

Easter 2 (B)
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1 John 2:15-29
TLC, Keene, NH

*Our Fellowship in Christ:
Navigating the Contagion and Coercions of Fellowship*

“And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.”

Introduction

“THE MORE PEOPLE, the less truth (Kierkegaard). Integrity is not strengthened by multiplication ... Which promise is most likely to be kept: the promise spoken by a politician to a crowd of ten thousand or the promise exchanged between two friends?”

Such is Eugene Peterson’s observation in his book *Run with the Horses*. Where, the thought is not only how cheaply promises are regarded in our time, but how life in the herd – depending on *which* herd we run with – denigrates us all and downgrades our faith.

“Can we keep from being crowd-conditioned?” Peterson asks. Or do we keep “trading our name in for a number ... letting the crowd reduce us to mindless passivity?” (130-131)

Fellowship with our heavenly Father – created by the cross, and confirmed by the empty tomb – assures us that we can. Yes, don’t let the world and its false prophets tell you otherwise. God’s promises stand. His call? Irrevocable!

Main Thought: So that, with our fellowship in Christ secured, the Easter people of God may continue to dwell in fellowship with one another – even in uncertain and perilous times.

*“[Yes] **this** is the promise that he made to us—**eternal life.**”* (1 John 2:25)

PROMISE MADE! PROMISE KEPT!

Amen.

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OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HAS MADE SOME INCREDIBLE PROMISES TO US ... promises that lay at the heart of our fellowship with Him and with one another.

Take this gem for example:

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

(Romans 10:8-10)

That promise is backed by a guarantee. Yes, Easter confirms that God's promises regarding His Son can be believed ... that our "Advocate" (Jesus) and His "propitiation" (His atoning sacrifice) for our sins (1 John 2:1-2) delivers exactly what they say ... not just for us, but for the world!

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1)

And as a blessed result, fellowship with the Father is established forever.

But THIS old WORLD WOULD SURELY SEE SUCH FELLOWSHIP UNDONE.

Let's pick up where we left off last week ...

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

"Desires of the flesh ... of the eyes ... the pride of life." That's a pretty tough crowd – thugs who undermine our fellowship with God and each other.

"Be in the world but not of it," Jesus once said. (John 17:14-16 paraphrased) But that's one tough call!

Not unlike the culture in which the prophet Jeremiah faced back in his day. Israel chasing after whatever brought them pleasure. Breaking faith and fellowship with one another, because they had forsaken fellowship with their God.

Where, for all of the beauty of this world – and yes, it is *still* our Father's world – there is much to lead us astray. Values on the auction block – defined and shaped by well-paid celebrities. Immorality in full view in our living rooms and on our iPhones. We have about as much hope of passing through this world unscathed, as we do walking out of a cigar bar with our clothes still smelling "Downy Fresh."

Note, this is not a criticism of baseball games, catching the latest movie, or smoking cigars. John – like Jeremiah – only issue the warning: this world is not your friend. The desires of both flesh and eyes – as well as the pride and conceit of life – could well be our undoing as the "antichrists" of the age – the purveyors of perversity and pseudo-popularity – would undermine our faith, bidding us to adopt its death-dealing ways.

18 Children, *it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*

Where the temptation for us is either "to be cool or be cast out" (Rush), to become like the world or take a back seat.

But Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed!] Alleluia!

GOD HAS NOT LEFT US “AS ORPHANS.”

“*I will come to you,*” Jesus promises (John 14:18). He already has ... dying and rising for us. By overcoming sin, death and hell by the power of His resurrection, bestowing life and light to all whom He calls into fellowship with Himself.

20 You have been anointed by the Holy One ...

Your baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit counts as joy. In Christ, you possess something more precious than anything this world or its proponents can offer: forgiveness, life, salvation. Your Baptism stands as the blessed means by which the Spirit brings you into fellowship with the Father and with one another.

“*Baptism now saves you.*” (1 Peter 3:21)

“*When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.*” (Titus 3:4-6)

Where, if that assurance of fellowship with Him is not assurance enough:

... You all (also) have knowledge.

The affirmation of your place with/in Him. This is no mere intellectual assent – something that even demons believe (James 2:19)– but a deep abiding gift that is rooted in His life-giving and life-affirming Word ... secured by your Bridegroom (Jesus’) willingness to pledge and wed Himself to you and to me for eternity.

21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

To assure you. To reinforce your fellowship with the Father. To shore up your fellowship with one another. Yes, be assured of this fellowships “divine” – ever “leaning on the everlasting (outstretched) arms” of God’s grace, mercy and peace.

Whereby, in Christ, You possess the very Father Himself ...

23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

Even as He whom you possess, possesses you, and will never let you and me go!

Therefore ...

✚ “*Let what you’ve heard (if for the first time, or) from the beginning (and have come to believe) “abide in you.”*

Where ...

24 *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. **If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.** 25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.*

Furthermore – with Him abiding in you ...

✚ We are given to abide in Him.

*26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But **as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.***

Yes, meditate long and passionately on all that the Lord has done for you, and still does for you. For there are so many distractions, so many voices clamoring for our attention. Whereby, abiding in Him will not happen unless – at the Holy Spirit’s direction – we purposely seek out time to be with Him – in prayer, with time in His Word, in communion with one another.

Be fiercely John/Jeremiah-like ... where:

“If I say ‘Forget it! No more God-Messages [for] me!’ [His] words [become a] fire in [our] belly, a burning in [our] bones. [Where, we are] worn out trying to hold it in. I can’t do it any longer.” (Jeremiah 20:9, The Message)

All so that ...

28 *And now, little children, abide in him, so that **when he** [Jesus] **appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.***

Conclusion

In the prophet Jeremiah’s day, there was a group of people called the Recabites (Jeremiah 35). They were nomads, wandering about, living in tents – a people who had made a vow to God to live *in* the world, but not be *of* it.

One day – at God’s direction – Jeremiah invited the Recabites to come to the temple, to enjoy a feast. He set before them food and drink (though they had made a vow to drink no wine). It was all to show that it is possible to live and serve in the world, but not be of it. The Recabites – true to their vow – said “No thanks!” While the rest of those who claimed to be God’s people sold out to their own desires, abandoning faith and fellowship with their God.

Easter people of God, You have a heavenly Father who fiercely desires to be in fellowship with you. Wherein, anointing you by grace, and entrusting to you His life-giving Word, He has – like the Recabites – set you apart for a life of love.

Where, the Apostle John concludes chapter 2 of his letter saying:

29 If you know that [Christ] is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

Being borne of Him, live in the light of His grace. Keep faith with “the truth of God ... and the reality of being” His children. Where, by grace – and the Holy Spirit filling us – “every time we reject the habits of the crowd and practice the disciplines of faith (in regular worship, faithful prayer, tithing and caring for the poor ... and in the pursuit of righteousness),” we become a little less like the world, and a little more like Him ... “a little more alive.” (Peterson, 138, 139)

*“[Yes] **this** is the promise that he made to us—**eternal life.**”* (1 John 2:25)

Not on the basis of what we have done, but on the basis of what *God* has done – and still does – for us in Christ. It is for this life in fellowship with Him that we were created. It is for this life in fellowship with each other that we are redeemed. To embody what God grants to us in grace – all by way of a ...

PROMISE MADE! PROMISE KEPT!

Amen.

[Friday E-mail:]

Deuteronomy 31:8 ... *“It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”*

Isaiah 26:3 ... *“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”*

Isaiah 41:10 ... *“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you ... help you ... uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

Would it surprise you to know that your heavenly Father has made some incredible promises to you? Not unlike the one He makes in the 2nd of our Easter sermon series: “Our Fellowship in Christ.” This week, in 1 John 2:15-29, the elder Apostle recounts this in v. 25: *“And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.”*

It is what Easter brings to! The full on assurance that you and I *will* live forever. Not like the company that recently bought the entire corpus of work from the rock band Kiss, who now plan to offer “live” concerts of their music in perpetuity by way of holographic image (even Bruce Springsteen’s sold out) ... no, you can – with all seriousness and confidence – now tell your friends: “I will never die!”

Of course, the world offers much to dissuade you from such thinking, even as they seek in multitudinous ways to – in essence – reverse death. But it is a false hope, as sure as Ted William’s cryogenically preserved head hopes one day to bring the legend back to life. Sorry Red Sox fans! There is only way to live forever – His name is Jesus! And for all who confess Him as their Savior, your hope of living forever is made sure. Jesus’ resurrection proves it. God’s promise of this – irrevocable! Our fellowship with the Father – by way of the Son – and with one another, is now preserved. No matter how dark the days, we will not be left as orphans!

To explore this a bit more – along with engaging in other promise of God – join me for the next several weeks in both our Sunday morning Bible study at 9 and in our worship at 10:30; wherein, God not only invites you to abide in Him, but has made a promise to abide in you ... all so that when the Lord does appear *“we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at His coming.”*

Until that time, let these promises assure you today ... like these:

Matthew 11:28-29 ... *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

John 16:33 ... *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

Promises made! Promises kept! SYOS