

TITLE: Fellowship

DATE: 2024.4.7

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 1:1—2:2

TEXT: ³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have **fellowship** with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

THEME: Our joy is in fellowship with God.

INTRODUCTION

I believe in the Word of God, but its truth is not always found in a literal reading of its words. We have to take into consideration the language, the setting, the culture, the mental health, the needs and desires of the author as they embed some of these things into the text knowingly and unknowingly.

For example, the author of 1 John loves the church so much and wants to help them to make it into the realm of God upon Christ's return. But the return is taking longer than anyone anticipated and some have fallen back to old habits.

The encouragement of this passage is to be sinless until Christ's return, but we have to be careful because we don't want to move away from the graciousness of Christ's love and see this encouragement as work that we need to do to merit our place in Christ's realm. It's about our relationship with God and not how 'good' we are.

SCRIPTURE

God loves to dwell with us. From the time of creation God intimately get hands dirty in holy soil and breathes life from God's lungs into ours. God dwells in the Garden with Adam and Eve. God journeys with Abraham and Sarah, God is with their family members in Egypt, and through the Exodus and into the Wilderness for 40 years. God is seen with them through the Davidic monarchy, and comes to dwell among us in the incarnation through Jesus. Now through the Spirit, God continues to dwell inside and among us, as we wait for Christ's return.

1 John begins with what we know. "In the beginning," just like the first book of the Bible and connects us through the beginning passage of Gospel of John to this writing. God has always been discoverable though what we hear, see, feel, experience and through what God reveals to us. We know God from our experience, from the experience of others and from the faith of those who are with us now as well as those who have come before us.

It is all about Fellowship. Fellowship with God, Fellowship with Jesus, Fellowship with others and fellowship that brings completeness and joy. That is what the 7th day is for, a Sabbath rest to have time to fellowship together.

To preserve this fellowship, the admonition is for us to stay away from sin. To understand sin in this context, is to see it as the things that we do that 'wounds' to our fellowship with God, wounds our fellowship with others and wounds our ourselves.

APPLICATION

We are human being, good and evil, but not sinless. For us to be sinless, is an impossible expectation. That puts so much pressure on our being good. The better questions is, "How can we live an authentic life as Christian (or in fellowship with God and others)?"

Relationships that bring joy are the measure of our lives as Christians as verse 4 suggests. Taking our cue from creation, relationships don't have to be 'perfect,' but we have to work at them to make them 'good.' We don't have to like everyone, we just need to have manners, be honest, don't do anyone harm and desire the very best for them in Christ Jesus. We can pray for them and let God write parts of their story.

When we run into conflict, we can take responsibility for how we contributed to that situation. When things go sideways, we can Admit our part that cause things to go that way and ask for forgiveness. Then we can change our behavior so we don't end up in that situation again. Sometimes it is better to error on the side of generosity, to be gracious even if it is inconvenient, and to be willing to listen because we don't know everything. When we understand why someone did what they did, we can be empathetic and maybe even part of the healing. Then we are more apt to be Forgiving, tolerate and patient. And clearly as authentic Christians in fellowship with Christ, Don't hold grudges or plot revenge. Don't talk stink behind someone's back. And say what you mean instead of trying to be funny. These are sins that wound fellowship.

We can stand up for those who are not able to advocate for themselves. We can stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized. We can speak up for what is right with our vote. We can forgive the hurt others have caused us trusting our future to God.

On Five Dollar Friday, I was pushing a full cart of groceries headed for a short checkout line. My wife blazed a trail for me to follow and secured a spot in line just before a shopper with her cart. As I followed, even though we got our place in the cue, I let the other shopper go ahead of me. An act of grace on our part. Selflessness instead of selfishness. Avoiding the judging scowl. It may have taken us a little long to check out, but with no regrets, no guilt and with joy.

CONCLUSION

Do no harm, be mindful of others, sacrifice to be a blessing, practice gratitude, people are more important than things, relationships take a lot of work. Take responsibility for how we have contributed to a situation. Be honest, ask for forgiveness, be willing to forgive the hurt others have caused you, tell the truth. learn to communicate better with each other, learn better relationship skills. Use manners. See the humanity in each other. Respect with dignity, remembering we are made in the image of God. We need to take care our ourselves so we can bring our best selves to others. Be in fellowship with others and have joy.

At Easter we had people show up that we haven't seen in person for a while. Easter service is different from the bustle of Christmas. We stayed at the door and talked, chatted, caught up, shared about the kids. Fellowship. Joy.

We did the same thing at the Easter Brunch in Dodge Hall. I got to speak with visitors who were touring the island as faith moved them to worship on Easter during their vacation. Joy.

I sat with someone at Easter Fun day that I haven't been able to sit a chat with, we talked about religious backgrounds, the church and theology (my favorite topic). Joy.

Just having an interest in others who come to Church. Sibling in the family of God. We have Christ in common. Our love of God binds us together. We can have fellowship and joy.