

1 John 1:1–4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have observed and our hands have touched regarding the Word of Life—²the life appeared, and we have seen it. We testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We are proclaiming what we have seen and heard also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We write these things to you so that our joy may be complete.

1 John 1:1-4 2Easter Sermon 2024

Words of Life...
... for Joy complete!

Christ is Risen!

He is risen, indeed – Alleluia!

Maybe on Easter Sunday or Good Friday you recall me saying something about the fact that we were not there for a funeral. Singing Amazing Grace at the end of the Easter Sunday service is a happy, joyful occasion to be reminded and remind others about God and his Amazing Love, his Amazing Grace, his Amazing Mercy given so freely – so wonderfully to souls who listen to these very Words of Life.

These are words of life – not feelings, opinions, ideas or guesswork – these are God’s Words of Life given so that Easter Joy continues in our fellowship, continues in our church, continues in our school and in our personal private lives. From the very beginning God has loved us, God sent his one and only Son to save us, and God causes these words to make a change of heart – to bring us to faith with this Words of Life in Christ Jesus our Risen and victorious Savior.

1 John is considered by some to be “The Letter of Eternal Life.” I agree and as we take a closer look at 1 John these next few Sunday’s we will learn from the one who was very close to Jesus how Jesus is close to us all by grace through faith.

Jesus gives peace and sends us out by way of the Holy Spirit. We forgive people who repent – we warn people who fail to repent. In 1 John 1: God uses the word fellowship which in the Gospel of John is implied. Examples would be: John 13: to Peter “**if I do not wash you, you have no part with me.**” John 15: “**I am the vine you are the branches**” John 17: “**as the Father has sent me so also I am sending you.**” John 14: “**If you love me you will keep my commandments**” Fellowship is the disciples gathering as they did with Jesus before he was crucified. Fellowship is believers gathering with Jesus’s words together after he rose from the dead. Fellowship is part and parcel for the Church. Fellowship is so much more than coffee and donuts – it is perfect peace that Jesus gives – peace with God first but then also peace between each other. This Peace that God gives can help us be at peace and be in peace with each other, so that we are given the courage to warn and forgive.

Fellowship is not a one time thing. Fellowship is maintained through God’s Word and Sacraments together as a group, gathering as a Church. Fellowship is a regular, healthy, pattern of church attendance. Thomas broke that pattern...

When people don’t come to church, what do you say? I say, “We miss you.” We should be at church, we should be gathered with others behind unlocked doors, we should be encouraged by each other and encouraging each other. Unlike Thomas the first time when he was missing but more like Thomas the second time at church in his confession, we come to church to say, “**My Lord and My God!**” Thomas’ confession is our confession when we say the Creeds. Fellowship is gathering around the Bible together. Fellowship is being told Peace by Jesus as a group, fellowship is being sent out as a group to go find someone missing like Thomas. Look at the church mailboxes and find someone missing from among our spiritual family of believers and pray that God gives you the courage of those 10 disciples to find the lost, the distracted, the weak, the troubled, the skeptical.

Fellowship is more than a word – it is public worship where we need to be where Jesus speaks his grace. Fellowship is the joy we share over an open Bible in public worship. Jesus is complete Joy. Jesus is eternal life. Jesus speaks words that bring us to life, and bring us life. God himself appeared not just visually but audibly. Jesus spoke his words of truth at every miracle – to convince disconnected souls that he comes to bring connection, that is fellowship, to God the Father through Jesus Christ his only-begotten son, by way of the Holy Spirit causing faith in human hearts.

The opposite of complete is incomplete and that's the equivalent of an F on grade school report card. Imperfect people that we are must admit that we are not perfect, not good and even bad at hearing, believing, trusting, and proclaiming the Gospel. Thank God – God does not grade us, that is what is so amazing about his grace. Instead of counting our sins against us he counted them against Jesus. Instead of giving up on people who so quickly give up on him – his love is patient. Instead of making our faith depend on what we think, say and do, the faith that God gives is dependent on the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts inside that gift of faith.

Instead of **complete joy** some believers endure **complete pain**. How can a loving God allow the people he loves to go through something so terrible. We gather together in fellowship with God through Jesus and by faith given from the Holy Spirit. I do not have the answer to the problem of pain but I do know that the Peace Jesus speaks in public worship is something believers need first. Having Peace in public worship we can then go out to others and share this Peace of Worship. Fellowship is listening to the Gospel next to other believers in church. Fellowship is searching for the missing, like Thomas, so when we find them we can bring them back here to hear Jesus speak Peace to us together.

Did you catch that Jesus says three times in the Gospel lesson “Peace be with you?” I believe that is significant for many reasons. I don't catch any words of fear in this lesson from 1 John, do you? Nothing that John says should lead us to doubt or fear or disbelieve that Jesus Christ brings fellowship to us from the Father and himself the Son by way of these Words in which the Holy Spirit works to bring peace. Jesus says Peace be with you to those believers and he also says Peace be with you through me to you believers gathered in a room without locked doors.

This kind of peace that Jesus speaks to everyone is perfect and we need him to be. This kind of peace that Jesus speaks is powerful and we need him to be. This kind of peace that Jesus speaks is eternal and we need him to be – and he is all three! The peace that Jesus brings is perfect peace that casts out fear, doubt and sadness. This peace that Jesus brings is perfect that causes people like Thomas, people like me, people like you to know that from the very beginning God spoke Words of Life. Those very beginning Words of Life are Jesus who appeared to them visually. Those very beginning Words of Life are Jesus who appears to us when we hear that Jesus has done everything perfect to connect us to his heavenly Father. Those very beginning Words of Life are Jesus.

In verse 3 the word fellowship appears twice. We are connected to God first but then also secondly connected to other souls in the fellowship of God's gift of Church.

Complete joy and fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit who causes faith in these Words of Life – this eternal life of Jesus our Savior. Complete joy comes from knowing our sins were paid on the cross, knowing our forgiveness comes freely by God's will, knowing that from the beginning God's plan was going to happen, did happen and will continue to happen among us gathered around these very Words of God. These are the Words of Life that bring purpose, hope and spiritual healing to all who trust God who speaks to us through them.

Jesus spoke to that gathering of believers back then. Jesus now speaks to this gathering of believers today. Complete joy comes when we gather together, share these Words of Life so that we together testify and proclaim eternal life in Jesus Christ alone.

You can hear in the Gospel lesson from John 20 that Jesus Christ speaks Words of Eternal importance. Now this lesson from the Letters speaks Eternal Life in Christ Jesus. God's Words of Life are Eternal Life as the Bible is heard – so Jesus speaks his perfect Love that casts out Fear.

You've heard or experienced virtual reality and you know that it is fake – it is pretend. Today you hear what John and the other Bible eyewitnesses testify – which is Biblical reality. Biblical reality is real – Jesus died and rose from the dead. The Bible speaks truth which we hear, truth which we trust, truth which we proclaim. Our fellowship with God is beyond good – so that our fellowship in Christ Jesus is perfect and real. **Perfect Love Casts Out Fear.** Jesus is perfect love – his words cause faith and life and hope and bring peace between God and mankind. **Perfect love gives the Holy Spirit by the spoken Word of God in the Bible.**

Verse 4 says 'our joy' that includes more souls, more sinners, more people who – like Thomas need to be found and told. John 20:24 says Thomas was not with them and then immediately in verse 25 the Bible says that they kept telling him, '**we have seen the LORD!**' For them to tell Thomas they had to go out looking to find him.

Thomas was missing. We need to commend the 10 for going out to find him. 1 John 3:1 "**See the kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are! The world does not know us, because it did not know him.**" This Peace that Jesus brings, speaks and is ... is eternal life from his Words of life that come from his body – alive and well.

Believers need to be reminded together that Jesus brings Peace of soul, Peace of mind, Peace of spirit to we who can have so much trouble. Jesus' peace is eternal and perfect. Jesus' peace goes looking and tells. Jesus' peace is "**written to you so that our joy (in Jesus) may be complete.**"

Complete Joy is Jesus. Perfect Joy is Jesus. Perfect Joy casts out Fear. Perfect love casts out fear. **Take comfort** friend, your sins are forgiven by God himself. **Take confidence** believers your joy is our joy completed in Christ Jesus. **Take courage** – God from before the beginning spoke Words of Life at Creation and continues to speak Words of life into eternal life. "**Do not continue to doubt, but believe.**" With Thomas and John and Peter and Paul all believers of all time as part of the Holy Christian Church we say, "**My Lord and my God!**"

That's who Jesus is. That's what Jesus brings. That's what Jesus has to say in order to cast out our fears and cause hearts/souls to believe. The Bible is written "**that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have LIFE in his name.**" (John 20:31) Amen.