

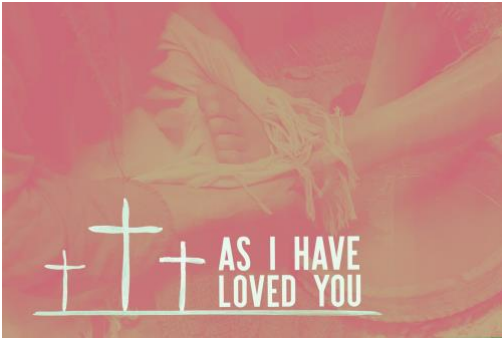
Sermon #1: Fellowship

April 23, 2023

Text: **1 John 1:1-4**

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Sermon Open:

We look in detail at the presentation of the eyewitness testimony about Jesus given to us by the Apostle John. Our faith does call us to receive a blessing through belief in miraculous & mysterious things apart from seeing. But our belief is also rooted in historical, physical evidence. Anyone who rejects Christianity has a burden of their own – to explain away this eyewitness testimony of men who proclaimed the risen Christ. These men not only testified about him in words, but who also suffered material loss and even died because they held to this testimony.

Scripture Exposition:

The focus of this message is on John's teaching regarding the **Fellowship**. John speaks of a **fellowship that eternally exists** between God the Father and God the Son (see v2, **John 17:5, Matthew 11:27**). We can also infer from other texts that this fellowship extends to God the Spirit, although John does not speak of this here. John further teaches that those who **belong to Christ by faith are received into this same fellowship** (see v3, **John 17:24**). Biblical fellowship is not a human construct nor is it something that God created for us. Had no human being ever been created, fellowship would still exist among the persons of God. Finally, John teaches us that those who are received into the fellowship of the Father and Son are **now bound to one another for the fullness of their joy** (see v3-4, **John 13:34**). John does not present to us an individualized Christianity. Our very faith places us into a family and requires of us that we learn how to live in that family for the glory of God. But furthermore, John is teaching us that without engagement with the fellowship of the believers, our life will be devoid of joy that God intended. There is a joy that will only be ours IF we are actively living in this fellowship.

Exploring the term Fellowship:

The Greek word John uses for fellowship is the word *Koinonia*. If we look at other ways this word is translated in the New Testament we get a better sense of what it means – such as *sharing, participating, and partnering in a common life*. In the sermon we explored in detail how fellowship with God begins, as well as how we sustain and grow that fellowship with not only God but also with one another. The critical point for us to grasp is that Jesus is alive and His life is continuing in us. We all share in this common life of Jesus as we **learn** from Him, as He **empowers** us, as we **suffer** for His name, and as we **participate** in His mission (see **Matthew 11:29, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 28:19-20**). Thus the command to love one another is based on learning how Christ is loving us and then applying that to the fellowship we live in.

Application:

Our **primary relational aim in the church** should be this fellowship that John describes. Relational goals in a church such as connection, friendships, and having our needs met are important. But we must not put these goals first. The primary aim of fellowship is to share the life of Christ, learning how to love and worship Him together. As we grow in loving Christ better, together, we will find other relational goals being met as well. The **strength of our fellowship with one another will be determined by the maturity of our fellowship with Christ**. If your fellowship with the Father and Son is dwindling, then you can be sure your fellowship with the church will suffer. But if our fellowship with the Father and Son is vigorous and growing, then there is no relational problem in the church that cannot be overcome.