

“That our joy may be complete” 1 John 1:1-2:2

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

“That which was from the beginning...”. These words take us back to the beginning. The same way John begins also his Gospel account: “In the beginning was the Word ... All things were made through him ... In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:1-4)

That which was from the beginning... in the garden. The life and light Himself. The One who was there at the very dawn of this age. The One who stood at the cradle of humanity.

The One who Himself formed the first human beings from dust of the ground, who held them in His hand and breathed the breath of life in their nostrils. The One who gave them the entire world and taught how to live in it.

He wanted to live with us in the love and affection filled fellowship, He wanted to pour over us the countless blessings that would flow from this fellowship with the Divine.

He witnessed His beloved creatures failing and making the tragic choice, which will put Him, their Creator, on the path to the Cross. Our first parents broke that wonderful fellowship. They chose self over fellowship with their Maker.

They believed lies instead of truth. They thought that they could be more if they were on their own, without the One who had brought them into this world, who had made and prepared this world for them.

They thought that their wisdom will be more superior, that their choices will lead to greater satisfaction, to more fulfilling life. But the dream didn't come true. They had rejected light and chosen darkness.

The dying that they had been warned about begun immediately. Their relationships with their God were tainted with shame and guilt. The wonderful union between our first parents was replaced with blaming and strife.

They were driven out of the garden and away from the tree of life. This is where we have been living since. This is how we lead our lives in this age. Without God who wants to be our Father, without God the Son who wants to be our Brother, without God the Holy Spirit who wants to give us new life.

On our own, divided among ourselves, each one striving to do what is good in their own eyes, each one seeking their own good. And as long as we live in darkness, far away from the divine light, we can fool and deceive ourselves that everything is fine, by denying that we have sinned.

In this world of sin and darkness the Light and Life came looking for us. That which was from the beginning... He came as one of us. John is so overwhelmed as he tries to put his experience in writing. He repeats Himself again and again.

"We have seen Him and heard Him, we have touched Him, the Word of life, the eternal Life came into the world...". He came to invite and bring us back into that fellowship which our first parents had so tragically lost.

Into the divine loving fellowship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Word of life approached and called a dozen of men – today known as the apostles, the sent ones.

He called them to follow Him, to be with Him, and He revealed them what is to come, what He has in store for those who respond to His call. He will bring them back where they truly belong. To the beautiful garden. There will be a new garden, on a renewed earth and with new heaven.

With the heavenly city, Jerusalem, with the tree of life, with our God as the source of light, where all His chosen people will live and reign with Him in joy and blessedness forever. Then He sent His disciples with His message.

To hand over the life-giving words to others, and so it's been happening since that time, as ever-growing living chain of God's people, invited into the fellowship with the Holy One, all united by and sharing the same Spirit of God.

Each of them rejoicing in this divine gift and trying to invite more and more guests to that Great Feast that will have no end. And this is the message that is sent to all the corners of the earth, to all the nations and languages.

“This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” As darkness cannot stand and disappears in the presence of light, so also nothing sinful can stand in the presence of God.

We cannot remain wilfully and consciously in our sins and hope to live in the fellowship with God. This is the tragedy of this world: “The light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.” (John 3:19-20)

Jesus Christ, the light and the life of the world has come to invite us into the wonderful divine fellowship with the Triune God. He has come to restore, to reverse what happened in the garden back then in the beginning.

He offers to us what was lost, the warm embrace of the Father, the love and care and trust filled relationships with our fellow human beings. How different is His attitude from anything else in this world! How refreshing and freeing!

We all are always evaluated and measured and judged and weighted. If we are found good enough, then we may be welcomed into certain communities, into certain fellowships. The higher someone has climbed on the stairs of social approval, the more opportunities they have.

The more others can benefit from you – from your wealth, from your fame, from your connections, and so on – the more welcome you are. And so, we all run in this race, we want to be somebody.

We want to climb higher and higher, to be noticed, approved and valued, we want to be found good enough, worthy enough, deserving love and adoration. So, we all run in this rat race...

And as we do, as we strive to satisfy our deepest needs for peace, for security, for significance, for control, for love and affirmation, the world asks us to make many sacrifices. There are always trade-offs.

We may need to sacrifice our family life for career or business. We may be demanded to sacrifice our health for achievements. We may sacrifice our peace and happiness for recognition. Or true love and faithfulness for fading pleasures. This world promises much and never delivers what's promised.

How different it is with the Word of life, with Jesus! This is not at all how He relates to us. He doesn't need to evaluate us – He knows us. Inside out. But He doesn't need anything from us. He doesn't want to benefit or gain anything from us, He is not searching for those who are good or worthy enough.

He knows what we are like. No hiding. No illusions. He knows what we need the most. To be cleansed from all our sins and unrighteousness, and to be brought back into the fellowship with Him and our Father and with one another.

He stands ready to cleanse us, He stands ready to forgive us, to wash us clean and to put His Spirit around us, to make us perfect, to make us beautiful and glorious, to make us worthy for the new life with Him in the age to come.

He stands ready to fill us with His love so that it flows over into our relationships with all people in our lives, so that the grace and undeserved affection that we receive from Him would spill over into our communities.

Only one thing He is looking for – that we come to Him. That we allow His light to shine into our darkness, that we turn away from futile things in our lives, from empty dreams, from chasing after false promises, and to stretch our hands to receive the gift of new life with Him. That's it. Turn to Him and receive.

If we refuse, “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” For He knows us anyway; every thought, every desire, every move.

But “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” He knows you, and He invites you to open your heart and to let Him in, so that He can wash you clean from inside.

Don't be afraid that anything will scare Him away, don't worry that something in you will make Him love you less, don't fret that His grace and mercy may have limits. His grace is like ever-flowing waterfall and all your sins and guilt and shame... just like a little stain. His grace washes the entire world clean.

It is so liberating to know that someone is seeking for you, welcoming you, embracing you for who you are, not for what benefit you may bring. That someone looks at you with love and adoration not only for who you are now, but for who you will be made in the life to come.

That brings us immense joy and peace. The life to come begins here. But our joy will not be complete if we can't share it. This is John's point. He so desired to share the message of Jesus so that His joy would be complete.

Only when we are blessed to be able to share this wonderful message with others, only when we see others being brought into the wonderful fellowship with the Father and the Son, only then our joy is complete.

We already are blessed more than we know. We are welcomed into the divine fellowship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and with John the apostle and other apostles, with Adam and Eve, with Abraham and Sarah, with the king David and Bathsheba, with Paul and Mary and countless others.

This fellowship is yours already. I pray that our Lord would continue to bless us that we all can witness our loved ones gladly hearing the message of Jesus and being brought into this wonderful fellowship, so that our joy may be complete.

Amen.