

Text: 1 John 1:5-2:2

Theme: You Don't Have to Be Afraid of the Dark!

Date: April 29, 2007 (Confirmation)

In the Name of Jesus, our Risen and Living Savior, Dear Christian friends and Confirmands,

This may embarrass you a little bit to think about it now, but do you remember a time in your life as a little boy or girl when you maybe found yourself crying in your room, or pulling your blanket over your head, because you were afraid of the dark? “Mommy, daddy, come into my room. I want to talk to you about something.” Or maybe you just said it right out, “Mommy, daddy, come in here and be with me. I’m afraid of the dark.”

If you ever remember feeling afraid of the dark, I think it’s safe to say you are not alone. Many of us, even as adults, don’t like to be in the dark -- especially alone in the dark. Many of us, I’m sure, could share a story or two about how scared we were when we found ourselves surrounded by nothing but darkness and maybe, for just a moment, thought we would never ever see the light again. This kind of darkness is physical darkness, and, if you’ve ever been in a really dark place, you know how scary that can be. But what can be much, much more scary is the kind of darkness that is called spiritual darkness. That’s the kind of darkness people are in if they don’t know that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, who has forgiven their sins, and who wants to shine the light of his love on their lives all the way to heaven.

Today, on your Confirmation Day, God wants you to know that in every detail of your life and for every day of your life for the rest of your life, “**You Don’t Have to Be Afraid of the Dark!**” The Word of God before us today helps us know why we don’t have to be afraid of spiritual darkness. The first reason is because God is Light and the second is because Jesus is Right.

1. God is Light

God is light. That is the comfort which the very first verse of our lesson gives us: **THIS IS THE MESSAGE WE HAVE HEARD FROM HIM AND DECLARE TO YOU: GOD IS LIGHT; IN HIM THERE IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL.** So, what God is saying about himself is that he himself is never in the dark. He’s always in the light. And, as a result, if we are with God, we will never be in darkness, either. We will never need to be afraid of the dark.

Well, are we always with God in his light? That’s a good question to ponder because our sinful nature loves the darkness. Our sinful nature loves the things that God hates: Jealousy, anger, holding grudges, marital unfaithfulness, abusing alcohol, greed, envy and the like. In the words of our text God help us evaluate whether we are living with God in his light or in the darkness of sin. Paul writes: **IF WE CLAIM TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM YET WALK IN THE DARKNESS, WE LIE AND DO NOT LIVE BY THE TRUTH.** Then he writes: **IF WE CLAIM TO BE WITHOUT SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US.** And finally he writes: **IF WE CLAIM WE HAVE NOT SINNED, WE MAKE HIM OUT TO BE A LIAR AND HIS WORD HAS NO PLACE IN OUR LIVES.**

Specific Law

Scripture clear teaches that God loves us and has given us faith in Jesus, who has proved God’s love by forgiving our sins. But isn’t it true that we are often very tempted not to think about our sins so much or maybe sometimes even to enjoy them? Sadly, just as our dear Lord loves us and wants what’s best for us, the devil Satan hates us and wants what’s worst for us – and that’s why the devil is the one who keeps working in our minds to get us to say, “*Oh, it’s not that big of a deal to use that kind of language or to think those kinds of thoughts or to do those kinds of things that those religious people say are wrong.*”

Whenever we hear Satan say those things in our hearts, remember the warning that John gives you in these words. He says that if we believe those kinds of things, we are deceiving ourselves and lying to ourselves, and we are saying that God is a liar and that his Word has no place in our lives. In other words, if we believe those kinds of things, we would be content to live and walking in the darkness of sin all the way to the dark depths of hell.

Overcoming Sin

But that’s why it’s so great to know that God is light. God’s Word before us today also points out how great it is to have the true light of God shining in our hearts. Paul writes: **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, PURIFIES US FROM ALL SIN.** Then he writes: **IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST AND WILL FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND PURIFY US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.**

When we look at these verses, it’s kind of like God is saying, “*If you’re in the dark and you’re scared, it doesn’t make sense not to make use of the flashlight or the light switch on the wall.*” God’s promises in these verses are just like a spiritual flash light and a spiritual light switch. What he is saying to us is that there’s no need to let Satan get us to walk in the darkness. Walk in the light. Use the flashlight of God’s love. Use the light switch of Christ’s forgiveness.

And how do you that? It’s not complicated at all. Just keep listening to God’s Word. In fact, if there is one thing that stands out above everything else in the confirmation promises you are going to be making in just a few minutes, it’s the promise to be faithful to

everything God says in his Word until the day you die. That's why, until the day we die, we all need to continually be people of the book – God's book. For that's the message God uses to warn us in his love about the darkness he does not want us to live in, and also to promise us in his love that he will never let us live in that darkness. He is always there to assure us that our sins against him have been paid for by the one who is the light of the world. That's why all of us here today – and, most importantly, your Lord – want you to know that you don't have to be afraid of the dark. God is light.

2. Jesus is Right

And Jesus is right. That's the second reason that the apostle John gives us in these words as to why you don't have to be afraid of the dark.

Now, when I'm using that word "right" in talking about Jesus, I'm using it in the sense that he is always 100% absolutely and perfectly right. He never makes a mistake in how he works things out in our lives, and he never committed a sin, while he was on this earth to work out our salvation. In fact, it's because he was always right that he could accomplish our salvation. When someone is always right in the way that Jesus is always right, we say that he is righteous – and that's why we don't have to be afraid of the dark. Jesus is right. He is righteous. That's what St. John says in our text: **MY DEAR CHILDREN, I WRITE THIS TO YOU SO THAT YOU WILL NOT SIN. BUT IF ANYBODY DOES SIN, WE HAVE ONE WHO SPEAKS TO THE FATHER IN OUR DEFENSE – JESUS CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUS ONE.**

Specific Gospel

God makes it clear he doesn't want us to sin, but he also makes it clear that he knows how weak we are and how quickly we fall into sin. That's why, because of his love, he also makes it clear that he is one who defends us when we sin, because he paid the price for our sin. John says that Jesus speaks to the Father in our defense – yes, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. Just try to imagine that for a moment. You do something that is simply improper for a child of God to do. You act like you're living in spiritual darkness. But what does Jesus do for us. He speaks up for us. He says, "*Heavenly Father, have mercy on them because of my holy, righteous death on the cross. Let them know that you consider my righteous life and innocent death for them to be just like they lived a righteous life and will die an innocent death. Let them know that they will live in heaven.*"

Isn't that about the most amazing thing you could possibly imagine? But our Lord says that for Jesus' sake it's true. We don't deserve God to say anything good about us, but by putting our faith in Jesus as our holy substitute, God says everything good about us. He says we are his dear children every bit as much as Jesus is his dear Son. Through Jesus, we are all sons and daughters of God.

For You

And how can you be sure that this is something that God truly wants you to know? In the very last verse John tells you how. He says about Jesus: **HE IS THE ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT ONLY FOR OURS BUT ALSO FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.** Are you someone who is living in this world right now? Are you alive and breathing? If you are, then Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for your sins. In your confirmation class the last two years, you learned that to "atone" for something means to make something "at one" with God. You and I are at one with God because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. That's why you don't to be afraid of the dark.

Overcome Sin

So, when you go through those times when you wonder whether God loves you because of something that is going on that is very sad, or when you wonder whether God could possibly love you because of something you have done that is very bad, what do you think God would want you to do? He doesn't want you to think about how it feels or how it seems, because you will probably get very depressed and maybe even scared. He wants you to depend on his promise to you, because it is his promise to you that will never change. If he says you are loved by him and your sin has been atoned for by him, then no matter what happens in your life, his love will always be sure.

Means of Grace

This day is an extra special time to think about that promise of God, because on this Confirmation Day, you can look back at the day of your baptism, and know that that was the day God made a special promise to you. He brought you into his family. And next week, for the first time, you will have the opportunity to receive in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper the holy and righteous body and blood of your Savior, which was given and poured out for you. I pray that you will remember your baptism often – in fact, I pray that you will remember it every time you hear or say, "*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" And I also pray that your reception of Holy Communion will give you the personal reassurance that you truly are walking in the light of Jesus Christ, because you have put your trust in the one who is walking right with you because of what he did when he walked right to the cross for you.

God bless you, confirmands. We are all so thankful to God for you that because of Jesus, your dear Savior, you don't ever have to be afraid of the dark! So, in the future, if you do ever pull up your covers, please make sure they are the "covers" of God's Holy Word. Amen.