

1 John
The Apostles' Proclamation (Part 1)
1 John 1:1-4
September 19, 2021
Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

Well, I encourage you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 John, 1 John, the first letter of John the Apostle. Today, we begin our verse by verse study of this wonderful letter. Let me begin by letting you in on the structure. Now, let's admit that the structure of this letter is notoriously difficult because it's not at all linear like the letters of the Apostle Paul. Instead, it reflects a Hebrew, sort-of-Eastern way of thinking. But there are two pictures that I think will help you understand how this letter is structured.

The first picture is that of a symphony. Think of the letter of 1 John like a symphony. Often, the composer writes the symphony with several movements. Typically, he weaves a few musical themes throughout each of those movements, and then throughout the symphony, he returns again and again to those same musical themes. But each time as he does so, he doesn't do so in some monotonous, repetitious way, but rather with distinct variations. And that's exactly what John does in this letter. It's like the movements of a symphony with recurring themes.

Perhaps another image that will help you picture the structure of this letter is that of a spiral staircase. Think of the first letter of the Apostle John like a staircase, and down the center of that spiral staircase hang three great themes or three tests of eternal life. We noted those three tests last week. So, as this letter unfolds, it's like the Apostle John walks around that circular staircase, looking at those three tests that hang down the center from different vantage points, and each time he sees the same truths, but in a slightly different way.

There are, if you use the symphony image, there are three movements in this letter, or if you like that of a spiral staircase, there are three cycles around those themes that the Apostle John takes. Now, with that overview, let me give you a preliminary outline, and I say preliminary because I believe that this is going to be largely it; but as it unfolds as I study, as we study together, it may vary slightly, but I don't expect that, just don't hold me to it exactly.

But here's the structure. First of all, there's a prologue. The first 4 verses of chapter 1 are an introduction to this letter; we're going to begin to look at that today, Lord willing.

And then there are three cycles or three movements if you will. There are the tests of eternal life, cycle one, that begins right after the prologue in chapter 1, verse 5, and runs through chapter 2, verse 27. And in that movement, you see those three tests, you see the test of obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word, the test of love for God and His people, and then the test of faith in the Biblical Jesus Christ and in the Biblical gospel. Those same three tests will recur in each of the three cycles or movements. In the first and second, they do so in the same order; in the third case the order is slightly changed.

The tests of eternal life cycle two begins in chapter 2, verse 28, and runs through chapter 4, verse 6. And then the tests of eternal life cycle three, begins in chapter 4, verse 7, and runs through chapter 5, verse 21, through the end of the letter. Now, if you missed all that you're going to see it again; I just want to give you the sort of the introduction. That's the basic outline that we're going to follow as we work our way through this letter.

Now, with the background that we examined together last week, and with this basic understanding of the structure of the letter, I want us to begin this morning to study the first paragraph, the prologue to this letter. In the first four verses of 1 John, John introduces us to many of the very same themes that he does in the prologue to his gospel. If you're familiar with the first 18 verses of John, as we work our way through these 4 verses, you're going to see those same themes recurring.

Let's read it together, 1 John, chapter 1, you follow along in your copy of the Word of God as I read it for us, 1 John, chapter 1, verse 1:

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--and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our

fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

Now, the theme of that paragraph I would put this way, and we're going to see it unfold this week and next, Lord willing. The ultimate foundation of our fellowship with God, of our personal assurance of eternal life, and of our joy, is all based on the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. All of those things stem from the gospel the Apostles preached. These verses lay out the foundation of the Christian faith. D. Edmond Hiebert, calls it, "A weighty theological prologue which verifies the heart of the Christian gospel; namely that eternal life has been made manifest in the incarnate Son of God."

Now, if as I read that paragraph, you were a little confused about what it means and how to follow it, you're not alone. In fact, one writer calls John's prologue, "A hopeless tangle." That's a bit of an overstatement, but you understand what's going on here. I like the way Blaney explains why these first 4 verses are the way they are. He says, "The author was so full of his subject, so overwhelmed by the truth he sought to express, that his thoughts became crowded and his expression complicated." Remember, John, Jesus nicknamed him, "The Son of Thunder." He was a man given to passion, and you can just see that as he starts dictating this letter as he's upset about what the false teachers are doing to the churches he loved, as he's concerned for the people that he has shepherded and cared for. His heart just short explodes and it explodes all over the page in those first 4 verses.

But we can easily grasp John's meaning if we first understand the grammatical structure of these verses. Let me show you how it unfolds. If you're someone who marks your Bible, then you might want to indicate some of these things that will help you be clear in the future. Now, the first 4 verses are composed of two sentences, both in Greek and in our translation. Verses 1 through 3, is a long, involved sentence; that's sentence number 1, verse 4 is a simple short, you know, short to the point sentence that's easy to grasp.

Now, let's go back to the first sentence. The subject and verb of the first sentence doesn't come until verse 3. The main subject and verb, notice in verse 3, are the words. "We proclaim," we proclaim. The direct object of that main verb 'proclaim' is back up in verse 1; it's the four phrases there in verse 1. And then, you'll notice verse 1 concludes with a prepositional phrase that essentially means, "All four of those preceding phrases are concerning or they are about the

Word of Life.” Now, you’ll notice the dashes around verse 2. Verse 2 is, in fact, parenthetical; that’s why our translators have used those dashes. Because verse 2 is simply explaining how twelve ordinary men like John came to hear, and to see, and to look at, and touch the Son of God; it’s because of the miracle of the incarnation.

Then verses 3 and 4 explain the reason for the Apostles’ Proclamation. So, let me recap it this way. The main point of this paragraph is in verse 3, “We (That is the Apostles.) proclaim.” What did they proclaim? Verses 1 and 2. Why did they proclaim that message? Notice in the middle of verse 3, “...we proclaim...so that,” and the rest of verse 3 and verse 4, is the reason for the Apostles’ Proclamation.

Now, let’s look at it together. In this prologue, John points out three key features of their proclamation. First of all, in the first 3 verses, we’re going to look at, “The Focus of Their Proclamation.” That’s this morning, Lord willing. Then, we’re going to look at, “The Integrity of Their Proclamation,” and that’s back in verses 1 and 2. So, there are a couple of themes working together in verses 1 and 2. We’re going to look at one of those today, “The Focus of their Proclamation.” Next week, Lord willing, we’ll look at “The Integrity of Their Proclamation.” And then also, we’ll look in verses 3 and 4 at, “The Purpose of Their Proclamation.

But today, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Table, let’s consider just the first of those three features, “The Focus of the Apostles’ Proclamation.” From the language that John uses in these verses, it’s clear that his ultimate focus is not on an impersonal message, but rather the person at the center of that message. The focus of the Apostles’ Proclamation is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 23, “...we preach Christ crucified.” II Corinthians 4:5, “...we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord.” He was the center of the Apostles’ message.

Now, in the first 3 verses, John is going to explain for us several crucial truths about Jesus Christ, several crucial truths about this person at the center, the focus of their message. So, let’s look at them together, the truths about Jesus Christ.

First of all, in verse 1, he begins by teaching us that He existed eternally, He existed eternally. The first four clauses in verse 1 are, remember, the direct object of the verb, “...we proclaim,”

in verse 3. And he begins each of these clauses with the word ‘what.’ That’s because he’s talking about the content of the message that he proclaimed. But, the message, as we’ll see, is about a person.

Now, his first description of the person at the center of his message is in verse 1, the very beginning, “What was from the beginning.” Now, right away we’re confronted with a couple of possibilities. The word ‘beginning’ could refer to, ‘from the beginning of the incarnation.’ In other words, he could be saying, “We witnessed Jesus’s entire life, that’s what we’re giving witness to; not that they were there for the birth, but we give witness to it, beginning with the events described in Luke 1 and 2. “Beginning” could mean, ‘before the incarnation;’ the fact that Jesus existed before He was born in Bethlehem. Or thirdly, it could mean that He was before creation, or that He existed in eternity past, Jesus existed from all eternity. I think that’s exactly what John is teaching; because if you go to chapter 2, verses 13 and 14, you’ll notice that John uses exactly the same wording of God the Father, of His eternal existence. He says, “...you know Him who has been from the beginning.”

Also, when you go back to chapter 1, and look at that first phrase, you’ll notice that there is a remarkable similarity between this line and the first line of John’s Gospel which makes it far more likely that John is making exactly the same point here in his letter that he made back in his gospel. Turn back to John chapter 1, verse 1. He writes, “In the beginning was the Word.” In the beginning, as you recognize, echoes the first words of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John is saying, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,” notice how he says, “was the Word.” The Greek word translated ‘was’ there is a very important word. It means, ‘to be,’ or ‘to exist.’ And, in the Greek text, the verb is in the imperfect tense which implies a continuous state. We could translate it like this, “In the beginning the Word was,” that is, He already was in existence, He was already there, He continually was, there was never a time when the Word was not.

That’s the universal testimony of Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ existed before creation; it’s again and again. Let me give you a couple examples. In Isaiah’s prophecy, Isaiah 9:6, about the coming child to be born; you remember, “...child will be born to us, a son will be given to us.” And how is Jesus described there? As the “Mighty God, Eternal Father,” meaning that He is the Father of eternity. But there’s never a time when He didn’t exist. Micah 5:2, which

prophesies the place of Jesus's birth at Bethlehem, says prior to His birth, "...His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." And Jesus Himself claimed this in John 17, verse 5, He said, "...Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." He says, "Father, I shared your glory before anything was made."

Now, why is this important? Well, you remember last time, I told you that one of the false teacher's that was contemporary with John, actually there in Ephesus, was a man named Cerinthus. Cerinthus taught that the spirit of Messiah descended on the human Jesus at His baptism and left Him just before His crucifixion. Well, John is going to have nothing to do with that! So, his very first words are a declaration that Jesus existed even before the incarnation; before creation, He existed in eternity past; He was from the beginning.

A second truth back in John, chapter 1, a second truth that the Apostles taught about Jesus was this, "He was truly human," He was truly human. The next three clauses in verse 1, are a kind of second ballistic missile aimed at the false teachers who had attacked the churches John loves. You remember one form of the false teaching that John was confronting was a form of pre-Gnosticism. And some of the teachers in both pre-Gnosticism and Gnosticism, taught a heretical view of Christ called Docetism.

Docetism taught that Jesus only seemed or appeared to have a real body. They were operating on that sort of Gnostic idea that matter is evil, and spirit is good, so somebody like Jesus can't have a real body because that contaminates Him. John immediately makes it clear that Jesus was no apparition; He was no mere appearance, no vision, no group hallucination, He was truly human; He possessed real humanity and that reality was tested by the Apostles' physical senses.

Notice the verbs that summarize their experiences. Verse 1, "...what we have heard." John says, "Listen, with our own ears, we heard Jesus teach," and boy did they hear Jesus teach. Countless hours over three-and-a-half years. He says, "What...we have seen with our eyes." John says, "We saw Jesus Christ. We saw Him at every time of the day and night; We saw Him in many places across the Land of Israel; We saw Him over and over again for three-and-a-half years." And oh, just in case you think this was a spiritual vision, notice he adds, "...with our eyes!" What he saw was not some internal spiritual vision; it was a real person in the real physical world. He adds in verse 1, "...what we have looked at." This is a different Greek

word than ‘have seen.’ It means to look at something intently; it describes the literal, physical scrutiny of something with your eyes so that you can intelligently interpret its nature and its significance. Verdict writes, “They scrutinized Jesus so thoroughly that they had no doubt concerning His physical reality.”

He adds in verse 1, “...and touched with our hands.” The Apostles intentionally touched the physical body of Jesus to verify its physical reality. Again, by adding. “...with our hands,” he underscores, this happened really, physically. Of course, it certainly happened before Jesus’s death, during the three-and-one-half years of His ministry, but it was crucial in validating Jesus’s resurrection and the fact that His post-resurrection body was real. Jesus Himself made this point in Luke, chapter 24, verse 39. He said, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” Jesus existed eternally, and Jesus was truly human!

A third important truth that we learn in our text is that He is God’s self-expression, He is God's self-expression. Notice the end of verse 1, “...concerning the Word of Life--.” Now, that prepositional phrase, “...concerning the Word of Life--,” describes the previous four clauses as “concerning (or, ‘being about.’) the Word of Life.” Literally, the Greek text says. “The Word of the Life.” John just doesn't want us to miss it; we’re talking about real definite things here, ‘The Word of The Life.’

Now, some commentators believe that “...the Word,” here at the end of verse 1, is just a synonym for the message, so you could say that, “The word is the message of the gospel,” but, it doesn't describe Jesus personally. Of course, the gospel describes Jesus, but “the Word” is really just saying the message about life. However, it's far more likely that the Word of Life here refers to Jesus Himself, not merely the message about Him. Why? Well, let me give you several reasons.

First of all, John often uses the preposition translated here ‘concerning’ to describe persons. You can check it out in chapter 5, verses 9 and 10. Also secondly, the phrases back in verse 1, those are about a person. Thirdly, what follows in verse 2, requires that we understand “The Word of Life” to be a person because He was manifested, they saw Him. We can add a fourth reason and that is that John is using this expression that is very close to the one he uses to

introduce his gospel. In John, chapter 1, verse 1, “In the beginning was the Word.” In both verses, John 1:1 and 1 John 1:1, the Greek word is *‘logos;’* the word for Word is *‘logos.’*

It's a concept that appeared in Greek philosophy where it primarily represented reason and rationality, the rational principle by which everything exists. But undoubtedly, John is not dipping into Greek philosophy. He's drawing his use of this expression *‘logos,’* not from Greek philosophy, but from the Hebrew Scripture. And if you go back to the Hebrew Scripture, you find that, in the Old Testament, the Word of God is His self-expression in His revelation; it's the nature of God to reveal Himself. And again, and again, the prophets say what? “The word of the LORD came” to this prophet and that prophet, “the word of the LORD came.” For example, Isaiah 38:4, “Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah.” This is John's primary emphasis here.

He's talking about “The Word,” this person is God's self-revelation. How do I know that? Because of how John uses it. Go back to his gospel again, John, chapter 1, verse 18, at the very end of his prologue to his gospel, he writes this, “No one has seen God at any time; (but) the only begotten God.”

By the way, the word ‘begotten’ is a word that just means ‘one-of-a-kind, unique.’ “...The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, (That is, who enjoys the closest of relationships with the Father.) He has explained Him.” The word is literally, “He has exegeted Him.” So, the Son is the exegesis of God; He is the self-expression of God.

You want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus; “He who has seen me,” he said to Thomas, “has seen the Father.” Look at Hebrews, chapter 1. The writer of Hebrews makes exactly the same point in verses 1 and 2. He says, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways.” He's talking about the Old Testament there. He says verse 2, “in these last days (God) has spoken to us in His Son.” Jesus is the Word of God in the sense that He is the expression of God; He is the revelation of God; He is the great self-expression. The person at the center of the Apostles' Proclamation is called, “The Word,” because He is the self-expression, the self-revelation of God.

A fourth truth about Jesus, back in our text is this, He is self-existent and gives life to everything and everyone, He is self-existent, meaning He is life, He has life in Himself, and He gives life to everything and everyone. Look at the end of verse 1, he said, “What I'm talking about here; it's about the person who can be called ‘The Word of Life, The Word of Life.’”

Now, that could mean, that prepositional phrase, could mean ‘The Word is Life,’ and in verse 2 Jesus is called, ‘...the eternal life,’ or it could mean ‘The Word gives life.’ I think, because of John's penchant for double meaning, there's a good reason to believe he means both here, because he makes both of the same points about Jesus in the prologue to his gospel. You remember in John, chapter 1, verse 4, he says of Jesus, “In Him was life.” What does that mean? Well, John explains it in chapter 5, verse 26, when he says this, “...just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.” Jesus shares equally in the self-existing life of God. Jesus's own life is eternally self-existent.

I mean, think about it this way, every living thing in this universe depends on God for life, right? I mean there's nothing that has life in and of itself. There's only one being in the universe who has life in Himself and that is God. So, by saying that Jesus shares that quality, that attribute, he's saying that Jesus is God. Jesus made this very claim that His own life was eternally self-existent. You remember in John 11, verse 25, he says to the sisters of his dear friend Lazarus at Lazarus's graveside, “I am the resurrection and (What? What is it?) I am the life,” I am the...life! In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, (and) no man comes to the Father but through Me.” Now, although Jesus is Himself self-existent, He was the one who gave life to everything and everyone else. John, chapter 1, verse 3, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

By the way, John isn't saying the same thing two times in that verse. He's saying two different things. In the first half of that verse, he's saying Jesus created absolutely everything; and then when he says in the second half of the verse, “...apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being,” he's saying, Jesus himself is uncreated. Nothing, there's nothing in the universe that exists that Jesus didn't bring into being if it's created. That means Jesus Himself is not created; He created all things. Jesus Christ is the one who gave you physical life and who sustains your life moment by moment, did you know that? You have life because Jesus Christ

willed it to be so and continues to will it be so. The moment He changes His decision about that, your life here is over. In Revelation 1, verse 18, Jesus says, "...I have the keys of death and (the grave)." So, he is the life who provides you life, and when He decides, He turns the key and you die.

If you're in Christ, you are a Christian. If you have repented of your sins and believed in Christ, then understand this, He is also the one who gave you spiritual life and who sustains that life. This was Jesus's own claim. John, chapter 10, verse 28, He says, "...I give eternal life to them." If you have eternal life, it's because Jesus Christ gave it to you, "...I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." The Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, The Word of Life, gives physical life to everything and to everyone, and He gives spiritual life to those who believe in Him.

Listen, if you're this morning and this is not the Christ in whom you put your trust, you need to understand that He is the only one who is life and gives life, and if you hope to have eternal life, if you hope to know God, if you hope to have fellowship with God, if you hope to have your sins forgiven, it's only in Him! You had better seek it from Him. Jesus has life in Himself and He gives life to all.

A fifth truth revealed here about Jesus is, He was manifested in human flesh. Look at verse 2, "and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, (That's a reference to Jesus Himself, He is the eternal life.) which was with the Father and was manifested to us--."

Now, as I noted for you, grammatically, this verse is a parenthesis in this opening statement. That's why our translators have put a dash at the beginning and end of it. But notice, both at the beginning of this parenthesis, at the beginning of verse 2, and at the end of verse 2, John drives home a central theme of his gospel. The eternal Word of God, who is self-existent, who gives life to all, notice, "...was manifested." Now, you'll notice that verb is passive, this is what theologians refer to as a divine passive, meaning that this is something God has accomplished. And the word 'manifested' itself, means far more than just appeared. You read the Old Testament and the second person of the Trinity often appeared to His people in the Old Testament, but this is something entirely different. Here, we're talking about the historical

event of the incarnation; Jesus was manifested how? In human flesh, verse 1, that could be heard, seen, observed, and touched. John 1:14, "...the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we (beheld) His glory."

Or Paul puts it even clearer in I Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16, and in that early confession of the Christian church, "By common confession, (Paul writes.) great is the mystery of godliness." That is the mystery about this person, "He who was revealed." The word 'revealed' in I Timothy 3:16, is the same Greek word translated 'manifested' in our text. "He who was manifested in the flesh." That's what he means when he says, "He was manifested...the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

Do you understand that the eternal Son of God, fully equal with God, everything that God is and does, Jesus Christ is and does? He became flesh, that is He became fully human; He became just like you in every way except for sin, still continuing to be fully God, but adding to Himself full and complete humanity. He had a human and has a human soul just like you do. He has a perfected, now glorified human body; He was made flesh, manifested in the flesh.

The sixth truth that we learn in our text is that He was eternally with God, He was eternally with God. Verse 2 says, "...we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, (Notice this.) which was with the Father and was manifested to us--."

The Greek pronoun translated 'which' here is an unusual one and the leading Greek lexicons say it should be translated something like this, "The One who by His very nature was with the Father," the One who by His very nature was with the Father. Now, if that's bringing John 1 to mind, it should because there, John writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," same expression. These two short expressions are making two separate points about the Word or the Word of Life.

First of all, He was a person distinct from the Father. He was with God in the sense that He was a separate person who accompanied God, and yet He also enjoyed an eternal relationship with God. Notice 'was,' implies past continuous existence. The Greek preposition 'with' here, both in 1 John 1:2, and in John 1:1, is not the normal Greek preposition for 'with.' This word, this preposition literally means 'to' or 'toward.' He was 'to' or 'toward' God. Literally, it has the

idea of 'face-to-face with,' in the New Testament. It almost always occurs in context when 'with' means in an intimate sort of relationship. So, John is saying, "The Word existed before the incarnation, even before creation, in an intimate relationship with God. He is a person distinguishable from the Father, but who was in an active face-to-face relationship with the Father."

So, what was that relationship? Look down at verse 3, "...His Son." He was His Son. Jesus was eternally with God in the intimate relationship of Father and one-of-a-kind, unique, nobody else in this category, Son. This is the foundation, the basis of the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity, because you have full equality, you have eternal existence, you have both having life in themselves, and yet they are distinct persons, Father and Son. One God, eternally existing in three persons.

The seventh truth that we learn in our text is that He is Jesus of Nazareth. This focus of the Apostles' Proclamation is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. Notice verse 3, "His Son Jesus." The name 'Jesus' distinguishes Him as the historical figure that lived in Palestine 2,000 years ago. So, do you hear what John is saying? He's saying, "Let me just be very clear with you, 'The Word of Life was manifested in the flesh,' that is Jesus of Nazareth. Folks, this is the foundation of our faith, this is what the Scriptures teach, this is what the Apostles proclaimed. My question to you is, 'Is this what you believe about Jesus Christ?'"

Finally, He is the promised Messiah and Savior, He is the promised Messiah and Savior. You see this in verse 3, "...His Son (And then notice this.) Jesus Christ." In his name, Jesus, and in his title Christ, '*Christos*,' the anointed one, we learn why He was manifested in the flesh. Take the name Jesus. You remember that God demanded that Jesus be named with this name. In Matthew, chapter 1, verse 21, you remember that the angel showed up with Joseph and he said, "Listen, you're going to call the child that's in Mary's womb, Jesus."

What does that mean? Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew, '*Yeshua*,' which means, 'Yahweh saves, Yahweh delivers, Yahweh rescues.' And then listen to what the angel says next, "Call his name, call the child, 'Yahweh saves' because this child (He) will save His people from their sins." You see, that too is a claim of deity. He says, "Call him 'Yahweh saves' because He (the child) will save His people from their sins." That's why He came. His name explains His

mission; He came to be the Savior. Look at chapter 4, verse 14 of 1 John, “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

In His title, Christ, you see this same reality. ‘*Christos*’ in the Old Testament, the Messiah, ‘*HaMashiach*,’ was the one God appointed to deal with sin. All the way back in Genesis, chapter 3, verse 15, you remember, there's going to be a unique individual who will come, who will crush the head of Satan, He will deal with sin. How? Well, as the Old Testament unfolds, we learn how and you get 700 years before Christ in Isaiah, chapter 53, and we learn exactly how. Because He will stand in our place and absorb the wrath of God against our sins; “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastening for our shalom fell upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray but the Lord has caused the iniquity,” the guilt of us all, all of His people, He’s caused our iniquity-- literally the Hebrew says, ‘to strike him.’ On the cross, God struck Jesus with your guilt and the justice that guilt deserved if you’re in Christ. That's how.

And, of course, John makes this clear. Go to 1 John, chapter 1, verse 7, this all happens through His blood that we have the cleansing of sins. Look at chapter 2, verse 2, “...He Himself is the propitiation (the satisfaction of God's justice) for our sins.”

Listen, if you're here this morning and you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, and I'm not talking about one of your own making. I'm talking about the one we have seen that was at the center of the Apostles' message. The Apostles of Jesus Christ taught that you can be forgiven of all of your sins against God, that you can have fellowship with God, verse 3, and later in John, that you can know God. Think of the amazing reality of that. All of those things can be true, how? Look at 1 John, chapter 3; 1 John, chapter 3, verse 23, “This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.” Go over to chapter 5, verse 10:

The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made (God) a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has...concerning His Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Listen, your only hope is found in a person, the person at the center and focus of the declaration of the Disciples, the Apostles, and that is Jesus Christ. Run to Him today and find those realities.

If you're here this morning and you're a follower of Jesus Christ, what you're going to discover next week is that the ultimate foundation of our fellowship with God, our assurance of eternal life, our joy, is this message about Jesus Christ that the Apostles proclaimed, this is it! This is where your hope lies, this is where your salvation lies, this is where your assurance lies. And John is going to bring us back here again and again until those who are in Christ discover the reality of the fellowship they have with God and the joy that results from that. It's this message about Christ and our complete trust in Him that we celebrate in the Lord's Table.

Take a moment now and prepare your hearts; ask the Lord's forgiveness for your sins, confess them to the Lord. If you're a follower of Christ, confess your sins and prepare to take the Lord's Table together.

Our Father, we thank you for the great truths about Jesus Christ that we have seen and been reminded of this morning. Lord, for most of us here, we have already embraced those truths; we see these things and we say, "Amen!," with all of our hearts! This is what we believe; this is the One whom we've come to trust. Thank you that in Him we have forgiveness of our sins. Thank you, that as our Lord described it, we've already been bathed; our souls have been bathed, cleansed, we've been forgiven; the gavel of your justice has come down in the courtroom, and we will never face those sins again.

Father, while we don't face those sins judicially, now we are your children; and when we sin, we don't sin against you as judge, but we sin against you as Father, and we come seeking your forgiveness.

Lord, before we take of the Lord's Table in which we remember His sacrifice for sins, we want each to confess our sins to you, individually, personally, Lord, all the sins you bring to mind; we confess to you now. We pray that you would forgive us, that you would cleanse us because of what Jesus did, and that you would give us a renewed resolve to walk in the paths of righteousness. Father, forgive and cleanse us; and as we turn our hearts to worship Christ in the

way He gave us through the Lord's Table, may we do so with clean hands and pure hearts. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.