

Sunday Sermon 04072024 1 John 1:1-2:2, John 20:19-31

“The Greatest Testimony in Human History!”

Ironically, I seem to be a little exhausted after Easter. It may be because the tension I had with myself was relieved with the relief that one long church celebration of Lent, Passion Week, and Easter has ended. Also, it seems to be because I have a bit of an obsession with Easter, hoping that my congregation will be armed with the Resurrection Faith.

Essentially, Easter is the Super Bowl for pastors. It's game time, and the pressure is on! Certainly, this feeling may be a result of my own selfish desires that I need to throw away. Of course, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I could probably instill such beautiful faith in the congregation on Easter. But faith in the resurrection does not bloom overnight, like the flowers of the Easter lilies.

Today, I want to finally close the chapter on Easter, but not before I speak again about our faith in the resurrection. So, let's take a look at Apostle John's greatest testimony concerning the "word of life."

I. We have been freed from sin.

Many Christians are sick and tired of the word "sinner." Maybe it is because "sinner" and its variations are mentioned 749 times in the Bible. But I was always curious why some churches and church members focus on sin and not more on the fact that sin is resolved. Once you know how it is resolved, you can be free from disgust.

But then why would God place a stigma on being a sinner? To acknowledge that we are sinners is to confess that we have sinful natures. In that very dark moment of sinfulness, we are offered the benefit of the grace God has prepared for us. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous, and he will forgive us of our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing." God has promised to forgive our sins and cleanse our corrupt nature.

Nowadays, in this corrupt world, the cost of crime can be paid off with money. But there is no amount of money or other method that can forgive human spiritual sin except for faith in and acknowledgment of Jesus shedding his blood on the cross. The reason God allows us this easy and unique way out of sin and the freedom that comes with it is that He alone wants to be the owner of our lives.

II. We have eternal life in the gospel.

Euni and my newlywed life began in a studio apartment in Jamaica in the borough of Queens in New York City. One winter evening, we went to Manhattan to see the night view and then walked in front of the department store called "Fifth Avenue." At that time, in the show window there, a mink coat was on display. I blindfolded Euni and asked, "Euni, how much is that coat?" "If I get it right, will you buy me that coat?" Euni replied. "If you guess the price, I'll give you the right to take a closer look at that coat," I replied.

Of course, I guessed it was a lot more expensive than my expectations, so I estimated it would be around \$5,000. However, the price was 70,000 dollars. A sable fur coat can cost from \$10,000 to \$500,000! In 2015, Kalr Lagerfeld featured one of the most expensive pieces of clothing ever made: a full-length sable fur coat that cost 1,000,000 euros, which is almost \$1,200,000 US dollars!

How much do you think you would have to pay if you wanted to buy your earthly life? And what about for your eternal life? There is no price tag for that. However, all of us have been gifted the priceless gift of eternal life, for free, in the gospel of Jesus.

Today, Apostle John's testimony in the first verse of 1 John says, "This we proclaim concerning the word of life." The Word of Life here is in reference to Jesus Christ and the gospel. John testifies here that the word of life existed from the beginning—that he had heard it, saw it with his eyes, and touched it with his hands.

The Bible is the book that brings life (John 20:31). If you read this book and believe, you will have eternal life. This means that to gain eternal life, you must read and believe this book, because the Bible testifies to Jesus and his salvation. Of course, the Bible can be used for other purposes too. But if you read the Bible and you have not received new life, you have completely lost the purpose and point of the book.

#Testimony of Mr. In-Soo Lee: Mr. I.S. Lee graduated from the Republic of Korea Military Academy. After graduating from the academy, he was promoted from second lieutenant to colonel faster than anyone else. He once served as the chief secretary of a general who was the chairman of the National Reconstruction Supreme Council.

He was a Christian but had no time to go to church. One day, however, he was arrested and sentenced to death for serving as a counter-revolutionary.

While in prison, he was subjected to inhumane treatment. However, his mother gave him a Bible. He had read the Bible 50 times in total when his death sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. When he read it 70 times, his sentence was reduced to 15 years of imprisonment; at 100 times, he was released from prison.

After his release, he began to run the Evangelism and Rehabilitation Center for inmates and released prisoners. The gospel takes our exhaustion, anger, and despair and turns it around to joy, gratitude, and hope.

III. Jesus is our advocate.

What does the resurrected Jesus do for us now? Let's look at 1 John 2:1, 2. In a word, Jesus is our everlasting advocate. He defends us before our Father, even though we have sinned. Also, Jesus is the sacrifice for our sins and for the sins of the whole world as the atoning sacrifice.

Sometimes we are moved to see a competent attorney saving a defendant who had been stigmatized as a murderer and redeemed as an innocent person. If so, how powerful is the defense of Jesus, who saves us by the merits of the blood of self-sacrifice before the righteous judgment seat of God?

Let us be glad and thank God that the Almighty Jesus, who was resurrected from the dead, is our defender. With the help of the Lord, we can walk on the path of faithfulness, humility, and loyalty. The temptations of the devil are no longer in us and are driven out. For after the resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in us.

Have you ever heard of a document called "Pilate's Report"? This was a document recorded by the Roman historian, Velleius Paterculus. I think this is worthy of reference to our faith in the record of the Lord, who has seen Jesus directly. This report is a vivid field report of Jesus to the Emperor Caesar Tiberius from Pilate, who was the Roman administrator of Judea from 26 to 35 AD. Pilate was the one who washed his hands, avoiding the responsibility of crucifying Jesus.

This report is an official document made in court during the Messianic Age and is currently in the temple of Saint Sophia in Turkey. It begins with the greeting, "Emperor of Rome, Sir Tiberius Caesar," and describes in detail the events about Jesus that he experienced. Inside is recorded the ministry of Jesus, his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection, similar to the records of the gospel written by the disciples of Jesus.

We often hear arguments that people do not believe in Jesus because they do not believe in his actual historical existence and resurrection. Despite witness accounts of the resurrection, these naysayers still want to live their own way without God. But as children of God, we must always check whether our faith in the resurrection is in our hearts.

The resurrected Jesus came directly to his disciple Thomas and made him confess that Jesus is "my Lord and my God!" This event proves to us that Jesus comes to us today and that He wants us to awaken through His truth. The miraculous events we experience can ignite our resurrection faith. But the power that keeps our faith in the resurrection vigorous is experienced by us when we firmly believe in the words of Jesus' promise.

Last Sunday, there was a lot of unexpected snow, and some people suffered from colds. Therefore, several members were unable to attend the Easter Sunday service. Our expectations of celebrating the joy of Jesus' resurrection together seemed to be daunted by circumstances. However, we confess that no physical adverse conditions can diminish our faith in the resurrection.

Moreover, depending on the surrounding environment and conditions, the Easter decorations and worship settings may change from year to year. Instead, how grateful are we that we can keep our resurrection faith the same under any conditions? That unadulterated joy and love all originated with the resurrection of Jesus. It also began with the testimony of the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

Listening to and believing in John's testimony, each of us must be witnesses and testify about the resurrection of Jesus. Sometimes we make that testimony with words, with life, with songs, with writing, even with laughter. This testimony is available to all of us. The Lord gives us the opportunity and the way to do it anytime and anywhere!

Today, many people say it just like Thomas did. “Where is Jesus?” “Let me see him, then I will believe.” However, we cannot show them Jesus because He is not on earth. We and you should show them as Jesus. I do not mean to become a behaviorist, but I do mean we can help them see Jesus through our love. Also, we should pray to the Holy Spirit to show them Jesus.

Until Jesus comes again, the time of “What a Blessing to Believe without Seeing” will be continued. If Jesus already comes again, the necessity of the faith's existence will disappear. Because everything was accomplished as the Lord promised. Until the day of the Lord comes, let's walk together on the path of victory in faith, following the leading of the Spirit and the word of God!

Even though we cannot see Jesus with our physical eye sight, in the Spirit of God, let's all together experience the power and glory of Jesus' resurrection. Amen.

Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:

- 1) As you celebrate this Easter Sunday, what spiritual awareness or moving experience was given to you recently or repeatedly?
- 2) What does the gospel of Jesus Christ mean for your daily life today? What attempts do you make to continually imprint it?
- 3) Do you remember the moment or process that convinced you that you were forgiven of your sins through the grace of Jesus? What role does that event play in testifying to the resurrection of Jesus?