

Order of Worship for April 7, 2024

Prelude

P: Jesus Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Hymn: “*Jesus Lives, the Victory’s Won*”- **Hymn #490**

P: Jesus rose on Easter to give us victory and to give us the power to forgive sins: (John 20:19-23) On the evening of that day (Easter Sunday), the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

P: Yet we doubt Jesus’ Word.

Hymn: “*O Son and Daughters of the King*” - **Hymn #470 vs. 1-4**

P: We doubt like Thomas:

(John 20:24-29) Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.” Eight days later, Jesus’ disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Hymn: “*O Son and Daughters of the King*” - **Hymn #470 vs. 5-7**

P: (John 20:30-31) Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise be to You, Christ Jesus.

P: Lord, Jesus, we doubt even though You have won the complete victory for us on Easter. Send Your Holy Spirit to move us in Your Word so that we believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God and have life in Your name.

C: Amen.

Hymn: “*O Son and Daughters of the King*” - **Hymn #470 vs. 8-9**

Entrance Psalm:

P: Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk,
that by it you may grow up into salvation—

C: if indeed you have tasted that the LORD is good.

P: Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon His name;

C: make known His deeds among the peoples!

P: Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;

C: tell of all His wondrous works!

P: Glory in His holy name;

C: let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!

P: Seek the LORD and His strength;

C: seek His presence continually!

P: Remember the wondrous works that He has done,

C: His miracles, and the judgments He uttered,

P: He remembers His covenant forever,

ALL: the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk,
that by it you may grow up into salvation—

C: if indeed you have tasted that the LORD is good.

Lessons

First Reading: Acts 4:32-35

R: Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle: 1 John 1:1-2:2

R: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so

that our joy may be complete. 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, God 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. 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 atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon Hymn: *“I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”* - **Hymn #411**

Sermon: *“Walking in Light”* – **1 John 1:1-2:2**

I’m usually the last person in my house to go to bed. Some of that’s because working with college students can lead to some late hours, and some of it’s my natural inclination. But it means I’m often walking in the dark, trying not to wake anyone up. And while I know where most things are, neither my kids or I are as good about picking things up as we should be, so there’s usually something to step on. If I was walking in the light, I could see. If I’m walking in the darkness, I can’t see what’s there.

In trying to avoid darkness, people instead seek for enlightenment, though they don’t call it that. Our world is full of self-help books, recipes and checklists and “hacks” for getting your life together. Some can be pretty helpful. Many focus on "being yourself," which easily leads to self-preoccupation and narcissism. The mystics of Luther’s day urged people to “Do what is in you!” They appealed to people’s supposed “inner light” as the source of their moral power and courage. But Luther bemoaned and distrusted this piety. Before his rediscovery of the Gospel, all he could see in his heart was selfishness and sin. How could he do what was in him, when his heart was full of lust, selfishness, and pride? Rather than light, Luther saw only darkness in his sinful heart.

In today's reading from 1 John, we should start at the center: "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all." Other advice about the road to good living can be very helpful, depending on our situation. But when we recognize that we are, at the bottom line, children of the God who created us and the Christ who walks with us, all of life comes clearer.

CS Lewis once said, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else.” The light of God helps us see

everything more clearly. Not just our sin, but God's grace and forgiveness. That changes how we see everything. And when we see things properly, that changes the way we walk.

We heard as we always do the Sunday after Easter about Thomas, who was in the dark. He'd walked away from the disciples when Jesus appears to them in the upper room. There's debate over why he wasn't with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them. Some think that it was because Thomas was no longer "with" the disciples, no longer a part of the group, no longer a follower of Jesus. He was off on his own, alone, dealing with the grief and fear he had by himself. He was walking in darkness, but Jesus came to call him back into the light.

Now, this walking isn't just about a single step. It is instead ongoing, habitual activity, present continual tense. Walking in darkness isn't just a single step, but being in the dark. So, too, is walking in the light.

The sin we have, the sin we try to hide, the sin we refuse to admit even to ourselves enslaves and entraps us, and we are unable to free ourselves from sin's power. It's only out of the brokenness of recognizing our powerlessness that grace can work. It's the brokenness that comes from knowing that you can't help yourself. It's the brokenness that comes with a hangover, or the failing grade that comes as a result of too much partying and not enough studying. It's the brokenness that comes with a broken friendship, a relationship that was ended because of your own fault that can't be undone.

One of the Greek words for sin the most common one used in the New Testament is hamartia, which means to miss the mark. The target set by God's law is something we can never hit every single time. Instead, we miss the mark. We sin. And we can't fix it on our own.

As we say at the beginning of the service when we use Divine Service Setting 1, "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" (1 John 1:8-9). These words remind us of God's promises. When we confess our sins, God forgives us. Because of Christ's death on the cross, our sins are washed away in the blood of Jesus. Because of Christ's Word of absolution, he removes our sin from us. It's as simple—and wonderful—as that! It's not that hard! Getting right with God is as simple as saying, "I'm sorry," or "I have sinned against the Lord," and receiving His forgiveness in faith. As God's forgiven children by faith, we become more and more like him each day as we hear his Word and receive his forgiveness.

The saying goes, "Sometimes sunlight is the best disinfectant." The Washington Post adopted the slogan "Democracy dies in darkness" in 2017, when they wanted to show the power of the press to show what was happening in the federal government. Iowa and other states have so

called sunshine laws, regulations requiring transparency and disclosure in government or business. Evil hides in darkness, and flees from the light.

When our sins are exposed to the light of God's Law in confession and repentance, the darkness in our hearts flees like shadows from the rising sun. Then the light of Jesus' love can come into our hearts. His grace can overcome and overpower the sin within us and washes us in light, transforming our hearts into places of light, little lamps burning with the light and love of Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World.

Sin thrives in darkness. When secret sin hides in the shadows, it has power over us, rotting and festering. But when you flip on the lights, the cockroaches scatter. When you confess your sin, God is faithful and just to forgive your sin (1 John 1:9). His light puts the darkness to flight and burns brightly within you. Christ's light shines in you, and you reflect his light to the world. Bring your sins to light in confession and repentance, and cling to the cross of Christ, the shining light that radiates grace and mercy to people everywhere.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in "Life Together" that we are all sinners with darkness dwelling somewhere within. Pretending we have no sin—either individually or communally—is deceptive and untruthful. Instead, Christ should be, and needs to be, the center of every worshipping community. Christ brings light to the darkness of our secrets and sins. Therefore, the more honest and open we are, the more healing can abound.

True fellowship, as 1 John tells us, begins with honesty, confession and forgiveness. The goal may not be to avoid the inevitable sins that come with communal living, but rather to avoid the big one: pretending we have no sin at all.

That's why John tells us to walk in the light or walk in the darkness. The people he's writing to needed to be reminded about the difference between their faith talk and their faith walk. And so do we.

We will miss the mark. We will stumble in our walks of faith. But because of what we just celebrated, we can live and walk in hope.

Apostle's Creed: (Inside back cover of hymnal)

Offering:

Sharing Our Ministry:

Prayers

P: Christ Jesus,, we face doubts like Abraham did when You promised that You would give him the land You sent him to:

C: **“But he said, ‘O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?’”** (Genesis 15:8)

P: Or Gideon who You called to defeat the Midianites:

C: “And Gideon said to God, ‘If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me.’” (Judges 6:17)

P: Or Zechariah who doubted when Your angel told him he would have a son.

C: “And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” (Luke 1:20)

P: Or John the Baptist in prison as he asked Jesus through John’s disciples:

C: “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3)

P: Or Martha who was before her brother Lazarus’ tomb:

C: “Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.’” (John 11:39)

P: Or the early Christians who doubted when Rhonda told them that Peter was standing at the door free from prison:

C: “They said to her, ‘You are out of your mind.’ But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, ‘It is his angel!’” (Acts 12:15)

P: We doubt like Your disciples did when they saw You in the storm.

C: “Jesus said to them, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’” (Mark 4:40)

P: Like Peter who walked on the water and then began to sink,

C: “Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him, saying to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’” (Matthew 14:31)

P: Like the disciples who found themselves powerless to chase out a demon

C: “And Jesus answered, ‘O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to Me.’” (Matthew 17:17)

P: Like the two disciples from Emmaus

C: “And Jesus said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!’” (Luke 24:25)

P: Like Thomas we say:

C: “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” (John 20:25)

P: Say to us as You did to Thomas

C: “Do not disbelieve, but believe.” (John 20:27)

P: It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. (Psalm 118:8)

C: The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. (Psalm 34:22)

P: Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. (Psalm 32:3)

C: Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. (Psalm 125:1)

P: Show Yourself to us in Your Word and sacrament so we can say with Thomas,

C: “My Lord and my God.”

(other concerns)

P: All this we pray in Your most precious name.

C: Amen.

Hymn of Praise: “*Alleluia! Alleluia! Hearts to Heaven*” – **Hymn #477**

Confession:

P: Christ Jesus, we place our trust in so many things:

C: Our money, our education, our families, our work, ourselves.

P: You are not first in our lives.

C: We have other gods in place of You.

P: But Jesus rose of Easter to announce. “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

C: And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

P: By the power those very words of Jesus give to His Church, I as a called servant of Christ, forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Call to Communion:

P: Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to walk in His light. To shine His light in front of our path He has given us the wonderful meal of His true body and blood in Holy Communion. He invites us to experience that light as we join in that supper.

The Words of Our Lord:

Lord’s Prayer:

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

Distribution:

Hymns: “*Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain*”- **Hymn #487**

“*These Things Did Thomas Count as Real*” – **Hymn #472**

Dismissal:

Closing Prayer:

P: Let us pray... Almighty God, grant that we who have celebrated the Lord’s resurrection may by Your grace confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen

Closing Hymn: “*Christ the Lord Is Risen Today*” – **Hymn #469**

Postlude