

We Walk in the Light **1 John 1:1-2:2**

Low Sunday

Welcome to Holy Humor Sunday worship service. After a busy Lenten season, passion week and Easter, I felt relieved, though I had to prepare this sermon. After the big celebration of Easter, everything seemed back to normal. But we need to remember the Easter season lasts for 50 days and we can continue to celebrate the joys of Christ's resurrection each Sunday. Since this is also known as "Holy Humor Sunday," a little humor wouldn't hurt!

"An elderly pastor was searching his closet for his clergy collar before church one Sunday morning. In the back of the closet, he found a small box containing 3 eggs and 100 \$1 bills. Wondering what it was, he called his wife into the closet to ask her about the box and its contents. Embarrassed, she admitted having hidden the box there for their entire 30 years of marriage. Disappointed and hurt, the pastor asked her, "WHY?"

The wife replied that she had not wanted to hurt his feelings. He asked her how the box could have hurt his feelings. She said that every time he had delivered a poor sermon, she had placed an egg in the box.

The pastor felt that 3 poor sermons in 30 years was certainly nothing to feel bad about, so he asked her what the 100, dollar bills were for. She replied, "Every time I had a dozen eggs, I sold them to the neighbors for \$1."

I am glad that Juhee is also a preacher, so that I don't have to worry about any eggs in my closet. If you are somehow collecting eggs, I will prepare a big donation box to collect your money for a discretionary fund. As the name, 'Holy Humor Sunday' indicates, the early Christian church understood Sundays after Easter as days of joy and laughter. So, I hope that we continue to experience the joy of resurrection and new life in Christ during this season of Easter.

We Continue Walking Our Faith Journey Even After Easter...

Compared to the high holy day of Easter, we feel that we are pretty much back to normal. Of course, we still feel the excitement of the joyful Easter and the glow of the promise of new life, but it is also true that we have returned to our somewhat tedious routine of daily life and continue walking on an ordinary faith journey. We cannot stay on the mountaintop forever, and in fact, life happens in our ordinary lives as it does in our faith. An old evangelist said, "I don't care how high you jumped on the night you got saved, I want to know how straight you walked when you came back down." What matters in this Eastertide is learning to walk straight in the light of God. The First Epistle of John can help us on this matter since it highlights connecting faith with life. For the next few weeks, we will reflect on messages from First John.

First thing, first. Do you know who wrote the First Epistle of John? While we call it the First Epistle of John, many scholars claim that we don't have hard evidence to support that the Apostle John wrote it. But due to church tradition, First John retains its name "John." Also, First John is more like a sermon than a letter because it does not contain any of the components of a normal letter. When you write a letter or email, how do you begin and end it? With a greeting and your name, right? But there is no greeting or closing in First John. It also does not have the name of the author nor the recipients. It begins with the phrase, "we declare to you what was from the beginning..." I am pretty sure that this is not a good way to start a business letter. But if this is a sermon, it all makes sense. Verse 1 to 4 is the introduction of the sermon that tells the major theological theme of the sermon. Let us slowly read it together.

“1:1 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--1:2 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--1:3 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.1:4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.”

What stands out to you while reading these verses? Can you find repeated words or phrases? [ppt] “What we have seen, heard and touched!” and “fellowship.” For John, faith is experiential and communal, so fellowship is at the heart of the faith. Faith cannot be reduced to simply worshipping God as an object up there somewhere. Faith is sensory, so you can see, hear and even touch the word of life, incarnate. Last Sunday during our time of shared joys and concerns, our dear friend, Andrea Dunn shared her experience at our Maundy Thursday service. After the hand-washing ritual, she could see that her hands were clean and felt a sense of purification. Faith is experiential. I personally felt what it means to be a church when I saw congregation members washing one another’s hands. I could see how we become one in Christ through washing each other’s hands as an act of being obedient to and carrying out Jesus’ new commandment to love one another. Faith is sensory and we often experience the risen Christ through the hands of other Christians. Fellowship with one another and with God are central to a life of faith.

We often assume that faith is a personal thing, an internal thing. It is a thing between oneself and Jesus. But the Bible consistently reminds us that faith is a community thing. We are on this faith journey together. We support one another and encourage all along the way. We are not alone on our journey of faith. We have fellowship with one another, and this is a blessing.

When you hear the word, “fellowship,” what images or things first come to your mind? If you happened to think of food, you must be a United Methodist! I read some jokes about United Methodists and found humor in them so I will share some with you. “You might be a United Methodist if You, your brother(s), your sister(s), your significant other, your parents, and your children (if you’re a parent) are all on different committees in the church and none of you remember how you got there.” “You might be a United Methodist if you’re watching Star Wars and someone says “May the force be with you”, you automatically respond “and also with you.” “You might be a United Methodist if the word “fellowship’ immediately has you running into your kitchen to make your famous potluck dish.” “You might be a United Methodist if you think you have to have a potluck dish to get into heaven.” I found it interesting that a lot of Methodist jokes relate to food. Food is an important part of fellowship but there is more.

The Greek term 'koinonia' is often translated as fellowship, but it has a deeper meaning. It means communion, sharing, participation, contribution, and so on. Koinonia involves sharing thoughts and visions and, moreover, joining hands to live out that vision. Koinonia isn't just being there when everything is going well, but also being together in moments of suffering. Sometimes God's will may go against our own thoughts and require sacrifices. Nonetheless, true faith is not turning away from the Lord even in those times. Fellowship means sharing life together. The season of Easter is a time to deepen our fellowship with God and one another. It's time to walk together in the light.

We Walk in the Light

John points out that “walking in the light” is a sign of fellowship with one another and God. “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all... 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.” The church is a gathering of people who seek to resist darkness and strive to walk in light through communion with God. The fellowship of Christians should be different from that of any social club. What’s different about them? The essence of Christian fellowship lies in encouraging each other to walk in the light. Many scholars point out that class meetings were an essential part of the Methodist movement and its expansion. At the heart of the early Methodist class meetings, one question was asked to all participants. “How is it with your soul?” The class meeting was a group of people that met weekly in order to check in with one another about the state of their souls. They encouraged and supported one another to walk in the light. I believe that our Wednesday book group functions like a Wesleyan class meeting to some degree. Your close Asbury friends also check in with each other. Fellowship is a central part of faith. I hope that we continue to have fellowship with one another and walk together on our journeys of faith. Let us walk straight in the light of God as one body of Christ. Amen.