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 Waterford Mennonite Church
 May 13, 2018 - Sermon's Outline
 Text: 1 John 5:9-13

Title/Question: How is God's own testimony going to come out of us?

I. Introduction:

Story: I grew up in a small urban Mennonite Congregation in which testimonies were a regular part of the Sunday morning experience & regular part of the church life. Stories about

- how the ordinary became extraordinary (i.e. the car that was broken, the money to pay the bills, God's protection as a was driving to work, the answer prayer...)
- Examples of God's love
- Faith put into action and/or how my faith grew in a moment of doubt

Theme/Series: This morning we continue the series focusing on 1 John

- 1 John which is a pastoral letter to a faith community, community that was divided. Sometimes it seems that there have been some many changes in the world, and yet at times we are reminded about how much things are just the same.
- This letter found the church struggling. This is perhaps not much different than today, than this morning. At times like many other congregations and as individuals, we find ourselves struggling with the meaning of being Christian and being in Christian community. Oh, what does it mean to be a follower a Christ in today's world?

In the last few Sunday, we have been reminded that:

- We are God's beloved. Beloved in birth. Beloved in life. Beloved in death. Beloved in resurrection. (*April 22, 2018/God's Beloved/Cindy Voth*)
- The amazing love of God – the place where it all begins. (*April 29, 2018/Too Much Love/Cindy Voth*)
- World conquering faith – that faith that overcomes the world (*May 6, 2018/ World-conquering Faith/ Neil Amstutz*)

In this morning scripture, we will be focusing on Christian testimony.

Webster dictionary defining testimony as:

Definition of testimony

plural testimonies

1a : a solemn declaration usually made orally by a witness under oath in response to interrogation by a lawyer or authorized public official

b : firsthand authentication of a fact : [evidence](#)

c : an outward sign

2a : an open acknowledgment

b : a public profession of religious experience

- The apostles were earnest believers in what they preached. They were there. They saw. They were witnesses to Jesus the Christ; his teachings, the miracles, the death, resurrection and ascension, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
- As a result, when they wrote and taught, their starting point was that they did not need to be convinced. “I was there” “It happened” “We were witnesses” was where they started. This is why the early church gathered around the apostles’ teaching, oral tradition at the first, later written down in the gospels, and then further amplified in the letters the apostles wrote to the church. As the church gathered daily in homes to break bread, care for one another and pray, they would take time for the apostles to recall what had happened: what Jesus said and what Jesus did. Let’s quickly look at the examples of a few of the apostles, Peter, James and Paul

II. Few stories... disciples

Peter:

- A key example of this is that the apostle Peter is widely believed to be the main source for Mark’s gospel. It is as much his recollections as it is Mark’s writing.
 - Further, in Acts 1, when he felt it was time to fill the role vacated by Judas, Peter suggested the Christian community appoint a new apostle, someone who had also been there, someone who *had been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.* (Acts 1:21). Someone else was going to be needed to keep replaying the life and times of Jesus.
 - Later, Peter writes to the churches that the message of Jesus Christ was: *“announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.”* 1 Peter 1:12. **That preaching began with the apostles themselves, testifying to what they saw and heard.**
 - So, there was no need of further convincing. These things were true, and according to Peter’s main theme in this first letter of his, worth suffering for.
 - Peter, **a very emotional disciple**, spent his life in testimony. His life was a testimony.

James:

- The apostle James also speaks of suffering, specifically suffering where one’s faith is tested,
 - calling it a potential source of joy (James 1:2),
 - describing it as a blessing (James 1:12), and as a blessing that brings forth God’s work (James 1:4 and James 5:11 – referring to what God brought about in Job’s life and experience).
- For James this makes perfect sense because he was there. He moved forward into leadership of the Jerusalem church, the original hotbed of suffering and martyrdom because he was a witness. Why else would he do it?
 - He believed that a life lived in joy, even when suffering, is a **furthered** testimony, extending the gospel through the lives of those who were not there, and who did not see.

- Jesus pointed to this same thing even before James wrote about it: “...*blessed are those who believe without seeing me.*” (John 20:29 – *New Living Translation*).

Paul:

- The apostle Paul was not there in the sense of those who followed Jesus in his earthly life and ministry. If he was there at all, he would have been counted among the Pharisees, the community of skeptics who were not convinced and became hostile. He dis-believed to the point of initiating, presiding over and attempting to expand prosecution of the Christian community. But the resurrected and ascended Christ met him on the Damascus Road. Paul was there. He saw. He retold that story for the rest of his life.
 - In 1 Corinthians 15 he gives an extensive rendition of what had been witnessed, who saw and why. This is why his life became a testimony, through imprisonment, shipwrecks, and beatings.
 - He writes that since that so many were present and that the overwhelming evidence is the starting point, that we can stand firm, that nothing should move us, that we can, without hesitation, give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, and that whatever we do in this testimony-laden life is not done in vain. (1 Cor 15:58)
- **John:**
 - And here we have the apostle John. He was there. He saw.
 - *In the earlier verses (6-9), John reminds us*

NIV

This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify:⁸ the^[a] Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.⁹ We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.

1 John 5:6-9

- John offers us God’s own witness, a three-fold, repeated testimony that Jesus was the Christ.
 - **Water** – The baptism of Jesus – attested to in all the gospels – is a public moment. What was witnessed by those present was God’s Spirit resting on Jesus and the voice of God proclaiming who Jesus was.
 - **Blood**—The crucifixion provides a number of poignant moments: a thief who converts, a centurion who recognized Jesus as the Messiah, an earthquake and the heavy curtain of the temple torn in two, and then all those who witnessed the empty tomb and the resurrected Christ himself.

- John opens his letter with a reference to the blood of Jesus claiming that this blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:9). He knows this because he was there. He bore witness at the foot of the Cross of the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world.
 - He needs no further convincing but lives his life in testimony to what took place.
- **Spirit** – The Spirit that rested on Jesus at his baptism, now rested on the community of disciples (not just apostles, but all Christ’s followers) to empower them to be testifiers of what they had witnessed. Jesus had promised its coming (John 15:5-16), and the actual coming on the day of Pentecost was yet another widely witnessed event, one that had an immediate global impact (Acts 2).
- **John’s reference** to it here reminds us that:
 - The Spirit’s presence is a testimony to us as Christ’s followers today that what the apostles saw and heard are true.
 - The Spirit’s presence in us is God’s own testimony to us that the gospel life and message of Jesus are true.
 - There is no greater testimony than God’s own testimony about these things!

God spoke to the disciples, to those around them, to those who listen, to us today...

- God spoke at the baptism of Jesus.
- God – on the cross – lifted up in front of empire and injustice and oppression and personal sin in every form – taking its penalty away, personally involved in redemption.
- God – in the form of Spirit, filling us as Jesus had promised, prompting us and speaking to us even today.

III. Additional points to share:

- God spoke and testified. The Apostles spoke and testified. **Now we are invited to speak and testify because we have that assurance.**
- **Now we are invited to speak and testify** in this world that such much need a message of hope, peace and reconciliation.
- **Now we are invited to speak and testify** to those around us, to those in our communities, to those that we interact with. God has given us the gift of his Son, **why would we not want to share it with the world?**

IV. Challenge to think:

1. Here is how an Anabaptist Christian from Church history (or the experience of the global Anabaptist church of today) offers their assured testimony....
2. Here is how I experienced and benefitted from the testimony of someone who spoke into my life....
3. Here is my own testimony of Christ’s ongoing work as I have experienced it....

V. Conclusion/Final Thoughts:

- John helps us understand that the testimony about Jesus:

- begins with God,
 - was witnessed by and then shared by the apostles, and that
 - as ones on whom God's Spirit falls as we ourselves are baptized by water into that bloody death and glorious resurrection of Jesus, we can be assured that this testimony resides in us for our own use of sharing God's message of love!
- Our text today begins at v. 9, where John writes that God's testimony is greater than any other because it is God's own testimony. Let me read v. 10 to extend the thought:
 - *"Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart."*

The testimony is in there. The question becomes, how is God's own testimony going to come out of us?" In word? In deed? In both? It is not intended to be hidden to be share!