1 John 1:1-10

Sermon

Have you ever been in a position where you’ve tried so hard to belong but you just could never quite get there.

I left Uni and had 9 months before applications opened for the job I wanted to do. And in that time I got asked to be a receptionist. And I think that there isn't a position I am less suitable for.

But while I was there I tried to fit in. I really did, but no matter how much I tried I stuck out like a sore thumb. I found it hard to sit still like the others. I was often standing up at my desk while the others sat and to be honest I had no idea what I was doing. My boss knew what he was getting when he hired me and was very gracious to me but I still feel sorry for him as I did not belong in that role.

And this feeling has a name, it's called imposter syndrome, it's that feeling you get in your gut when you fear you don't belong and you feel like an imposter who could be caught out at any moment as a fraud.

Maybe you’ve felt this yourself, and unfortunately it's not uncommon for Christians to feel imposter syndrome within the church and even God. A lot of Christians fear going to church because they feel likes their sinfulness could be exposed and they would be discovered as a fraud.

In this passage john calls for us and it's original audience to have fellowship with him because it is a true fellowship with God and his people. And this offer was made in direct contrast to those opposing Jesus who had split off from the church. So john starts by making an offer of fellowship before he compared his fellowship with the anti-Christs. .

So, as we look through this passage today I want you to think about how you’re approaching fellowship with God and if you haven’t already thought about how you might have this then dig into the text with us and explore how we can have a fruitful fellowship with God.

# A fellowship offering (1:1-5)

So firstly in verses 1 to 5 we see the offer of fellowship that John makes is Genuine.

In these first 5 verses We see that it is a true offering based off witnesses – just look at the testimonial and almost court room like language that John use to describe what he and others are proclaiming to the church.

In verse 1 he says:

‘That which was from the beginning, which **we** have **heard**, which **we** have **seen** **with** **our own eyes**, which **we** have **looked at** and **our** **hands have touched** – this **we** proclaim concerning the Word of life.’

In verse 2 he says “**we** have **seen** it and **testify to it”**

And in verse 3 again he says “ we proclaim to you what **we** have **seen and heard…”**

The proclamation of fellowship John is offering is based on many witnesses hence the repeated use of the plural words like ‘we’ and ‘our’.

The fellowship John is offering is trustworthy because it’s based off real events that have been seen by real people, heard by real people and testified to by real people.

One of the most striking things about Christianity is that it is historical. And because it is historical you can test it’s truthfulness. And one of the greatest witnesses to the truth of Christianity is its earliest witnesses of Jesus, those who saw, heard and touched Jesus.

These people were proclaiming that it’s through Jesus Christ that one has fellowship with God, eternal life and the forgiveness of sins.

And they were proclaiming this even though it was punishable by death to do so. And majority of them did proclaim this offer until they were killed for it. I doubt that many people would be willing to die for a lie, let alone this many people for the same lie.

And here they are proclaiming the same truth in paper to us thousands of years later.

Have fellowship with us.

In verse 2 we also see that by offering us fellowship with himself and God through Jesus he is offering the church eternal life because the life (Jesus) has appeared, and eternal life is proclaimed in Him.

By being in fellowship with God we are in fellowship with eternal life. And so accepting this fellowship is like being grafted into God himself.

Grafting is a particular art taken on by some gardeners and involved connecting branches back into tree’s in order to grow them into the shapes and directions you would like. If the branches graft in properly then they will go on living as long as the tree does but if they don’t get grafted in then they remain a stick and eventually die.

Here are some artworks done by grafters.

Now I want you to imagine that God was a tree that never dies and has eternal life and that we are a branch that has fallen off the tree because we decided to live in rebellion against the tree, though as a branch we are still living once we have fallen from the tree, it’s temporary. Because we’re separated from the life source we’re destined to die and fade away if we aren’t connected to the tree. But grafting could save our branch life by reconnecting us back to the life source.

 The Fellowship John is offering us in this passage is with God who is Himself eternal life, if we accept this it means we are grafted back into fellowship with God so that His life can eternally sustain us once again, as we were designed to live.

And the third thing about this offer that John wants us to know is that it isn’t motivated by evil or selfish intentions but rather by a joyful relationship. In chapter 2:1 John calls this church his dear children. He has a relational investment with these people. He cares for them and so he says to them in verse 4 that he is writing this to make his joy complete. John is much like a father who finds joy when his children make the right choices and so he tries to persuade them towards the right choice knowing that other voices are trying to persuade them to the wrong choices.

So in summary John’s fellowship offering is genuine, grants eternal life and is motivated by a joy much like that of a parent. But what about the fellowship the antichrists have offered, what is that like?

# 2) False fellowship (1:6 + 8 + 10)

Well in this passage we get a taste of it. We see that their fellowship is based on the idea that we can earn our fellowship with God because of two false claims mentioned in verses 6,8 and 10 which are marked unsurprisingly by the repeated phrase “if we claim…”.

In verse 6 we see that their first false claim is that they have fellowship with God and yet walk in the darkness. Essentially, they are arguing that you can have fellowship with God without having to deal with your sins. They’re directly opposing the truth mentioned in verse 5 that God is light and has no darkness within him. They think sin can be disregarded as if God doesn’t care if sin isn’t punished. But he does, for he is Just and a just God cannot let rebellion go unpunished. It’s impossible to have light and darkness dwelling together for light will always overcome darkness.

<Imagine I had a shoebox here, with a cardboard strip in the middle, if I had a candle on one side and nothing at all on the other. When I allow the darkness and the light to have fellowship with each other by lifting the sliding barrier in the middle we’d relaise the two cannot actually have fellowship. The light destroys the darkness.

And in verses 8 and 10 we see their second false claim. That they are sinless. And I think it’s easier for us to understand the falsity of this claim because in our culture we’ve gone as far as making sayings to argue against the idea of anyone being sinless.

 When we make a mistake we say things like “no one’s perfect” and “I’m only human” because we know that no matter how hard we try we can never be sinless.

<make a PowerPoint for this!> But this raises a problem doesn’t it. A problem for us as well. If we are all sinners who walk in darkness and God is perfect and has no darkness in him at all. How can we have fellowship with Him?

Do we just try and walk in the light, without sin, as much as possible and hope God doesn’t discover it? Or do we just follow the example of the anti-Christ’s and confidently trust in the lie that we are sinless and in fellowship with God.

Some people do this but it leads to the feeling of imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is the fear of being caught out for simply feeling like you don’t belong in a certain group or position. And unfortunately there are plenty of people who just act like a Christian without any assurance that they are in fellowship with God. They live trying to hide their sin from God and others in fear of the day they may be caught out as a fraud who doesn’t belong in the church. This is no way to live, and it’s a downward spiral.

But John offers us a better way, he offers a true fellowship with God, one that achieves the fellowship it claims to have.

While the antichrists trusted in their own ‘sinlessness’ John offers us a fellowship based on trusting in Jesus sinlessness not our own.

Whilst the antichrists methods were based on having fellowship through our own perfection, John’s fruitful fellowship is based on having fellowship through Jesus’ perfection.

# 3) Flourishing fellowship (1:7 + 9)

In verses 7 and 9 we see a picture of a flourishing fellowship.

Verse 7 says that “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.”

And verse 9 says “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”

In these verses we see that walking in the light doesn’t mean being sinless.

It means we don’t hide our sin from God but rather we expose it by ‘walking in the light’. And by exposing it to God or as verse 9 says by confessing our sins to God, He is faithful and the blood of his son Jesus Christ purifies us from our sins.

<Illustration – I think in a lot of ways Sin is like a mould that festers in darkness but once it’s exposed to the sun it dies out quickly.

Walking in the light means exposing our mouldy sins and not trusting in our ability to hide the mould from God’s eyes in order to be deemed as clean but rather by trusting that Jesus can purify us from them by bringing them to the light.>

Christians don’t claim to be perfect, far from it. We claim that only Jesus is perfect and that all of us are dependent upon him for perfection.

This is because Jesus is the only human who always walked in the light and yet he died the so that we who walk in darkness may dwell with God who is light.

Jesus was the only sinless person and yet he was killed for the sins of the world in order that sinners might live.

Jesus was the only one who earnt fellowship with God through his own perfection and yet he was forsaken on the cross and cried out ‘my god my god why have you forsaken me’ in order that we may receive fellowship with God.

We can only have fellowship with God and his people through Jesus Christ. A fellowship based on anything else is false because only Christ can deal with our dark sins and darkness cannot dwell with light.

So will you receive this fellowship with God through Jesus and trust in Him for your sins to be dealt with?

And if you already have received fellowship with God through Christ in the past are you continuing to find assurance in Christ in order to be purified of all your sins or are you finding yourself bitter in your service to the Lord wherever that may be?

Are you slipping back into trying to be perfect in order to attain God’s fellowship, and seeing your good acts as a chore to that end rather than a response to the gracious gift of free fruitful fellowship in Christ?

Wherever you see yourself, don’t be sucked into false fellowship and instead receive the fruitful fellowship with God which has been bought for you through Jesus alone.

I think it will be appropriate to end by praying. And I was hoping you would join me in doing something a bit more traditional. The words of a prayer of general confession are coming up on the screen. This prayer comes from the prayer book and was put in the prayer book to be said together in church because of this passage.

For years Christians have prayed these words in churches every week because they know that verse 9 is true. That “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” because of Christ.

So knowing this truth please pray out loud with me these words.

Almighty and most merciful Father,

We have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have left undone what we ought to have done,

And we have done what we ought not to have done.

We have followed our own ways and the desires of our own hearts.

We have broken your holy laws.

Yet, good lord, have mercy on us;

Restore those who are penitent,

According to your promises declared to mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And grant merciful father, for his sake,

That we may live a godly and obedient life,

To the glory of your holy name. Amen.

* Say through once again
* Make a PowerPoint or a Prezi for the sermon
* Put sermon onto iPad mini