

Theme: Facing the Facts! - 11 John 1:8-2:2

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who has brought us together”. Amen

Dear friends in Christ,

The sermon text for this morning is from the Epistle of today: 1 John 1:8-2:2. My fellow redeemed: We all have mirrors at home. They are wonderful tools that we can use for one purpose or another. In front of a mirror we comb our hair, remove our pimples from our faces, women apply makeup on their faces, and we, men, shave our beard, etc. But as well in front of a mirror we see things that we do not want to see. Like it or not, the mirror made it abundantly clear that there is more head and less hair than we had ever seen before.

As we grow older, we all have that experience of looking in the mirror and having to admit to things we do not like, such as wrinkles, gray hair or age spots. For teens, looking in the mirror means seeing the acne or pimples that suddenly appears. But since we do not like what we see, we go to great lengths to try to cover these things up, so we do not have to face what they mean for us! We colour our hair; we put creams on the acne or pimples; we might even go so far as to consider plastic surgery or a toupee.

We just do not want to face the fact that our bodies are aging. And sometimes, it is hard to face the facts. Many people, men especially, seem reluctant to go to the doctor when they feel those questionable aches and pains. We think, no news is good news, and if we do not acknowledge the problems in our bodies, they will go away. Or we feel that we are overweight, but we do not want to get on a scale, because then we would have to acknowledge what it says.

But sooner or later, like it or not, we have to face the facts. Our bodies are aging and changing. We are going gray; we are gaining weight; we do have wrinkles. We are not able to do all the things we used to do when we were younger. Try as hard as you like, you cannot hide from that truth forever. You have to face it and deal with it. But there is also another, greater, more important truth that John would have us come to terms with in our text today.

John wants us to look into the mirror of God's law and see what it shows us about our lives. And the truth is: the holy law of God shows that we are sinners. We have to come to terms with that truth.

And when we acknowledge this, John assures us of some wonderful news, the news that Easter declares so clearly: that there is forgiveness for all sinners, in the wonderful love of Jesus, who is the atoning sacrifice for all sin; and the life of all who come to Him in faith.

The words of John in our text are not very popular in our world today. Hear what he says: ***If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*** And yet this is the one thing we try to deny more than anything else.

Someone once made the observation that prisons are filled with people who claim they have all been falsely accused. People do not think of themselves as sinners today; they are victims of their circumstances, who have no control over the way they act. And if we do not think of ourselves as victims, we are, at the very least, quick try to rationalize or minimize what we do.

The commandments say, "Honour your father and your mother". But we do not have to do that, because our parents do not understand us. They are living in a different era; they are out of touch with the world today. We are to do nothing to hurt or harm others, and if we do hurt them, it is only because they deserve it, because of what they have done to us.

We can do what we want sexually, because the world is different today, and we do not need all those old stereotype institutions like marriage and monogamy any more. We do not gossip—we are simply telling it like it is. Yes, we should go to church, but we work so hard all week, and we only have Sunday to relax; and besides, I can worship God just as well as at home. Yes, I know I should be helping out those less fortunate than me, but it is their own fault that they have gotten themselves in the mess they are in, and besides, no one ever did anything to help us.

Friends, we could go through every one of God's commandments and see what God says we should do and those things that we should not do, and we would likely have some sort of rationalization for all of our actions. We do not think of ourselves as sinning. We are just different. But now it is time to face the facts. Again and again God, in His Word, reminds us of the reality of the sin that is so much a part of our lives. As I said, look into the mirror of God's law, and it will make it very clear that you are a sinner. I am a sinner, and I am not proud of that.

Every single person on the face of the earth is a sinner. It is the one thing that each and every one of us has in common. We cannot rationalize or minimize what God has said again and again so clearly. Romans 3:12 says: ***"All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."***

The proof of that is all around us. It is so much a part of our lives that we cannot cover it all up. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to see that our lives fall far short of God's standard of holiness. You do not have to be a genius to see that we continue to show by our actions, by our words and by our deeds that we are sinners.

Is it any wonder, then that John tells us so plainly in our text? ***If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*** What's more, John reminds us: ***If we claim we have not sinned, we make God out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.***

We need to be honest with ourselves, and with God—and remember, we are not fooling Him, anyway. We need to face the facts, as we acknowledge it, like it or not, that what Paul says in Roman 7:18 about Himself is true of all of us: ***I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.***

Here are the facts: we are sinners. We cannot do anything to save ourselves. And we deserve the full punishment of death and hell because of our sin. But here is another fact, this time a wonderful truth: ***But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*** The fact is: God does not want us to suffer the eternal torment of hell. And so, in His great mercy, He has rescued us from sin, death and hell through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In Christ, we have the One who speaks on our behalf before the judgment seat of God. He defends us, not by rationalizing our actions, or by trying to make light of them, but by paying the full penalty of those sins through His own life, death and resurrection for us. He atoned for our sins by giving His life in our place on the cross, and He conquered death for us through His resurrection.

The fact is we were dead in our trespasses and sin, without hope. But in Christ, things are different. In Christ, we have hope. John says: ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

If we face the facts of our sin, we will realize that we are not the people God has called us to be. We must say, as Paul did, “***I am the chief of sinners.***” But let us also rejoice that if we confess our sins to Him; if we turn to Him with humble, faithful hearts, He will forgive us and purify us. His mercy sets things right, as He restores us that we might live as His people.

The facts are simple, if we will face them. We are sinners. But we are forgiven in Christ. This is the central teaching of the entire Christian faith. This is the most basic lesson of faith, and the one we need to learn the most. John tells us why this is such an important lesson: ***My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.*** When we see sin for what it is, we will not want any part of it in our lives. But when we minimize sin’s power and influence in our lives or when we delude ourselves into thinking that we do not sin, well that is what pleases the devil the most. For when we do not face the facts of our sin, then we are most susceptible to its damning control over us.

Thankfully, God gives us the help and strength we need to resist the temptation of the devil and to deal with sin. His forgiveness sets us free. The fact is that our God forgives those who face the facts, turn to Him with repentant hearts and seek His grace. He is our life and salvation. That is

one fact we can be absolutely sure of, for in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are guaranteed that this is God's truth for us. Amen.

“The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keeps your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour”. Amen