

# Easter Sunday: “Building Holy Homes!”

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April 7, 2024

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## Scriptures

### **1 John 1:1-9**

*1:1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you that this is the eternal life promised by God - true fellowship, with God and with Jesus Christ...*

*4 We are writing these things to you so that our joy may be complete. 5 This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you, that God is light and in God there can be no darkness at all.*

*6 We cannot have true fellowship with God and still walk in the darkness. But when we walk in God’s light, we also have fellowship with one another because the work of Jesus cleanses us from all sin... 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 But if we confess our sins, Jesus who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

## Sermon: Building Holy Homes!

During Lent we listened to the stories of folks who have, in my estimation, become “living stones.” Similar to real stones, these folks are typically ignored by our society, that is, at least until they get in the way! But with a little attention, some genuine kindness and lots of encouragement, we learned that what often lies just beneath the surface can become construction material of the highest grade. Because these are the very kind of folks that God uses to build true houses of worship or what we could also call Holy Homes!

That is what I think we are trying to do here in our very “plain” little building on the corner of Oak and Matthews in Ft Collins. The carpet in our sanctuary is always stained and we can never seem to keep it clean enough. The tile in the kitchen is always needing repair and I’m constantly having to replace one appliance or another! Why? Why do we do all this?

Do we do all this seemingly never ending work because we feel sorry for those who are less fortunate than us? Do we do it because we feel guilty for being more fortunate than they? Well I truly hope not! I hope that neither of those are our prime motivations. So hear me out on this folks. I hope that the primary motivation for all that we do is because we believe in and are filled with hope! We should be doing what we do, because we believe in the power of love! We must never stop believing that kindness works! And deep down we must hold on firmly to the hope that each and everyone of us, can change!

And if we believe that God does dwell within each person through the power of the Holy Spirit, then each of us of great value! Each and every life is precious and each life should be filled with joy! Of course pain is real and we will have many struggles to overcome, but true joy is the fruit that leads to life that is eternal!

Our little space that desperately needs another coat of paint inside, and where the grass outside seems to need re-sodding every year, is a Holy Home, a place of true and holy worship. And most certainly this is happening not because of what we do here one Sunday morning each week, but it is a result of what happens here during the rest of the week.

Now I know that none of you is under the delusion that it is always sunshine and puppies here all week - though we do have several dogs and cats living here in purrfect harmony! There's plenty of pain, lots of struggles, conflicts, mistakes and even some cursing - well lots of cursing sometimes - but there is also healing and hope! And we have become witnesses to it all.

And that is where our reading from 1 John chapter one comes in to play this morning. As one of the Lectionary options for this Sunday it seemed to sum up well the answer to what hopefully is the inevitable question that we should all be asking post Easter and that is, "What's next?" And you know, I don't think I've ever preached on 1 John chapter one, let alone any of the other chapters in any of the Epistles of John (which are three by the way!).

Now in this first letter, John, along with his sidekicks, (note that the letter starts with, "we") go to very great lengths to establish both their authority and authenticity. They repeat themselves three times, in order to make it abundantly clear that everything that follows their introduction, is worth the readers' serious consideration, due to the fact that they are sharing only that which they were eyewitnesses to.

The letter writers proclaim that they were first hand witnesses to the life, and to the teachings and to the resurrection of Jesus! "We know this to be true," the writers of 1 John are saying, "because we were there! We saw him with our own eyes and heard him speak with our own ears and we touched him with our very own hands and he touched us!" You cannot get more authentic or authoritative than that!

And once they have now established their own "cred" they proceed to make one of the most phenomenal declarations of all, that true life is actually available for each and everyone of us! And I quote, "this is the eternal life promised by God - true fellowship, with God and with Jesus Christ..." True community is true and eternal life! And true community is being in relationship with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, you and me!

God is the light they declare! God makes it all happen! And God cannot be anything but light. God's light illuminates any and all darkness! And we find our way in this light. By walking in the light we can also reflect God's light and so help others to also find their way. When we wander off into the dark, the light of others will help us find our way back. When we do make mistakes, or refuse to reflect God's light, the light is not taken away from us, but remains steadfast until we acknowledge our failures and then once again experience the wonder working power of Jesus' forgiveness.

I think that the greatest lie that we have been told and the greatest source of darkness that we perpetuate as humans, is the belief that some folks are not worthy of God's love, that they are not somehow capable of being restored or redeemed. But if we open ourselves up to the pain and to the suffering of others we too can ultimately become infused with the power of God's light! Because when we walk with others in God's light, we too become eyewitness to the tremendous power of resurrected, transformed and radically changed lives due to the love of God.

But the writers of 1 John add this curious statement, that their compulsion to sharing this truth is also a bit self-centered because it also leads to an increase of their own joy - to becoming even more full of joy! I too have experienced this amazingly and seemingly transcendent joy when I've been able to share with those folks who have been thoroughly traumatized by life, that they too are truly valued and deeply loved by God, a God who in fact desires for them lives that are filled with joy, hope and purpose.

In the light of that realization (yes the pun is intended!), we too can also become part of the “we” who wrote that first letter from John. We too have seen and we too have heard and we have also experienced and been enlightened by the great power of God to transform lives this past Lent. And I have no doubt that many of you have experienced this, both through personal experiences and through stories of others that you have encountered in the past.

And so we too, can say along with the Johns in their letter:

“Now, what we must declare to others, is that which has been true from the beginning, but it is also what we have heard with our own ears, what we have seen with our very own eyes and what we have looked at and touched with our hands. It concerns that power which brings people back to life again. We have seen it and testify to it and declare to everyone that this is eternal life - which is a true community promised by God - with God, the Holy Spirit and with Jesus Christ... “

We must say and sing and write these things so that our hope is constantly renewed and that we are even more filled with joy. This is what we know for sure and what we must proclaim, that God is “the light” and anything that is dark or destructive just isn’t God! We cannot have true fellowship with God while still stumbling through a life of lies.

But when we walk in God’s light, we know the truth and also have fellowship with each other because the work of Jesus keeps us from being duped again. If we say that we can live without missing the mark sometimes, we deceive ourselves... But if we confess our mistakes, Jesus who is faithful and just, will forgive us and the power of forgiveness will keep us on track.