above and beyond and paid our penalty for us and that's what is meant by that word propitiation there in verse 2 of chapter 2 right

Jesus brings us into the light first by being our advocate but secondly by being the propitiation for our sins and propitiation that's a big nice vocab word what it means is to appease anger and in this case it means to appease God's anger imagine if you parked your car here around Berkeley and you left your wallet in your car and you walk back to your car and there's been a smash and grab and your wallet is stolen the first thing you might feel is you might be distraught right how could this thing happen to me but pretty closely the next emotion you might feel is anger right you'd be angry that someone would do this to you and even if the perpetrator was caught even if the perpetrator fixed your car replaced all of the contents in your wallet you could still be angry right what would it take for your anger to go away would the perpetrator need to spend some time in jail for what they did would the perpetrator maybe need to pay for the counseling you now need because now you're traumatized and are afraid to drive in Berkeley whatever the case may be something would need to be done in order for your anger to be removed well that's what

[30 : 56] Jesus does for us when we sin against God when we walk in the darkness we not only have the guilt of that sin but we also bring about God's righteous anger because of it and so when Christ died on the cross for your sins his blood not only washed away the guilt but he also removed God's wrath for you it's no coincidence that when Jesus died on the cross the whole land was covered in darkness Jesus Christ the light of the world he brought his light into the world and he faced the ultimate darkness of death for you and me the darkness that you and I should have faced so that you might be brought into the light so that you could walk in the light right that's the gospel that is good news you and I can be free to confess our sins to one another because we know Jesus has paid the penalty and removed God's wrath for us you and I can strive to live a life that dies to sin and lives to righteousness because Jesus Christ the righteous one has already closed us with his righteousness you and I can have confidence knowing that we are already walking in the light because he has brought his light in exchange for our darkness do you remember in the very beginning

I said that God is good right well one reason that he is good is because God sought out a solution for you to get you out of walking in darkness and into his glorious light right the goodness of God was manifested in Jesus when he became the propitiation for your sins when he rose and ascended into heaven and is even now your advocate before the Father my friends be assured of that goodness find joy in that goodness and walk in that goodness amen let's pray dear heavenly Father thank you for being a good good Father for sending your Son to face the darkness so that we can walk in your light Jesus thank you for not only appeasing God's wrath towards our sin but for continually advocating for us even now in heaven Holy Spirit apply these truths to our lives so that we might walk in them it's in Christ's name we pray amen thank you

God Him grenade thank you forising