

1 John 1.1–2.2
Easter Eggs!
Discovering the Hidden Messages of God’s Word:
The Power of Easter Is in the Word

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Winchester, VA
Pastor Paul Krueger
April 15, 2018
Third Sunday in Easter

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷But 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, purifies us from all sin.

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

I mentioned earlier this year that we follow a three-year cycle of Scripture passages to give our attention to each week. This year we’re going through the Gospel of Mark but on occasion we draw from either John or one of the other Gospel writers to fill in some areas where Mark has less detail. That’s especially true during the Easter season. Mark gives us less than a dozen verses in his account of Easter showing us only the visit of the women to the empty tomb. Last week, we heard the words John has to share with us about the evening of that Easter Sunday and today we listened to Luke’s account.

It’s a rather eventful couple of paragraphs. Jesus appears and speaks those assuring words, **Peace be with you!** Then, to assure the disciples that it truly was Him, He showed them the marks on His hands and His feet, had them touch Him to feel that He was really there, and ate some food in front of them. But how could this be and what did it mean? He had died, hadn’t He? Luke tells us what happened next. Jesus spoke again saying, **“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things** (Luke 24:44-48).

Jesus knew that His time to be physically present with the disciples was limited. In a few short weeks He would ascend to the Father’s right hand. But He wouldn’t be leaving His disciples alone. In fact, He wouldn’t be leaving them at all. At one point, a few weeks later when He was gathered with His disciples in Galilee, He promised them, **Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**

But He would be with them in a different way now, not physically through His bodily presence, He would be with them through the promises of His Word which He had now opened their minds to and in which He would strengthen their faith by sending His Holy Spirit to them. In the final days before His ascension Jesus emphasized for His apostles the importance of God's Word. They would have to know and understand it and all that it told them about Jesus because He was sending them to be His witnesses.

They would be witnesses not only to what God had revealed about the Messiah through Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. They were witnesses of how those prophecies had been fulfilled through Jesus. That was especially true of John. He had been there to see Jesus with his own eyes and touch Him with his own hands during both Jesus' humiliation and exultation. He was there to witness the miracles Jesus performed and hear the message He proclaimed, there on the mountain of Transfiguration, there in the garden as Jesus prayed, at the High Priest's house as Jesus went on trial, at Calvary as Jesus died. One of the first on the scene at the empty tomb, John was there again that evening when Jesus appeared to them. Later, even after Jesus had ascended, John would see Him again as God gave Him the revelation of heaven and the last days.

John knew the power of Easter first-hand. He shared that power by proclaiming the good news of Easter wherever He went and by recording for us today what it was that He had witnessed. In our lesson from 1 John, he wrote: **That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And... with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.** Today, *The Power of Easter Is in the Word*. God uses His Word, given through His servants the apostles and the prophets, to bring us into fellowship with Himself.

We find that fellowship with God first of all, in the confession of sins. John reminds us in verses 8 just how important it is to regularly confess our sins, because if we don't confess them, then we are deceiving ourselves either that we aren't guilty of sin or that the sins we have committed aren't that big of a deal. But God tells us that we are guilty of sin from the moment we come into this world, that even as Christians we continue to fall prey to temptation and that sin is serious—it is a big deal—because it separates us from God disrupting our fellowship with Him.

When we see from God's Word that we are sinful and that sin has such dire consequences, we confess our sins because as John states in verse 9, it is in response to confession that God grants forgiveness. If I don't confess my sins, I'm saying I don't need God's forgiveness. So we confess our sins. We do it privately, whether in the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Evening Prayer, or even as we list our sins by name laying them bare before our heavenly Father. And we do it publicly. Each week as we gather for worship we begin by confessing our sins to God and asking for His forgiveness so that we can rejoice together in the absolution that He gives to us through Jesus, the reason we're able to gather here in fellowship with God and one another.

Lastly, in verse 10, John warns us that if we don't confess our sins we make God out to be a liar. We would be calling the message of the law a lie when it accuses us of sin, and we would be calling the message of the gospel a lie when it speaks of salvation and righteousness as God's free gifts to us.

Confession is where our fellowship with God begins, but confession alone isn't enough. If you or I came before God to say, "I am not worthy to be your child, because I have sinned against you with my words and actions, with my thoughts, even with what I've failed to do," that truth alone couldn't reconcile us to God. Our fellowship with God comes also through faith in the death of Jesus Christ.

He died a righteous man, as John says in 2:1. He alone was conceived and born in perfect fellowship with God and remained faithful to God throughout the course of His life even when God would have no fellowship with Him as He hung on the cross. But not only was He a righteous man, He was the Son of God so that the life He offered in His death is sufficient to make amends for every sin and every sinner restoring us to fellowship with God.

Finally, our fellowship with God comes through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Faith that His resurrection which, as we saw in the opening verses of our text, has been verified by the apostles on the basis of their first-hand observation, not only as eye-witnesses but as those who heard and touched Jesus both in His state of humiliation before His death and in His state of exaltation after His resurrection. That resurrection was proclaimed by them to the world both through spoken word and through written letters and accounts. Acclaiming that He is truly the Son of God and Word of Life.

And faith that His resurrection enables Him—going back to 2:2—to serve as our advocate before the Father whenever we sin on the basis of His saving work, His atoning sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

The power of Easter is the power to restore sinful people to peace and fellowship with God. That power of Easter is in the Word which God uses to call us to repentance and which, as we confess our sins, He uses to point us to the good news of the cross and the empty tomb.

Thanks be to God that He has given such a powerful tool and that through it He brings us the powerful gift of Easter: everlasting fellowship with Him. Amen.