

We'll have our men's group coming up.

Here's the way it's going to work.

We're going to open with praise.

And what that means is we are going to go to the Lord in prayer.

And then we are going to stand and praise the Lord through the old doxology.

At that point in time, Stephanie will begin playing Holy, Holy, Holy, and we'll go right into that.

Alright.

Let's settle our hearts, prepare our hearts and minds for what He has in store for us today.

Lord, thank you.

We always begin with praise and thanksgiving for the opportunity to be here, to be with you today, to serve you today, to be taught by you today, to be led by you today.

We are a grateful people.

All of the people that are here today, bonded together by the power of your Holy Spirit, Lord, you are our pastor.

You are our teacher.

And we come to you humbly and ask you to lead us in our music, lead us in our prayers, lead us as we explore and move through your word today, Lord.

In Jesus' mighty name.

Amen.

We want to open this morning with Psalm 16, speaking of Holy, Holy, Holy and Fairest, Lord Jesus, and the mighty fortress that is our God.

I was wondering where we would go after Easter.

As I often say, Christmas and Easter, you got your texts.

And sometimes you can get to the get to the text through prophecy and sometimes you can get to the text in the meaning of the season, right directly from the words of Jesus, sometimes through the letters.

But what is next is the real question.

You just make a clean break.

Well, no, we never really make a clean break at church, right?

Because we talk about why we celebrate church on Sunday.

Why do we gather on Sunday?

Because it's the first day of the week when they realize that the Lord Jesus had been resurrected.

And that's why we gather.

So moving forward from all of the teaching that led into last week and all through last week, I do want to go into some great examples of what happened next.

Right.

Not just the road to Emmaus, which we talked about last week, having your eyes open spiritually by God's Holy Spirit.

But what does the early church look like?

What does the early Christian look like and sound like?

How do they behave?

What can we learn from them?

And we can learn quite a bit.

We can learn how to gather together as his church.

We can learn what it means to be indwelt by God's Holy Spirit.

We can learn what it means or how we should interact with other believers and interact with the world, as we say.

We learn everything, right, from scripture.

So I'm going to be using 1 John over the next couple of weeks.

There's a fantastic example of all of those things relative to the individual believer and the gathered and the forces that come against the individual believer and the gathered.

We learn a lot from that.

I'm also going to be touching upon the vax, which is the natural progression of things.

We read about how the disciples handled the resurrection and his ascension and all of those different things.

And I will be touching upon the psalms, which always speak to the heart of the believer, regardless of what your emotion may be, your situation may be.

There is a psalm for every occasion, as we say, and there are psalms of praise and adoration and songs of recognition of who God is.

Psalms 16 is such a psalm.

I'd like to begin there.

We're going to worship with "How great thou art" and "How great is our God."

And that is going to be the premise of the preaching for the next several weeks.

The work that he did on that cross to complete us must be recognized and must be worshiped.

Psalms 16, and I'll be reading from the New Living Translation, and I'm going to preach just a little bit through it, but not a lot, because it really does speak for itself.

There are a couple of things that we should probably touch upon.

"Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge."

"I said to the Lord, 'You are my master.

Every good thing I have comes from you.

The godly people in the land are my true heroes.

I take pleasure in them.

Troubles multiply for those who chase after other gods.

I will not take part in their sacrifices of blood, or even speak the names of their gods.'

'Keep me safe, O Lord, for I have come.

I take refuge in you.'"

This is the theme of the sovereignty of God himself over you, over the universe.

There is no living thing.

In fact, there is nothing, anything that has been created that is not under the sovereignty of God, the Creator.

If God the Creator would like to take all of the trees and change them to a different species, he could.

I can't see any good reason why he would want to do that, but he could, because he is sovereign over them and what they are.

He is sovereign over the beasts of the field, which we've spoken of many times, and how they are programmed to do what they do.

When you look at nature and the migrations of these species and how they know to do these incredible things that keep their species alive, we know where that programming, so to speak, comes from.

We also know that human beings, as we read the Genesis account, are not beasts of the field, nor are we trees or plants or inanimate objects.

In fact, we are so much more than that, humans have their own category in creation.

There is all of creation and they name everything from the formless earth and how it is formed on a big scale, and how the land is formed in the sea and the sky, and all of them to the very small things.

He talks about the creeping things on the ground and the little fish of the sea, and all of that is done, and then what?

It creates man.

So at the very moment, this is one of the very basic human questions.

What's so special about me?

Or what is my purpose?

Or who am I?

This is one of the cornerstone places that we can go in scripture to understand that no matter who you are, what your situation, what you've been through, whatever the case may be, you are a creation, you are an image-bearer of the Most High God.

That's the bottom line.

There's a lot more to come as you are filled by God's Holy Spirit, as you are saved, as we say, and sanctified by Him, and you walk in His power.

There's a lot more to come.

But the very foundation, whether you're a believer or not a believer, and there's so many lost people, why are they so lost?

They don't even realize that they are special and unique category of creation.

They don't even realize or will not accept the fact that they are image-bearers of the Most High.

That's one thing when you talk about the Opposer of God's will, what would He like to get out of every human being's head?

That you are in fact special.

Not special like, "Oh, I'm going to get all the..."

You're special because you're a special part of creation.

You are spiritual, a spirit being, physical body.

You are a moral being.

You make choices in your life.

Beasts of the field don't make any choices in their bodies.

You come to know right from wrong, good from evil, all of those things, and you, by the power of God in this crew anyway, we try to discern the next decision that we're going to make, the next words that we're going to speak, the next actions that we're going to do.

Beasts of the field certainly do not do that.

"Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.

You guard all that is mine.

The land you have given me is a pleasant land.

What wonderful inheritance!

I will bless the Lord who guides me.

Even at night my heart instructs me.

I know the Lord is always with me.

I will not be shaken, for He is right beside me.

No wonder my heart is glad and I rejoice.

My body rests in safety, for you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever."

Hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to fulfill that.

It sounds as though it is right out of one of the letters to the Church.

If not, if you change the nouns around, an actual teaching of Jesus Christ Himself.

Scripture informs Scripture and as we go from Psalm 16 through the teachings of Jesus, through the teachings of the Apostles into the Church, we see that the same truths apply now as they did then.

This psalmist recognized in the midst of the religious system, in the midst of the sacrificial system of which we've spoken quite a bit over the past few weeks leading up to Easter, that that really is absolutely useless without faith in a holy, sovereign God.

The sacrifices that He asks for are meaningless as Scripture says, "If you do not approach the altar, that altar or this altar, with a broken and contrite heart, understanding your desperate need for God, to be enveloped by Him, for Him to be your refuge."

And as we understand it through the teachings of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, that this is fulfilled in Him and thus it is fulfilled in us by the power of the promised Holy Spirit of God.

So we open with that.

I wanted to open the cornerstone.

You're going to hear how this is going to play out when John starts speaking, right?

In 1 John.

But this is the cornerstone.

And as we often say, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Now we'll see this and we'll go fast forward, 750 years?

Help me out.

And fast forward 750 years, now we'll see it in action as actual followers of Jesus Christ in His church.

Amen?

This is your cornerstone.

"Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge."

"Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.

You will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave."

Sounds an awful lot like bodily resurrection to me.

"Granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasure of living with you forever."

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever shall believe in Him will not perish but have everlasting life with Him forever."

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

This is the reality in which we live as His church.

I'm always telling you, and the invitation always stands.

Every Sunday, beginning during the middle end of the service, if you would like to give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, that's what the altar is for.

This thing still works.

I'll test it again for you.

Let me check it out here.

Yep, working just fine.

Working is fine.

But I always say this too when we're singing hymns like that, especially those hymns.

You don't sort of hit the rank of the hymns.

But especially those hymns.

If you're down, you're compressed, if you're not feeling, come on up here.

Come on up here and just listen to all of that worship pouring over you.

You'll go back to your seat differently.

You certainly will.

It's absolutely spiritually energizing.

And it's fantastic.

And you're all, "Oh, great!"

And I'm like, "Whoa!"

And my hair is standing up.

Tucked in!

You know what?

I had a moment going there.

I had a moment going there, and then Josh had to squish it.

But I'm still there.

[Audience member] You've got a lot of talk on that.

[Laughter] Exactly.

You tell me, David.

[Laughter] First John chapter one.

This is one of those deals where each and every Sunday, I'm going to chunk out a piece of scripture, and we'll see how far we go.

You could take parts of, especially, well, any part of scripture, really, but 1 John happens, Josh, to be one of my favorite pieces of scripture, and preach 11 sermons on the first five sentences.

So we'll see where the Lord wants this to go.

I know my intention is to teach, and I know what I would like you to take away with today.

But we'll see where we go.

1 John chapter one.

"We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen.

We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands.

He is the Word of Life.

This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him.

And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life.

He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us.

We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us.

And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy."

If there was one passage of scripture, if all of the canon, as we call it, beyond the Gospels were compressed into one paragraph or two paragraphs, this would be it.

There isn't anything in here.

And what I like about it most is that several times in this passage, John clearly says, "We proclaim to you the truth."

And that is what I do.

And that's not like, "Oh, look at..."

No, I'm not an apologist.

I can't do those fancy arguments.

I can't do the whole case for Christ thing.

I find them fascinating.

I love listening to them, the argument, but I'm not wired that way.

Everything that I speak is premised on the fact that I know it's true.

And I'm not here to argue with you.

I'm telling you the truth.

So this is what I like.

I really identify with this scripture.

I identify with John and what he is saying to the people whom he is speaking.



We proclaim to you what we saw, we proclaim to you what we know, we proclaim to you that he is life.

And those who believe in him, those who will invest in his life will have fellowship with us.

We will be the church.

And I love that.

Like I said, that's the way I'm wired.

Now, you want to have a comment?

I'm not much of an evangelist.

I'm not much of an apologist.

He made me a preacher, a proclaimer, and that is what I do.

So that's why I so strongly feel about this.

When he opens up, he doesn't open up like Paul does.

We would like to say hi to Ryan and Jeff and Phil Ephesus.

We would like to recognize Mark and Jody and so on and so forth.

So and so brings you their wishes and in the name of Jesus Christ, he does it.

He goes, "We proclaim to you that Jesus Christ is God."

I like that.

Like I can do that.

Right?

I'll get rid of all the social niceties that I'm not very good at and get right to the point.

"We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning.

He is God.

He is eternal.

He is eternal, whom we have heard and seen.

It's the truth.

We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands.

Tell me about some, it's not a bodily resurrection.

He is the word of life.

This one who is life itself was revealed to us and we have seen him.

Now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life."

I love that.

Like I could read that over and over and over again.

Like the Lord's Prayer.

When we talk about the Lord's Prayer, it's actually an affirmation of who God is.

And you lead us not in temptation, but you deliver us from evil.

This is who God is.

And I would like that.

When we read these words, there are times when Paul is making very detailed, this is not Paul, I know, but he is making very detailed and eloquent arguments for this theological thing, or this purpose of Jesus, or what the case may be.

John is a preacher.

So here we are.

We go to the verse that's kind of tiny.

Like I said, I made them this morning, and one of the things that I forgot and I always had to do, whenever I transfer the lyric of a song, like I have a PowerPoint for the song, "How Great Thou Art," and I copy and paste it onto a new PowerPoint, whenever you put that on a USB drive, boom, it washes everything out.

And I forgot that I used to have to go there in the morning and then redo it all and make it black again.

So I apologize for that.

But it's "How Great Thou Art."

Come on.

Come on, people.

I love you guys.

Verse 3, let's pick up there and then we'll go a little farther.

"We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us.

And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

We are writing these things so that you may fully share in our joy."

There is fellowship.

Acts 2.42.

Fellowship is a part of worship within the Church.

It's a part of worship within the Church.

You have fellowship, one with the other, as brother and sister in Christ.

You are bound together by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

And we want those who do not know Christ and His eternal life-giving self to know Him.

Because not only do we want to have fellowship with them like, "Hi, how are you?"

Whatever the case may be, we want to have fellowship with them as Christian brothers and sisters.

It's different.

And we know that it's different.

And it's not that, you know, "It's awesome, it's dumb, and we need to be mean to them."

No, no, no, no.

Don't get anything twisted like that.

But you know very well that being drawn together as brother and sister in Christ, it's different.

It's magnetic.

It draws us all together.

And then we're always talking about what would a person experience if they walked in off the street.

Would they experience the love of Christ that is within us, that is binding us together?

Something different than what any social club in the world has to offer?

John is telling them, "We want you.

We want to tell you what we know.

We want to tell you what we saw.

We want to tell you what we did.

We want to tell you all about Jesus, the Messiah, and eternal life through Him.

And we want to fellowship with you that way."

So there's the premise.

There's the premise.

Speaking into a group of believers and non-believers alike.

Right?

There's his premise.

Let's go to verse 5.

"This is the message we heard from Jesus, and now declare to you."

Notice the language.

It's all declarative.

We are proclaiming.

We are declaring.

This is the message we heard from Jesus, and very carefully I would like to provide the argument that I believe proves it's true.

No.

It's true.

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you.

God is light, and there is no darkness in Him at all.

So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness.

We are not practicing the truth.

But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other.

There's that word again.

"And the blood of Jesus, His Son cleanses us from all sin."

This is important to understand.

God is light.

We know that there is good and evil.

We know that God is sovereign over both good and evil.

So God is both good and evil, right?

No.

Creation, and the way that He has made creation, and the way creation has played out with these autonomous moral beings that He created, has created evil.

We are the ones who chose to be in opposition to God's will.

God hasn't changed.

If you're having a problem with your relationship with God, it's not an issue with God, it's an issue with you.

And this is where we can get in front of that mirror and figure out what that issue is.

John is going to give us some suggestions of unrepentant hidden darkness that we carry in our hearts, and that we try to hide from others and even from this love of God, and go on sinning, thinking, "I can have the best of both worlds."

No problem.

So don't get that, right?

You always hear Eastern religions and that sort of thing, there's light and dark, there's yin and yang, there's good and evil, there's always opposite forces pulling it in.

God is life.

God is love.

God is good.

You are created as a special piece of creation, and you are created with the ability to accept or reject.

And in the very beginning, with the temptation of being more like God, we rejected.

And so, boom.

The opposition to God's will has come into the world and has been there, of course, ever since.

So that's where all of it ties together.

That doesn't happen.

Like a beast of the field, one of those steer over there doesn't say, "I do.

I understand God's will and I reject it, because I would like to eat more grass than He has given me."

I don't know.

It doesn't happen.

I don't know because it doesn't happen.

But a human being can say, "I've read the Word, I know the truth, I've heard preachers proclaim the truth.

I don't want that."

You can do that.

I don't want that.

That's not for me.

There's a huge difference.

Huge difference.

That's not God being good and evil.

It's God being sovereign over creation.

There's a difference.

Just a little bit more.

So, because I want to read this piece because I mentioned it, right?

So, if we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.

But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that His Word has no place in our hearts.

We go right back to the Garden of Eden.

You can say, "What do you want about me, God?"

but I know who I am.

And if I were God, I certainly would allow my behavior.

That's exactly what we want to do.

And that is sinful.

When it is in opposition to God's will.

That's why we say about living in God's will, following God's will, discerning God's will, behaving as though we are inspired by God's Holy Spirit, all of those things.

But if we say, "No, no, no.

There is no sin in me for one of two reasons, perhaps.

One, I am holier than you are and there is no sin in me.

Don't you know I went to seminary and I am the godliest man that you will ever be and there is no sin in me."

Oh, how about the sin of the bride right there?

But anyway, right?

Or, that's not really sin.

One of two reasons.

You think that you really don't sin.

That you're so religious that you don't.

You don't really know what you need God for.

Why are you even in church?

You've gotten to that point of perfection.

You are the next Jesus Christ.

Wrong.

Or, that how I behave, what I think and what I do really isn't that sinful.

Or, you can't really be sinned.

If you think that you don't have those, and we talk about that all the time.

Even when we go back to the old Ten Commandments.

We say, "This is what I do, this is what I am doing, this is what I am saying, this is what I am thinking.

Does it honor God?

Does it honor His creation?"

Now, if any one of us can go through an entire waking day and raise their hand at the end of the day, I want to hear about it.

Because I know that there are points of frustration.

With my grandkids, or maybe with my wife, I can't talk to them.

You know, maybe whatever is going on.

And I'm like, "Hmm, and whoa, whoa."

Wrong thought.

Re-adjust.

Right?

We're human beings.

We are the symbol.

We are simultaneously sinners and saints.

So I want you to know that maybe, we'll follow up with these last six verses, because they're commentary on the last couple.

And then we'll finish.

"My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who cleans our case before the Father."

Well, that sounds like it's actually possible for people not to sin.

That's not what he's saying.

He's saying if you are doing what he mentioned above, and trying to get away with your sin, recognizing that it's sin, or behaving as though there is no sin at all in your life, if you're doing those things, I don't want you to do those things.

But if you do those things, understand.

Confess them.

Confess them to the Lord.

Confess them to a brother or a sister.

Confess them and understand and recognize your forgiveness that's already there.

The grace that has been extended to you.

And if in your heart, going back to Psalm 16, if in your heart it's truly broken and contrite, if you truly do not want that sin anymore, then the good Lord will correct you.

Part of his correction is that conscience that said, "Hey, you just did something stupid.

You just sinned.

You need to go to the Lord.

You need to make a phone call to your brother or your sister."

That's part of the correction, is understanding.



It's self-awareness as a Christian.

So if you do sin, my prayer is that you do not enjoy it anymore.

And that you turn back to the Lord because you are under his grace.

And when you do that sincerely, you'll recognize, "I am forgiven of that.

I may move.

I will move forward.

And I will be very intentional in my speech, in my behavior, in my thoughts."

So this advocate, he is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

Not you.

You're going to go on being a human being, covered by the righteousness of Christ.

He is the one who is truly righteous.

He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins, and not only our sins, but the sins of all the world.

And we can be sure that we know him and we obey his commandments.

If someone claims, "I know God," and doesn't obey commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth.

But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him.

That is how we know we are living in him.

Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

We should aspire, as the great book says, to be imitators of Christ.

We have all of the information we need to make the right decision.

But the decision is in the hands of all of you free moral agents.

And not only THE decision, "Yes, I believe that Jesus Christ is Savior.

I submit myself to him as Lord.

My life, Lord, I am yours."

Not only THE decision, but the little decisions.

We have all the information we need.

It's what I'm about to say, what I'm about to do, what I'm thinking.

Does it honor God?

Does it honor his creation?

Over the years, we have enough information for the little decisions.

We still must make those decisions.

That's how we got created.

You're not sheep, you're not goats, you're not steer.

You are a human being, unique among all creations.

The ability to hear the word today and give your life to Jesus Christ.

The ability to hear the word today and want to reaffirm your commitment to Jesus Christ in an anointing and in prayer.

Or not.

And remember, we often speak of the wrath of God.

The wrath of God is in fact leaving you to your own devices.

And when you look at an atheistic world who is left to its own devices, need I say Amen?

Need I say Amen?

Father, we do pray that this word does penetrate hearts and minds and spirits.

We pray that in your name, your Holy Spirit would invade those who are opening themselves to you right now for cleansing.

To realize the truth in their own lives and of their own lives.

Understanding that it's called a walk with Christ for a reason because it is verb.

It is action.

Lord, let us dwell on your word and just your word.

Know your word.

Let us have all of the information.

Let us have your guidance and your discernment, Lord, that we may choose correctly in the big things and in the little things.

In Jesus mighty name.

Amen.

Amen. - Thank you.