

Practicing Resurrection as Easter People
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I John 1:1-2:2

PRAYER

When Pastor Tom proposed that our Eastertide theme would be “Practicing Resurrection and Other Foolishness” I was intrigued and interested in what he was going to say. Then I figured out I was covering the first Sunday and I became intrigued and interested in what I was going to say! So together let’s look at the I John passage read earlier and see what it might mean to practice resurrection or live an Easter life

In the opening verses, of I John 1, the writer declares I’m telling you what I’ve seen, heard and touched concerning the word of life – this life revealed – Jesus. We’re telling you about what we’ve witnessed so you can have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with us.

So the beginning of our Easter life is entering into a relationship with God and with others. Easter is about liberation. Liberation certainly from death, but it’s about being set free to we can say, “Yes, Jesus” and in so doing enter into a relationship with the whole and holy. To grow a relationship, it takes time, talk and trust. Our relationship with God is no different. It also takes time, talk and trust. So we start with relationship. What else? Anything? Going back to first John

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light. Light was a metaphor used in the culture and time when I John was written and is an often used in the Bible. Genesis, “Let there be light.” Moses turns aside to see the burning bush. Jesus says “I am the light of the world.” So we see light used to represent self-manifestation. God revealing God’s reality to us. Light can represent purity, goodness, righteousness, guidance.

“*Walk in the light*” first we need to note, we’re not called to be the light! For us firstborn, type A folks that’s an important thing to note. We cannot produce God-quality light. We’re called to simply walk in God’s light. Walking in the light does aim at moral and practical actions but it’s more than practicing what we preach. It’s living in accordance with the character of God and living in dependence on the cleansing provided by Jesus, the grace of God.

Wesley says of this verse: God's light is "The light of love, holiness and glory. What light is to the natural eyes, God is to the spiritual. Imitation of God being the sure proof of fellowship with Him."

Living an Easter life is the chance to be embraced by God and to allow God's love to envelop you and fill you with love until it spills out of you and onto others. This is part of the Easter life, you become Jesus' disciple and begin to allow God's character to be developed in you.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Sin? Sin? It's not a very modern word. People's backs arch, they become defensive. . . "Who are you to judge me?" But to understand this verse we have to have a working definition of "sin." So rather than trying to itemize what's moral and what's immoral, let's try and back into a definition. In Matthew 22:35 *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

So, all the "shoulds" in our life hang on three things: 1) loving God, 2) loving our neighbor and finally 3) loving ourselves. So if NOT SIN is loving God, loving our neighbors and loving ourselves then it follows that SIN is NOT loving God, NOT loving our neighbors and NOT loving ourselves.

So our working definition of sin is going to be: Sin is not loving God, not loving our neighbors and not loving ourselves.

Let's be real, no one wants their actions to be labeled "sin." But it seems that part of the Easter life is recognizing that we struggle with sin. I can only speak for myself. I recognize within me is a character that is not loving to God, not loving to my neighbors (or at the very least wants to draw lines around who is and isn't my neighbor) and is not loving to myself.

What do I do? I've been walking with God close to 50 years now. I've experienced my life and character changed to align more with God's character. BUT, I'm not there yet. I still sin. Hang around the office and it won't take you long to spot the rough edges of my character! The growing edge of my character. What do I do? I believe God is still walking with me, refining my character, filling me with love but... What do I do in the mean time?

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

God offers us eternal life which includes knowledge and fellowship with God. God doesn't desire death, destruction, or condemnation but life, healing and release. Life is to be experienced here and now. We receive life as a disciple/follower of Christ.

So what do I do? *If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Ok, ok, if sin isn't modern and doesn't have a place in today's vocabulary, how do you expect anyone to be open to confession?!

I wanted something to hang confession off of, so I goggled "What does the world love." I was hoping to find something along the lines of humility, honesty, or even transparency. Here's what I found:

- "The world loves a winner." No surprise there.
- The World loves New York . . . and Melbourne, Australia. Ok
- The world loves a lover. Nope, not anymore! According to Daniel Kittridge the world's bored by lovers. Now the world loves a quarrel. That one did surprise me!

Confession! No way! It flies in the face of convention wisdom which says I have to look good if I want people to like me and I want to keep my job. It's even on the #1 rated tv show. NCIS. Gibbs often says, "Don't apologize, it's a sign of weakness."

What are we supposed to do then? Conventional wisdom says:

- Why you sweep it under the rug.
- You can counter attack with or without sarcasm. We're told that a good defense needs a strong offense.

- You shift the blame onto someone else. Oops, I didn't know you were so sensitive. Shifting the blame works especially well at work. When you talking with your employees you can blame your bosses and when talking to your bosses you can blame your employees. Occasionally, you might have to throw a coworker under the bus but it's just the price that has to be paid. Everyone does it and it's just the way the games played. For those of you who are still at home, shifting the blame works well if you have siblings, especially younger ones..

If sidestepping sin is ok to do and even expected, why would I risk owning and confessing that I sinned?. . . Well, we've now come full circle. It starts with our desire to be Easter people. Our goal is to have fellowship with God and develop the same character qualities but. . . Notice an event of sin doesn't put us into darkness and out of fellowship with God but claiming we're without sin does.

Let me tell you a story that happened in our house within the last couple of weeks.

“Our beloved grandson JC lost his temper and was seriously in disagreement with a decision his Nana had made which resulted in him saying some unkind things to her. As is the house routine, JC was excused to his bedroom to think about what had just occurred and to reflect if maybe there was a better way to handle his anger.

When he returned to the living room, he stated he had a problem. “I want to say I'm sorry for what I said. My problem is this. I want you to know that I'm really sorry but I know I'm going to do it again. If I apologize and then do it again, you're not going to believe me that I'm really sorry. And I just don't want to apologize over and over again.” Wow, how insightful!

Poppa and I tried and I try here again to share that confession is good for our souls. When I confess my sin, I'm confessing that I've sinned against you and I've sinned against God. I'm acknowledging whose measure of truth and righteousness I'm embracing. I'm turning towards you and towards God. I can acknowledge my dependence on God and my desire to conform to God's character.

“Forgive me, God, I did it again and I don't want to keep doing it! Please help me to live in your truth and light.”

Confession is a resource to bring our whole life into conformity with God's character.

So what does I John 1 suggest are attributes of an Easter life?

- Fellowship with God and others.
- Walking in the light.
- Acknowledging and confessing my sin.

Amen.