

1 John 3:1

Reading: 1 John 3:1-10

Benefits

During the first week of the four part series on “The Love of Christ” we examined the depth of Christ’s love by its costliness. This enabled us to begin to understand the price God the Father paid by sacrificing his Son and the depth of Christ’s love when you examine what it cost him for each believer’s salvation.

Last week we spent time examining the second aspect of the depth of Christ’s love by how little we deserve it. Jesus wanted those who believed to understand he loves the underserving when he taught, ⁴³ “**You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’**” ⁴⁴ **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** ⁴⁵ **so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.”** (Matthew 5:43-45) So, here our love is not measured in the sacrifice but by whether we will give it to people who do not deserve it or return it.

This week we will spend time on the third element of the depth of Christ’s love – the greatness of his love by the benefits we receive. Love is not complete by sacrifice, but it also makes a positive contribution to a person’s life. As John wrote, “**See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. ...**” ² **Beloved, we are God’s children now ... we know that when he appears we shall be like him,** because we shall see him as he is. ³ **And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”** (1 John 3:1-3) Because of Jesus’ sacrifice when one believes in Jesus as their Lord and Savior they become “**children of God**” and this is of great benefit both here during our mortal lives on earth and in heaven. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, defeating death, we too will rise from mortal death to heaven and be gloried in a pure state.

On Resurrection Sunday we will finish with the fourth aspect, that of knowing the depth of Christ's love for us by the freedom with which he loves us. When a person loves in this manner they love not because they are forced to or because they feel guilty or because they demand something in return but simply, they love us. As it is written, ¹⁸“For I, *Paul*, consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ... ²¹ and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8:18 & 21) Jesus gave his life and loves all people whether they return his love or not. However, if they do not return his love, they forfeit the benefits of his love.

This morning look with me at 1 John 3, verse 1, where he makes a simple statement, but like much of what is the inspired Word of God it has great depth, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” The principle here is straight forward. However, Jesus often told parables to illustrate a principle he wanted the people to understand in a more personal way. So, this morning I start with a parable, a story based on true events but added to by me, in the hope it will help illustrate the principle John is telling us in verse 1 of chapter 3.

We have all been in a store or at the mall watching children run around playing when suddenly a child realizes that they do not see their parents. A sudden look of panic comes over their face and they begin calling for their mommy or daddy. If there is no answer they break out into screams and crying. This is a momentary crisis until someone steps in and helps them find their parents. They are comforted and reunited for there is a deep reliance upon their parents. This has also been experienced by most parents who cannot suddenly locate a child and a child that realizes they are separated from their parents. There is a deep pain of separation and anxiety, but for most it is short lived.

Suppose the separation is more serious, more painful. In Nigeria there has long been conflict between Fulani herdsman and Adara and Kaduna Christian farmers over the control of land in central zone. Imagine, a young boy playing in his village and suddenly hears screams and people begin running as men invade the village with machetes and guns. The boy runs as fast as he can looking for his family and sees no one, so he hides under a basket his mother made. Gradually the screams stop and he comes out to find everyone he knows dead; mother, father, brothers, sisters, family and friends. Over 6000 Christians have been slaughtered by the Fulani Muslims and their villages burned to the ground since the beginning of 2017.

The boy cries himself to sleep laying on the body of his mother seeking comfort and he wakes in the morning worried the Fulani will return and as he fully wakes, he is hungry and thirsty. He is afraid and there is no one left to help him. He comes out of hiding finds some bananas and as he starts to eat, he hears a sound and turning he sees there is a man watching him, a Fulani. He calls out to the boy in his language “Do not be afraid I am here to help you.” The boy wants to run, but to where? The man walks slowly over to the boy and reaches in his pouch and pulls out some bread, hands some to the boy to eat. Then from his back he pulls around a water skin, hands it to the boy and says, “drink.”

The Fulani man says softly, “I tried to stop them.” As he speaks the boy notices the cuts on the man’s arms and face. The man says, “Come with me and I will care for you. I am sorry your family is dead and I will help you bury them.” As they dig the graves for the first time the boy begins to speak and learns at the Fulani tribal meeting where they planned the raid on his village this man had disagreed with the plan and stood up to stop it. There was a fight and the man’s own son was killed. The boy senses the man sadness and also that the man cares for him. The boy realizes he lost his own son in an effort that others might live.

Over time the boy learns that his people had also killed Fulanis and took the land they farmed many years before and his people and the Fulanis were archenemies. Despite this, this man wants to save and care for the boy. Over time the boy senses he is loved by this man. Gradually the loss of the boy's family is softened and is replaced by hope. The boy begins a journey away from the war torn area with this man and they arrive in a town where the boy finds out the man owns a business and is wealthy. The man not only rescued the boy but provides for him and sends the boy to school, something that would never have been possible in his village. As the man cares for the boy there grows a love and affection between them. The boy who lost his family and the man who lost his son in an attempt to prevent the raid become family. The man adopts the boy as his son and makes sure that all he owns will be this boy's inheritance. There was more than a rescue, there was a new life.

Rescue

It is my hope that this story helps you to think of what lies behind John's words, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." It cost God his only Son to save each person from sin and death and hell. As John recorded the words of Jesus in his gospel account, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) These words and actions of Jesus Christ gave John the principle for what wrote in verse 1 and 15 verses later, look at verse 16, chapter 3 of 1 John, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."

In addition, just as the Fulani and Christian farmers were enemies so were, we enemies of God, and he had to propitiate or set aside his righteous anger in order to save us as. John spoke of this in chapter 4, beginning in verse 9, "God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved

God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10) God not only loved us enough to set aside his righteous wrath but he gave us clemency so we were no longer enemies. Just as the man and boy were no longer enemies, and just as the man adopted the boy as his own son, so too, God adopted us as his beloved children and lavishes us with unconditional love.

I want us to not take what God has done for granted, when something has been in place for almost 2000 years, we can forget the depth, the cost and the sacrifice. After all it is God who chose us – he did not have too, God could have said, “Enemies do not deserve to be saved.” That would have been final. Or, God could have said, “My son is too precious to pay the price for rebellious humans.” Nothing, absolutely nothing, required God to give people an all redeeming, forgiving, rescuing and healing love that would reconcile people back to him as his children. God could have set a plan that would have formed a truce with mankind, but He chose to go ‘all in’ – he sacrificed his only Son, so that, mankind who had become enemies of God could be made his beloved children.

Adoption – Even More

But even adoption is not an adequate description of this kind of love. When John writes about our becoming children of God, he is not thinking just in terms of adoption. He is thinking in terms of something more profound. He is thinking of new birth. There is no human analogy to this. If I find a child and want to take him into my home, I cannot cause the child to be born again. I can take him, just as the Fulani man did the boy, and I love him but there remains the personality and temperament that he has from his biological parents. I can influence him with love, but I cannot get into the child’s very nature and change it.

However, this is exactly what God does. The love John is describing in verse 1 is not a love that merely takes care of paper work and adopts and one gives their heart in

love to another. That in and of its self is an amazing love – to be adopted into God’s family and to no longer be an enemy and to have no need to fear, to feel loved, is amazing. However, John sees more, God does not merely adopt, He indwells, he moves in by his Spirit – “His seed”, as John calls it and gives himself to us and we are forever changed, our spiritual DNA is changed so that we now resemble God’s nature and are truly his child.

John said it this way here is chapter 3, verse 9, “[No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.](#)” So, if you and I are children of God, then we are so by adoption, but more than adoption we are God’s children by a new birth. We are indwelled with God’s spiritual DNA, we belong to him and he is truly our Father. John continued to add depth to this thought of a new birth, a new creation because there is no human concept of what God has done, it is foreign to the unregenerate human mind. In chapter 5, verse 1, John adds, “[Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.](#)” Our love, the love God has placed in our souls is for Him and His son, Jesus, but this love is also to be for all believers, as John said, we are to love “[whoever has been born of him.](#)” Joyce and I would often arrive in a new country and were greeted by believers we had never met and yet, quickly bonded in a friendship and love because of our common foundation as children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. This is why John continued in verse 2, saying, an outward sign that we belong to God is “[By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.](#)” (1 John 5:1-2)

So, the love of God for us goes beyond the story of the wealthy business man who took care of all the legal matters to adopt the orphan from Nigeria. God will not stop in his aggressive pursuit of closeness and communion with us until he has penetrated our very souls and planted his seed in us and given us a new nature, not a divine one, we are

not God, we are not his one and only Son, Jesus, but he gives us a nature like his, we inherit, no, beyond inherit we are made into the image of God.

Image of God Through Christ

Paul tells us that this was God's plan long before the world was made. He saw the fall of man into sin, he saw the history of redemption, he saw the incarnation, he saw the death of his Son, and in it all God's plan was, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30)

God predestined it. He planned it before the creation of the universe. What is it he planned? That his Son would have many brothers and sisters in the age to come. How? By adoption? Yes. As Paul wrote, "In love⁵ he God predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:4-6) But we need to understand it was more than adoption, God predestined us to be conformed, even more than conformed, transformed into a new creation in the image of his Son. Or, a new birth, as Peter declared, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." (1 Peter 1:3-4) We are not saved by outward works or signs, but by God creating us anew, "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (Galatians 6:15) God places his Spirit within each believer to transform them from a fallen human that is the enemy of God into his likeness, creates us as his child with his spiritual DNA.

God wanted us as his, not an adopted child, so he gave us a new birth, a new life as his true children.

Implications For Us

Now what does this mean for us this day? There are many, but let me mention just three.

First, the children of God are to be led and to live by the Spirit of God. Every believer is indwelt by God the Spirit and only these are the children of God as Paul wrote, “[For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.](#)” (Romans 8:14) This means to be a child of God we surrender our natural life to lead a spiritual life by God’s Spirit in us; the Spirit transforms us by the renewing of our minds, he changes our spiritual DNA, we are changed in the way we think and act and see our purpose. As Paul wrote and pleaded, so do I, “[I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.](#)”² [Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.](#)” (Romans 12:1-2)

Second, as children of God we are to be light in this dark and fallen world. You are to be different enough from the world that you shine God’s light into darkness. Your life is to glow with God’s bright character of truth and righteousness and love. As Paul commanded, we are to live so, “[that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,](#)”¹⁶ [holding fast to the word of life.](#)” (Philippians 2:15-16) Think about this thought – to be a child of God is to be more fully human than one can be – to be as close as to what God created mankind to be in Adam and Eve before the fall – living in unity with our Creator. We live in relationship with God and this separates us from all other humans that do not live by God’s Spirit. This is why 1 John

3:1 ends by saying, “The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” Our values and priorities and life purpose have been altered as our spiritual DNA is changed to that of God’s and his Son Jesus and as we grow closer to the image of God; this process we refer to as sanctification for we no longer identify with the world and the world does not understand us. It is important to understand that as we are conformed to the image of God our light grows brighter in a dark world and by this some see what God has done in us and they seek God and he guides them to himself and opens the spiritual eyes of their soul. Jesus said, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) I have to ask, “Is this the benchmark of your life?”

Third, as children of God we are heir of all. Being God’s children means that we are going to inherit all that God owns. This is what Paul teaches, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:16-17) We are fellow heirs with Christ. What is it that Christ is an heir of? The writer of Hebrews gives us the answer, “in these last days (*the time in history between Christ’s first coming and his second*) he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (Hebrews 1:2) So, Christ is the heir to all things of God the Father and we are fellow heirs with him – we will inherit all things of God. Paul spoke clearly, saying, “For all things are yours,²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,²³ and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23)

If we meditate on these truths it should have a tremendous impact on our lives. In America our society is concerned with having or owning things and one can never have enough. This is another reason the world does not understand us – for us, our lives should be centered on living in unity with Christ. God is saying do not worry about what

you own and control. Jesus taught, ²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:25-33) God knows it is our fallen nature to want to own things and control things, so he is telling us in these scriptures passages this morning – he is saying, “Get the need to own things out of your system. It is not important. Here is the deal – you already own everything, everything that is mine is your – it is just a matter of time. Until that time, trust me, I will take care of you. So, let go of the worldly and live for what really counts – live in relationship with Me through my Son and be my light to the world. In 1 John chapter 3 verse 1, God is saying, I love you and you are my precious child, let me lavish love on you. One part of your inheritance as my child is my love and because of the depth of my love for you – God wants you to know you will inherit everything God has. Paul teaches, “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21) We understand the entire universe, all of God’s creation will be redeemed for the sake of the children of God and as 1 John 3:1 says, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”

Creation

Our planet earth is a small part of a solar system that is 7.3 billion miles across. This solar system is a little speck in the galaxy called the Milky Way which is 80,000 light years across. A light year is how far light travels in a year. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second, so a light year is 5.88 trillion miles. So, our galaxy is 480,000 trillion miles across. The nearest star to us, Alpha Centauri, would take 4.3 years to get to traveling at the speed of light. The nearest neighboring galaxy would take 2.2 million years to get to at the speed of light. We have no idea how big the universe is and even if there is an end or edge to the universe. The totality of God's creation is beyond our ability to know.

All creation will be set free into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's. God has revealed these things to us, not so that we will fall in love with stars, but so that we will see something of the magnitude of his love. Can you begin to see the limitlessness of God's love? Now think on what John has taught us this morning by his simple statement, [“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.”](#) Paul follows this truth with, [“and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”](#) (Romans 8:17) God has done all this so his children, you and me, can begin to comprehend the depth of his love – a love without limits. If you have accepted Jesus, God the Son as your Lord and Savior then all of God's love, limitless love is yours!