

Second Sunday in Advent
Dec. 6, 2015
I John 1:5-2:2

In Christ Jesus, our Advocate and our Atoning Sacrifice, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Have you ever driven down a two lane country road with deep ditches on both sides? It's kind of nerve wracking. It certainly keeps you awake and at full attention. Swerve too much to the right and you are in the ditch, too much to the left and you'll end up with the same result. You need to stay on the narrow road.

The same can be said of Christianity. On both sides of the Christian's walk through life there is the deep ditch of sin and despair or pride and arrogance both leading to unbelief and eternal death. We swerve to the left or to the right and we are in deep trouble.

Jesus talked about the narrow road to life in Matt. 7:13,14: **ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE; FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE WAY THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND THERE ARE MANY WHO GO IN BY IT. BECAUSE NARROW IS THE GATE AND DIFFICULT IS THE WAY WHICH LEADS TO LIFE, AND THERE ARE FEW WHO FIND IT.** The way to heaven is narrow, meaning there is only one way: alone through repentant faith in Jesus Christ. That narrow road can only be found in God's Word and we can only walk on that roadway through faith in Jesus.

Unfortunately, as we said, there are deep ditches on both sides of this narrow road. John mentions some of those deep ditches in our sermon text. We read vs. 5-6: **THIS IS THE MESSAGE WHICH WE HAVE HEARD FROM HIM AND DECLARE TO YOU, THAT GOD IS LIGHT AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL. IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM, AND WALK IN DARKNESS, WE LIE AND DO NOT PRACTICE THE TRUTH.**

GOD IS LIGHT! Light here refers to holiness, perfection, purity. God is holy; there is not even a hint of any imperfection in Him at all. Therefore, if we say we believe and trust in Him and His Word, if we say we are His children, in fellowship with Him, yet continually, habitually live in sin, we are liars and don't have the truth at all. We are then not walking on the road, but have fallen into the deep, dark, ditch of deception and sin.

But **IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN.** If we walk in fellowship with Jesus, that is, with a repentant heart, confessing our sins and trusting alone in Jesus for forgiveness, we have fellowship with each other as well as with God. We are assured of forgiveness, for Jesus' blood has washed us from each and every sin, from **ALL** sins ever committed or ever to be committed in thought, word and deed.

Our theme from John's words this morning is this:

**As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ we see that
SINCERE CONFESSION OF ALL SINS IS THE ONLY WAY
TO AVOID SPIRITUAL DISASTER!**

- 1) Without such confession we lay ourselves open to fatal errors in opposite directions
(either making light of sin/or saying that we have no sin.)**

There are many things that can lead us into the ditches on both sides of following Christ. Two of them are mentioned in our text. The first is making light of sin. We read: **IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM, AND WALK IN DARKNESS, WE LIE AND DO NOT PRACTICE THE TRUTH.** The Greek has a present tense here for **WALK IN DARKNESS.** That means the action is continuous action, not a one time event.

How seriously do we look upon sin in our lives? Is it easy for us when we get angry to let curse words come flying out of our mouths and then excuse ourselves because we were just letting off steam? Do we "hang one on" in drunkenness every once in a while and excuse ourselves by saying we just needed to unwind from the pressures of our job or family life? Do we look upon gambling as just "entertainment" that doesn't hurt anyone, or do we really know what kind of a greedy, selfish monster lives within our sinful hearts? How do we look upon gossip and lies? Do you unmarried young people dress and act modestly to glorify God in your life? Do we look seriously on the

consistent hearing of God's Word or is skipping and missing Church services and not reading His Word not really that bad? How about envy, bitterness, selfishness, cheating, lying, fighting, discontentment, lustful thoughts? Do we look upon these sins but lightly, as really no big deal in our lives and still profess to be walking **IN THE LIGHT**, in fellowship with our God? Do we think "after all, nobody is perfect?"

To claim to have fellowship with God, to be in the light of Christ, means nothing if our actions say the opposite. If we walk in the darkness, we are walking around in a sinful lifestyle, going about in a way clearly opposed to God's Word. Then we are heading for the ditch and we'll drown.

The other wrong way of thinking is that we have done our best, kept God's Law as good as we can and therefore really have no sin that is damning. We pray, we go to church, we give our offerings, we do good things, we live a moral life, we are kind and help others. John writes, **IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US...IF WE SAY WE HAVE NOT SINNED, WE MAKE HIM A LIAR, AND HIS WORD IS NOT IN US.** Remember the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee thought he had not sinned. He bragged about his good life, his moral life, his many good deeds that he thought were far better than other people's.

Both ways of thinking lead assuredly to eternal death and destruction. To know that we are sinful, but not caring about it or looking lightly upon our sins, because everybody else is sinful and even worse than me/or thinking that we've done so well in our lives, lived such a good life, been obedient and moral so that we have succeeded in our struggle with sin, are better than others and surely do not deserve damnation; both of these ways of thinking and believing lead to a deadly end.

What does our theme say? **SINCERE CONFESSION OF ALL SINS IS THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID SPIRITUAL DISASTER!** Why? How?

II: God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins through Jesus our Advocate and Atoning Sacrifice.

We receive forgiveness of sins not only through God's faithfulness but also through His justice. God is faithful. He never goes back on His Word. In the beginning He promised to Adam and Eve and all of mankind a Savior from sin who would destroy the serpent Satan. It took 4,000 years before that promise was fulfilled but it came to pass through Jesus Christ. Throughout the entire Old Testament God through His prophets continued to remind His people of that forgiveness which was theirs through faith in that promised Messiah.

In fact one of the names of God, **JEHOVAH**, is proof of that faithfulness. It means **I AM WHO I AM**. God is the Faithful One, the Promise God, the Unchanging One. God is faithful to His Word. We know that we have forgiveness and everlasting life through Jesus because He has promised us that. He told us so in His Word. **NOR IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER, FOR THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED.** (Acts 4:12)

We are also assured of forgiveness because God is just. This may sound strange. Don't we say that it is because of God's justice that those who do not live a perfect life of obedience, those who break God's Laws are lost and damned? Isn't God's justice summed up in His Word: **THIS DO AND YOU SHALL LIVE** and **THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH?** Is not this His justice? "Live perfect, live forever. Live imperfect, die forever."

Yes, it is. But it is also God's justice that someone live that perfect life. Someone had to keep perfectly that law of God. And so God planned that His Son would be the One perfect Substitute. He would live that perfect life so that God's justice would be fulfilled. Upon Christ then the demand was laid. "Live perfect, live forever. Live imperfect, die forever." Christ lived His life perfectly in thought, word and deed. His perfect life of love earned righteousness and everlasting life, not for Himself, but for us. For God gave that perfection and life which Christ lived for us to us. He gives it as a free gift to everyone who has faith in His Son.

But Jesus had to do more. To appease God's justice the sinner also had to be punished. The verdict was **DEATH**, both temporal death and eternal death in hell. God said to Adam and Eve, **BUT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU SHALL NOT EAT, FOR IN THE DAY YOU EAT OF IT YOU SHALL SURELY DIE.** That verdict could not be changed, for God is an eternal and unchangeable, just God. The punishment had to be carried out, it had to be fulfilled, justice had to be satisfied.

Again Christ was the One and only One who could satisfy that verdict; the only One who could

meet that demand of death and still live. That is why our text says in cha. 2:2: **AND HE HIMSELF IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY BUT ALSO FOR THE WHOLE WORLD.** Jesus is the Atoning sacrifice, the One sacrifice that could bring about peace between God and men, the One sacrifice that could pay for our sins in full. The author to the Hebrews expands on this teaching when he wrote **BUT CHRIST CAME AS HIGH PRIEST OF THE GOOD THINGS TO COME, WITH THE GREATER MORE PERFECT TABERNACLE NOT MADE WITH HANDS, THAT IS, NOT OF THIS CREATION. NOT WITH THE BLOOD OF GOATS AND CALVES, BUT WITH HIS OWN BLOOD HE ENTERED THE MOST HOLY PLACE ONCE FOR ALL, HAVING OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION...BUT THIS MAN, AFTER HE HAD OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SINS FOREVER, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD...FOR BY ONE OFFERING HE HAS PERFECTED FOREVER THOSE WHO ARE BEING SANCTIFIED.**

John very nicely sums up his heart's desire for His people when he writes in 2:1: **MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS I WRITE TO YOU, THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN. AND IF ANYONE SINS, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.** The Gospel of forgiveness through Jesus Christ motivates us to live for Christ and to shun sin in our lives. But we are not perfect. We still sin because of our sinful flesh. Jesus defends us before His Father. He is our Advocate, our Attorney who pleads our case for us before the bar of God's Justice. He leads the Father to look, not at our sins, but at His Son's Atoning Sacrifice, His shed blood for us. In repentance we then confess our sins and turn to Jesus alone for full and free forgiveness for all sins. **HE IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!**

So as we prepare our hearts for Christ's coming, the celebration of His birth and for His second coming whenever that may be, this Gospel message will move us to continually, habitually walk in the **LIGHT.** As Paul writes in Colossians 2:6 **AS YOU HAVE THEREFORE RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, SO WALK IN HIM...**

Amen.