

Thursday English Communion Preparatory

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Preacher: Rev George Macaskill

[0 : 00] Let's turn to the passage in the Bible which we read, the first letter of John, and I want to read again and concentrate on the first two verses of chapter 2.

So that's 1 John chapter 2 verses 1 and 2. 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 for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. He is the propitiation for our sins. That is what this weekend is all about.

[1 : 22] This weekend is all about Christ. It's not about you. It's not about you making a profession.

It is about Christ. It is about Christ as Savior of sinners. John is writing here to Christians. He wrote his gospel so that people would believe. He wrote his epistle to those who did believe. Chapter 5 verse 13 says it all. These, chapter 5 verse 13. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God.

That you may know that you have eternal life. You see, it is not good to be a believer and not know.

[2 : 29] You must know you have eternal life. And John has written this epistle to build the Christians up in their faith.

To encourage them, to assure them that they had eternal life. It would seem that the reason he wrote this letter, the occasion, is in chapter 2 verse 19.

It seems that the readers had become unnerved by a defection.

Some of their members had left them. And this had unnerved a lot of the true believers. Now we must understand that these people left not over some denominational difference.

Not over some local scandal. These people had left worshipping Christ because they were not true Christians.

[3 : 48] These people who had left had denied two particular things. They had denied that Jesus was God. And you see, if you don't believe Jesus is God, you're not a Christian.

These people did not believe in Christ's deity. And the second thing about them was they did not keep his commandments.

They did not feel any necessity to keep the commandments of God or of Christ. Verse 4 in chapter 2. Whoever says, I know him, but does not keep his commandments, is a liar.

And the truth is not in him. So in short, these people who had defected from the Christian church at this time, they had first of all no saving knowledge of Christ.

And secondly, they had no sense of sin. And the Christian religion is all about Christ saving us from our sins.

[5 : 06] Now with regard to the deity of Christ, John begins his letter by explaining to them how well he knew Christ.

This is what he means in verse 1. That which was from the beginning. Which we've heard. He's saying, I've heard him speak. I've seen him with my own eyes.

I've looked upon him. I've touched him with my hands. I knew him well, he says. I'm qualified to make some statements about Christ.

And you see, he maintained, I knew this Christ well. And he was God.

And you see, we have a saying today. Familiarity breeds content. And by that, we mean that once we get to know somebody very well, we begin to see their flaws.

[6 : 08] We begin to see, ah, they're not as perfect as I thought he was. Because you've got to know him better. The more you get to know someone, the more you begin to see their flaws and their imperfections.

That principle just did not work with Christ. It was the very opposite. And that's exactly what John is teaching here. Look, I knew this person very well. I even stayed with him. I knew him well.

And the more you get to know him, the more convinced you become, he really is the son of God. He is divine. The more you get to know him, the more convinced you become that he is exactly who he claims to be.

[7 : 12] Now, on the other hand, these people who had defected were not living the life. They were not living according to the commandments.

And so he says, anyone who, anyone in verse 4, as we read already in chapter 2, whoever says, I know him, but does not keep his commandments, he's a liar.

But you see, there were others in the congregation, or amongst these readers, who had gone to the other extreme. And they were saying, oh, it's my sin that's worrying me.

I realize I'm breaking God's commandments. How can I be a Christian? And this is who he's addressing here. These things I write to you so that you'll realize you must not sin.

But, if you do, and when you do, remember this, we have an advocate with the Father.

[8 : 14] if anyone does sin, don't come to the conclusion, you couldn't have been properly converted. If any of you who believe in Christ fall into sin, don't despair.

Don't come to the conclusion, oh, I must have been wrong about my conversion. He says, remember, when you sin, remember, we have an advocate with the Father.

Jesus Christ, the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins. Now, as God would help us, let's just look at these two things which the apostle is directing us to meditate upon when we're conscious of our sinnership.

and sinfulness. When you sin, when you're conscious of your sin, when you're convicted of your sin, remember, first of all, we Christians, we have an advocate with the Father.

It's probably worth just mentioning at this point, Christianity is not really the worship of Christ. Christianity is the worship of the triune God through Christ.

[9 : 44] We worship God the Father. We worship God the Son. We worship God the Holy Spirit. But we worship Him and we draw near to Him through the Son.

We have an advocate with the Father. Now, the Father, the scene here, I often think when we look at this here, the scene here is more or less the picture we have in Revelation chapter 12, verse 10, when we're told there that there is an accuser of the brethren.

you know who he is. Satan, the devil, we are told in Revelation 12, 10, every day and every night he goes into the courtroom of heaven and makes an accusation against the people of God.

He says something like this. The accuser of the brethren, prosecuting counsel if you like, goes in before the throne with the judge and says, see that child of yours?

Last night he sinned. Yesterday morning he sinned. I sinned. I'm in hell.

[11 : 12] Why aren't they in hell with me? And of course his case is allowed to proceed because it is true.

Last night his people sinned. This morning his people sinned. So the case has to proceed. It's factually true and accurate.

But then what happens? Who steps forward? The defense council. The advocate with the father steps forward and says, yes, that's correct.

My people have sinned as recently as this morning. but but my blood shed at Calvary's cross paid for their sins.

Let my people go. End of quote case. The advocate with the father has set them free.

[12 : 26] his, he paid for their sins at the cross of Calvary. Jesus Christ the righteous.

that is the name he's given. This advocate with the father. This advocate is authorized to be an advocate by the father.

He's got permission of the father to be the advocate. He's got authority. He's got power. He's got permission and blessed be his name. He's got the will and the desire.

Some advocates are not righteous. They're experts in law. Experts in law looking for loopholes. But there are no loopholes in God's law. The soul that sins shall die. There's no loopholes.

[13 : 43] God has sworn irrevocably the soul that sins shall die. So any advocate must face that issue.

the advocate with the father which Christians have is Jesus Christ the righteous. How can God be righteous and let people who have sinned off?

Well my friends he doesn't let them off. He takes payment for their sins. It is absolutely vital that we understand in our Christianity when God justifies us when God forgives us our sins he remains just he remains holy.

When God forgives us sinners his sins he does not say well let's pretend he didn't do it. That's not forgiveness. God has faced the fact this is why is Christ called the wisdom of God?

Because God had sworn the soul that sin shall die and God wants these sinners who've sinned to be in heaven with him.

[15 : 13] So how can he solve the problem without changing the standards without lowering his standards without altering his laws that's where Christ comes in as the wisdom of God.

Christ becomes us and Christ brings us to himself and we become one with him. We become one with Jesus Christ the righteous and the moment any sinner anywhere puts his trust in Christ the righteousness of Christ becomes his.

Now you see the righteousness of Christ is transferred to that sinner who believes on him and he possesses Christ's righteousness through faith.

So God is righteous because he sees us through Christ. That's the wonderful thing. Maybe you're here tonight and you're not a Christian and you can't understand why it is that someone that you sinned with maybe when you were a child maybe when you were young then all of a sudden he seems to be converted and becomes a member in the church.

And he was worse than you. And you can't understand why is he allowed to be a member in the church? Why is he forgiven? He was worse than me. How can God let him off with all that he's done?

[17 : 00] Well you see he has believed in Christ and anyone who believes in Christ is constituted righteous not because they behaved properly but because they're united to Christ through faith.

Maybe you would hear tonight and you say I don't believe that. I don't believe that any sinner in one moment can be constituted righteous by God.

Well my friend that's exactly your problem. You don't believe. You need to believe and I tell you it will be life changing if you believe the gospel that Christ can make you righteous in one moment if you place your faith in him that will change your life.

He is the advocate with the father and he's righteous and he can make you righteous in one moment through faith.

Through faith in him he can constitute you righteous. He can give you his perfect righteousness as yours. sinners. And so Christians when they sin they are to remember how it is that they stand before God as righteous.

[18 : 38] It's not because they've behaved properly it's because they possess Christ's righteousness through faith. And so when you fall into sin you remember we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous.

But remember this also that he is the propitiation for our sins. Now what does propitiation mean? Ephesians chapter 2 verse 3 tells us we are all by nature the children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

You know you don't really start preaching the gospel by saying God loves you. You start preaching the gospel by saying we are all children of wrath even as others.

the Bible says that some verses God is angry with the wicked every day. But here is what the first thing that propitiation means.

[20 : 05] It means appeasing the anger of God against sinners. And I want to say this to you. there is nobody else that can placate the anger of God against sinners except Christ.

And when Christ puts out the anger of God against your sin he puts it out forever. forever.

God does not change his mind. You know as a boy I used to be terrified of Malachi chapter 3 verse 6. I am the Lord I change not therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed but I never understood it.

I can't think of any more comforting words. I am the Lord I change not therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

It is as if God is saying you sons of Jacob you jolly well deserve to be consumed but because I am the Lord because I said I would forgive you you go free.

[21 : 32] Yes you deserve to be consumed but I am the Lord I don't change the gift and the calling of God are without change of heart without change of mind and so when our Bible tells us tonight that he Christ is the propitiation for our sins it's reminding us Christ put out the anger of God against everyone who has repented and put their faith in Christ and you say well how can he do that because God the father has accepted the sacrifice of God the son on the cross of Calvary as the payment in full sin you see sin is a debt there's two accounts of what we call the

Lord prayer in one of them we're taught to say forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us in the other account it says forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors sin is a debt but what kind of debt is it it's not like money debt if you owe something to the supermarket and you can't pay it someone can go your friend can go along to the supermarket manager and say how much does my friend owe you and you write out a check and say well that's his debt paid and everyone's all happy okay that's money debt sin is not like that sin is like there's a technical name for it it's like criminal debt if your friend murders someone and is sentenced to life imprisonment you as his friend cannot go along to the authorities and say look I'll serve his prison sentence for him you can't do that because criminal debt rests on the head of the person committing it and so you see

God was under no obligation of providing a substitute for sinners he was under no obligation whatsoever but he chose to provide a substitute he chose to allow the principle of substitution to apply in this case but under no obligation to but he chose to do so he's merciful and not only did he choose to permit the principle of substitution to apply in the case of sinners but he provided the substitute he could have said well let them provide a substitute I'll allow the principle but let them get someone else to stand in for them that would have been mercy but when he says here is my son receive him he's been to calvary he has paid

God for the sins of everyone who will be in heaven receive him that's real mercy something else is involved in the word propitiation the removing of the offense isn't that a wonderful passage you read there in Daniel making an end of sin finishing transgression I always remember a converted criminal in Inverness years and years and years later every time there was a certain kind of crime committed the detectives would come along to his house and knock on his door and say where were you at nine o'clock last night have you an alibi and I remember him saying will they ever ever forget what I did way back in 1954 will they ever forget this world knows nothing about forgiveness of sin Christ can make an end of sin and he can remove it and he can take it away and he can he can take it away to a place where it will never be found and you know that's the picture we have in the day of atonement in Leviticus and I remember the case of bringing the two goats and the cast lots and the lot on whom the goat fell was called the scapegoat and it's not all that long since I discovered that the scapegoat is actually a shortened version of the escape goat the goat the goat that escaped one goat you remember was slaughtered but the other goat the scapegoat what happened to him well you remember the high priest on that day put his two heads on the head of the live goat and he confessed there all the sins of Israel as it were transferring them onto the head of the live goat and then they would appoint a strong man in the congregation and put a kind of rope or a tether around the head of the goat and that strong man led him out into and the way the authorised version puts it into a place uninhabited and they say that that goat was never ever seen again anywhere and the illustration is pointing out that's

[27 : 44] Christ taking away the sin of his people where it can never ever be found again not even by God Christ can make an end of sin Christ can finish transgression there's something else in this word propitiation it's the idea of a victim you see the people of God what blessings forgiveness but listen someone has to pay for it if you're not paying for it if I'm not paying for my own sin someone has to pay for it and the word propitiation has the idea here of a victim

Christ is the victim of our sins he is the one that has to pay for it and you know the children are correct when they sing there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin he only could unlock the gates of heaven and let us in he is the propitiation for our sins just one other thing there is the idea in the word propitiation of a meeting place it is the word the term is used of the mercy seat the place where a sinner can meet an angry God in peace where can a sinner guilty hell deserving where can a sinner on this earth meet an angry

God in peace well the foot of the cross that's where you meet an angry God in peace that's the place where God's wrath fell upon his own son and he was treated as sin offering you can meet God whoever you are you can meet him there in peace but there's another place we should

mention where we can meet God in peace and we can apply this to the Lord's table with this difference with this difference if you're a Christian if you've repented of your sin if you believe in Christ for the saving of your soul

God is no longer angry with you but he is grieved with your sin and you need to come close to him and you need to speak to him and you need to face him we all continue to sin and that grieves God but there is a place where he says come meet me at my table for a fellowship meal come back come back into the fold come back and know my joy and know my peace he's not angry because his anger was dealt with at Calvary but he is grieved and he wants you he says to you meet me at my table this weekend meet with me there let's reason together though your sins be as scarlet they can be white as snow though they be red as crimson they shall be white as soft as wool and it's all because he is the propitiation for our sins may God the Holy

Spirit make his word effectual to every one of us let's just bow our heads in prayer our gracious father in heaven we pray that you might take the things of Christ and make them ours show us his love show us his beauty show us his power draw us to him bless us this weekend hear us in mercy answer us in peace as we pray only in the name of the Lord Jesus amen much so let's see you see you again