*Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**1 John 1:1-2:2** (EHV)

1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have observed and our hands have touched regarding the Word of Life— 2the life appeared, and we have seen it. We testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3We are proclaiming what we have seen and heard also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. 4We write these things to you so that our joy may be complete.

5This is the message we heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. 6If we say we have fellowship with him but still walk in darkness, we are lying and do not put the truth into practice. 7But if we walk in the light, just as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 8If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us.

2:1 My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.

*Dear heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit on us so that we may rejoice in the fellowship we have with you through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

St John talks about what we’ve heard and seen, so I wonder, what have you heard and seen recently regarding the Word of life?

Well, last weekend you had the opportunity to *hear* of the shameful betrayal, cruel suffering, bitter death, and glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all your sins and the promise of life eternal for all who believe in him. You may have *seen* fellow sinners take and eat and drink the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. In this way you would have *heard* and *seen* true Christian fellowship enacted as we shared and participated in the holy things of God.

Today you also *heard* of one of Jesus’ most powerful resurrection appearances as he calls a disciple who struggles to believe what he *hears* to explore the very wounds of Christ. You also *hear* Jesus praise all those who believe without *seeing* him in the flesh.

But, after *hearing* and *seeing* what God has done for you in this holy place, what do others *see* and *hear* from you?

Do you share the joy and hope you have in Christ with your fellow Christians, or would you rather talk about the weather or sport or local happenings as if that’s more important? Do you readily forgive those who sin against you, just as you’ve been forgiven by Christ, or do you criticise people, make jokes at people’s expense, and defend your own actions as if you haven’t done anything wrong, just like non-Christians?

If you’re like most Christians, what you *hear* and *see* and confess and sing about in church doesn’t seem to last very far outside these walls. It’s almost like you confess and proclaim one truth here but live another truth elsewhere.

St John says this can’t happen, and if this does, then one of them is a lie. You’re either lying about the hope and joy you have here, or you’re lying to everyone else!

Similarly, I would reckon you all know that you’re sinners, right? After all, Scripture says all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

The problem is, you may be tempted to make out you’re *not* sinners. You do this whenever you attempt to shift the guilt from yourself by either making excuses for what you’ve said and done, or by blaming others for your sin.

So, even though you all know, accept, and confess the truth you’re all sinners by nature, you’re tempted to make out you’re *not* a sinner and haven’t done anything wrong.

But to say, or even live, as if you don’t sin, is a lie. The other alternative is, if it’s true you don’t sin, then God must be the liar, and I pity the person who’s brave enough to say that to his face!

Now I know no-one likes to be told they’re a liar, but it would be a lie to say anyone here isn’t a liar. We all lie. You lie. I lie.

We lie to save face. We lie to protect ourselves. We lie to make out we’re better than we are. We lie in order to shift blame or the wrong attention away from ourselves. We lie without even knowing we’re lying.

Not convinced that you lie?

Well, let’s say for example you heard someone tell you Mrs Picklebottle was seen speaking very loudly to Mr Rubberducky down the main street. They both seem to be getting very upset at each other. It seems as though they were having an angry argument in a very public place!

Now, you don’t have all the facts because you weren’t there and you didn’t hear what they were saying to each other, but now that you’ve heard such juicy gossip, you might want to share this with someone else.

Also, in the absence of facts, you might come to your own conclusion as to what may have happened, after all, you’ve known Mrs Pickelbottle to get in trouble before! As you come to your own conclusion about what happened or add any meaning or significance to what you’ve heard, you’ve come up with a presumption, a speculation, or a guess about what happened.

Unfortunately, your presumptions and speculations are potential lies because you may not have carefully investigated the truth of the situation. You may not know the full truth. But these presumptions (which are often wrong) are what you might act on and share with others.

Unfortunately, your *potential* lies may turn into *real* lies when you share your own presumptions and speculations. This means you may easily lie to others simply through sharing presumptive gossip because you haven’t found out the truth, or because you’ve judged people unfairly based on your own negative opinions.

What you may not have known is that Mr Rubberducky had left his hearing aids at home and Mrs Picklebottle had to speak loudly so he could hear her. It could be they looked upset because Mr Rubberducky was getting frustrated with himself for forgetting his hearing aids and Mrs Picklebottle was frustrated with herself because she couldn’t speak loudly enough so he could hear her. But now, because of your own misunderstandings, presumptions, and unchecked gossip, people across the town have come to the conclusion they were having a fight!

So, intentionally or unintentionally, we lie to each other, and we lie to ourselves. We may even start believing our own lies and deceptions to be the truth.

So how can we live in the truth of Christ and not lie to each other, ourselves, or even to God?

Well, for starters St John says we should walk in the light. After all, God is Light and his Word is like a lamp to our feet and a guide for our path. Because God can’t and doesn’t lie, only God and his holy Word are true and trustworthy. God and his Word is the truth by which we judge all other truth and lies. God and his holy Word will expose our own sinful nature and our lies and deceptions.

Thankfully we’re given good news about our lies, deceptions, and sin when St John tells us:

**If we confess our sins,**

**he is faithful and just**

**to forgive us our sins**

**and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 1 Jn 1:9

Now, what does this mean?

Well, let’s say our fellowship of believers is threatened by two people, or two groups of people, who are at loggerheads over an incident. It’s likely each person or side is trying to justify their own sin or trying to blame the other. We may even try to get others on our side through malicious gossip.

But, before we attempt to take the speck out of the other person’s eye, we need to take out the log from our own eye. Because we’re not good at seeing our own sin very clearly, we may need help from God, his Word, or some spiritual people to expose our own sin.

Once the Word of God has helped us realise how we’ve sinned against each other, we can confess our own sins before God and the other person (or people), and receive forgiveness for the sake of Christ. In this way, as the light of God and his holy Word exposes the darkness of our sin, and receive forgiveness for those sins, we enact the gospel among ourselves, and our peace and fellowship is restored.

This means, you as Christians don’t need to live as perfect people who don’t sin. Instead, you live as sinners who know how to confess and forgive. You live as people who enact the peace of Christ with each other through confession and forgiveness.

If each Christian were to live a life of confession and forgiveness, people will *hear* and *see* you’re not liars, deceivers, or hypocrites, but you’re people who actually believe and live what you confess and sing. They’ll *hear* and *see* you truly live in the truth and light of God’s Word.

This is the message of Easter in action. This is how you and I live the gospel every day and share what we’ve *seen* and *heard*.

What’s more is, this doesn’t just work for those who have sinned, but also for those who have been sinned against.

You see, most Christians are better at pointing out each other’s sin than admitting our own, but this is often little help to those who have been abused or hurt by others.

When people sin against you and hurt you physically, emotionally, sexually, or spiritually, you don’t need forgiveness, because it wasn’t your fault. Also, because those who did the sinning against you will always try to shift the blame, you may feel a misplaced or inappropriate sense of guilt which isn’t fixed by God’s forgiveness, because it wasn’t your sin to forgive.

In this case, remember the passage I told you earlier? What is it again?

**If we confess our sins,**

**he is faithful and just**

**to forgive us our sins**

**and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 1 Jn 1:9

While your sins are forgiven by Jesus Christ (which comforts you and brings you peace), for those who have been abused or hurt, there’s a promise Jesus Christ will *cleanse* you from all unrighteousness.

For those among you who have been abused, you don’t need to be forgiven, but you do need to be *cleansed* of the darkness done against you. In this case, the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all unrighteousness to make you innocent and pure once again.

You don’t need to live as people who *fake* perfection and purity, but you can live as people who *receive* perfection and purity of your risen Lord Jesus Christ. You live as people who proclaim the gospel message of forgiveness and cleansing to each other, which restores and strengthens your fellowship in Christ.

As those who sin, and as those who are sinned against, you’re forgiven and cleansed as you *hear* the Spirit-filled word of God and *see* it in action at the fellowship of the Altar. In this place the blood of Jesus washes you clean from sin – both your own, but also the sins committed against you – which means the presence of the risen Lord Jesus still establishes peace to troubled hearts among his disciples today.

This is the message of Easter which is to be lived out in the church today as it shares the holy things of God to bring about forgiveness, cleansing, and holiness.

This is what the world needs to *see* and *hear* from you outside these walls as well. So, believe it, live it, and practice it, so that…

*…the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in the fellowship of Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Pastor Stuart Kleinig

South Western Queensland Lutheran Parish – Chinchilla Ministry Area

2nd Sunday of Easter

7th April 2024