

“The Gospel Experience(d)”
1 John 1:1-4
Mercy Hill Church | February 20, 2022

1 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— **2** 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— **3** 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. **4** And we are writing these things so that our^a joy may be complete.

Introduction

- Consider your favorite (or memorable) 2-3 experiences you’ve had – could be a specific event or a season of life. What are they? Why?

Background of 1 John

- Written by the Apostle John
 - John’s life is a testimony to the transforming power of gospel. John’s encounter with Jesus radically changed John – from a brash, harsh, power hungry, quick-tempered fisherman to the “apostle of love.”
 - From history we know John was the only one of the 12 disciples of Jesus (besides Judas) who was not martyred
- John writes 1 John to encourage, remind, and challenge his listeners/readers to walk in the light and to walk in love.
 - MLK, Jr. Quote: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”
- Theme of 1 John: Walking in the light (of the gospel/God’s Word) & walking in love

1. We Share (the Gospel) Out of a Personal Experience of the Gospel (vv.1-3a)

- Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
- vv.1-3 is one long sentence (in Greek). Unlike the apostle Paul who writes very sequential (like a lawyer or an engineer), the apostle John writes more circular (like a poet or artist).
- Key phrase: v.3 – “We proclaim also to you”
 - The Apostle John is writing, sharing, proclaiming to His readers – addressing false teaching, rumors spreading, people doubting and questioning their own faith, people mistreating one another, etc.
- Notice the buildup of vv.1-2 to the key phrase in v.3a
 - Movement from being distant to intimate, from far to personal.
- Everything John is going to write about -- the reason for John’s writing and sharing – is personal
 - Not just John, but other disciples as well (“we”)

What is it that John and others have experienced which they are now proclaiming?

- Jesus! “Word of life,” “eternal life,” “made manifest”
 - Cf. John 1:1-5; Genesis 1:1
 - Who Jesus is, what Jesus taught, and what Jesus did = the Gospel (good news)!

- Not a 2D or 3D gospel but a 4D gospel!
 - John not just sharing a theory, idea or philosophy but the person of Jesus
 - The Christian faith, the Bible, is rooted in history: historical places, historical people, historic realities.
- John shares out of a personal experience of the gospel

Reflection:

- *Have you “experienced” the Gospel – or is it more a theory for you?*
 - *If you consider yourself a non-Christian (or perhaps used to go to church), what prevents you from taking that next step of faith?*
- *Could it be we are hesitant to share the Gospel with others because we haven’t “experienced” the Gospel ourselves?*
 - *Are there other reasons why you might be hesitant in sharing the gospel with others?*

2. We Share (the Gospel) For the Benefit of Others (v.3b)

- Why are they sharing about Jesus? Why are they proclaiming the gospel?
 - 2 reasons: “...so that...” (in v.3b and in v.4)
- First reason is for the benefit of others
 - When you experience something wonderful, we want others to share in that experience
- *κοινωνία (koinonia)* = “fellowship” or “sharing.” Really just means “sharing” or what we have in common.
 - Some passages on “fellowship”
 - **Acts 2:42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
 - Sharing in communion and prayer
 - **2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what *fellowship* has light with darkness?
 - Faith/belief in Jesus
 - **2 Corinthians 8:1-4** We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of *taking part* in the relief of the saints
 - Sharing/fellowship in caring for those in need
 - **Philippians 1:5** because of your *partnership* in the gospel from the first day until now.
 - Fellowship in the gospel
 - **Philippians 2:1** So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any *participation* in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,
 - Sharing in the Spirit
 - **Philippians 3:10** that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and *may share* his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
 - Sharing in Christ’s suffering
- Fellowship isn’t about an activity per se, but rather the focus; Christian fellowship is about what we share together – the commonality that believers have in Christ Jesus and life lived together.

Reflection

- *In what ways do you see Jesus as the center of our fellowship as a church?*
 - *In what ways do you see other things or interests possibly competing to be the center of our fellowship instead?*
- *What might it look like to have the Gospel as the center of our fellowship?*
- *Do you believe that the Gospel will be a blessing – and not a hindrance or harm – to your friends and family?*
 - *What other things do you feel like your non-Christian friends and family need besides the Gospel?*

3. We Share (the Gospel) For Our Own Joy (v.4)

- We share not just for the benefit and blessing of others, but there's a "selfish" component as well: we share the gospel for our own joy (second reason).
- Everything John writes in the rest of the letter is written from a place of deep, personal experience. He's writing for his readers' benefit -- and he's writing it for his own joy
 - His heart is so full of love that John wants others to know Jesus, to have fellowship with Him, and that brings John great joy.
- Yes, God commands us to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20), and it's not just for others' good but also for our blessing as well.
 - The Christian life isn't just one of obedience but joy as well (cf. Matthew 13:44, Galatians 5:22, Philippians 1:25)

Reflection

- *Who are the people in your life that would bring you joy if they came to know the saving grace and love of Jesus?*
- *How would you feel and respond if someone you knew came to saving faith in Jesus? Be honest. Why do you think you would feel or respond in that manner?*
- *How does this morning's passage reshape how you think about the gospel & evangelism?*