

V.O.C. July 2022

### July 3, 2022: Union and communion with God

Dear Listeners,

When you enter one of Europe's large cathedrals you experience a very peculiar feeling. As soon as you come inside, you conduct yourself in a reluctant manner, holding yourself back because of the overwhelming impressiveness of the place. You step ahead slowly; you look around with wide-open eyes; you whisper very softly. Everything you do and say is determined by the overwhelming *majesty* and *grandeur* of the exalted place.

Something like that, dear listeners, happens also when you enter upon the reading of John's first epistle. Everything seems so overwhelming, so exalted, so majestic, so grandiose! This first epistle of John is the *source* of our meditations in the weeks to come, and we hear John start out, saying, "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...."

The apostle is trying in words to make heaven and earth flow together. In a few sentences you have to comprehend the immense universe, the realm of the eternal God, the Life; and in one breath he also takes you along to the place where the Life came into the flesh and walked around in the streets of Jerusalem together with the disciples. As if that is not great enough yet, John also includes you and me in that picture: "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." God and we, Jesus the Son of God and us, have fellowship, and we proclaim this that you may have fellowship as well. Incredible, overwhelming, breathtaking; here you proceed with hesitation, reluctant, impressed!

Apparently, John wants to impress us immediately by this realm of salvation consisting of heaven and earth. In a very stunning fashion, he opens his epistle. There is no address, neither will you find the facts about the sender. It makes for a very direct and straightforward approach. Instantly he unites God, himself, and the readers in a description of communion which seems almost unreal. Yet, this fellowship is real! It is possible! In Christ it is feasible! Already here on earth, God and man, heaven and earth, are united in true communion! As citizens of heaven, John, the apostles on earth, do their work, and you and I are called to participate in it too! For Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was here: Immanuel, God with us! He united heaven and earth, so that God and man have communion, and we too!

Reading through this first chapter carefully, dear listener, we can easily see that the word 'communion' is its key-word. John conveys the beauty of the gospel of life and light: people who are inclined by nature to hate God and the neighbour, have fellowship, communion. How is that possible? This is possible only "if we walk in the light as He is in the light." He, that is God, of whom John had learned through his Master, Jesus Christ, that "God is Light!" He is light completely, John now writes; there is no darkness in Him at all! In this world there is darkness, the

darkness of sin, of unholiness, love-lessness. The whole world is in the power of the evil one, John writes in 5:19 of this epistle. Hence, those who still hate are worldly; for those who are worldly have darkened hearts, and walk in darkness. But that is not God's way! That is not God's fault either! John learned this from Christ, and they have seen that in Christ too. For the Lord Jesus said of Himself, "I am the Light of the world." And the way the Son is, so is the Father! The Lord Jesus also said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." So now, knowing this Lord Jesus Christ and the Father who sent Him, John can write in his epistle, "the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining!" This is the gospel John proclaims, and through this gospel communion is established, communion with the apostles, yes even with God in Jesus Christ!

Since we are called to this light by the gospel of Christ, dear listeners, there is in our life the struggle between light and darkness, and of darkness against the light. We are called to the Son Jesus Christ, who takes us up into His light. In this communion with Him, we may know that faith is the victory which has conquered the world. Yet, the struggle with darkness is still there! It is important to recognize that struggle, and to admit to its seriousness. We seem to enjoy the darkness at times; the light, which God causes to shine in our life, we often turn off again. That this affects our communion with God and our neighbour, however, we don't seem to realize sufficiently. That's now exactly where Satan is working the hardest: Satan wants to infiltrate our life, the communion with God and our neighbour!

Underlying these evidences, however, is a greater problem, a deeper issue, namely the communion with God is disrupted! Hence, John writes conditionally, that there is communion only *if* we walk in the light as He is in the light! Radically walk in it, that is! For in Him there is no darkness! God and Satan are opposites, no mixture! Satan won't mind that mixture, but God does! In mixture there is no salvation at all! However, when we have fellowship with God, we experience the grace of Christ, dispelling darkness and flooding us with the light of God! Then you should also observe the transition in verse 7 of 1 John 1, dear listener, where we would expect to read, "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with *Him*." That's what John had been writing about: about communion with the Father and the Son Jesus Christ. But no, John writes, "we have fellowship *with one another*."

That's a remarkable transition, dear listener! Because of the communion with God, the *result*, the *effect*, is communion with fellow believers, communion in the *church*! Children of the Father have communion with children in the family, the church! That's a fact! So, it's not so that we first work on our relationship with God and then start to work on the fellowship with others; no, communion with the Father of lights results in the communion in the church! This is, therefore, the Voice of the Church, proclaiming to you the union and communion with God, and calling you to this communion in the church where this gospel of light and life in God is proclaimed! God's grace in Jesus Christ works true communion; while sin only disrupts life in every part! The light makes communion possible! That's what we hope to show you next week, dear listeners!