Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. [3] All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Adopted and Sanctified

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your amazing grace which adopts and sanctifies us. Help us to embrace our position as your children who are holy and blameless in your sight because it is your good pleasure and will to call us into your family and to transform us into your image. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today's scripture reading is about the destiny of our relationship with God. John wants us to look at this great love that the Father has lavished on us. The word "see," also translated as "behold," is an urging to look at it and study it intently. It will bless us to look at the love of God which has been lavished on us. Lavish has the idea of a great measure of giving with no idea of it being earned or anything expected in return. Sometimes our pride makes us slow to believe in this kind of love, wanting to be worthy before receiving it. Sometimes the hurt and pain of life creates distrust and unbelief in the love of God. Sometimes it takes time to develop a more full understanding of the greatness of God's love. Spurgeon paraphrases God in this way: "you poor people that love Me, you sick people, you unknown, obscure people, without any talent, I have published it before heaven and earth, and made the angels know it, that you are My children, and I am not ashamed of you. I glory in the fact that I have taken you for My sons and daughters."[1]

God asks us to see, to behold this love. He is not ashamed; he wants to reveal it to us. The greatness of his love is shown in that through it, we are called to be children of God. He has looked down on us in all of our lostness, and done so much more than have charitable compassion and pity on our plight for this life and for eternity.

With these things he might have provided a plan of salvation to save us from hell. But he went so much further beyond that, He made us his children. The *Father* calls us his children in 2 Corinthians 6:18. The *Son* calls us his brothers and sisters in Hebrews 2:11. The *Holy Spirit* recognizes us as God's children in Romans 8:16.

We can imagine someone helping or saving someone else, but not going so far as to make them part of the family - but this is what God has done for us. This demonstration of God's true and deep love for us goes way beyond salvation. We are granted more in Jesus than Adam ever had. This is more than a restoration of what Adam had. When we receive Jesus, we become like our Father and we love our siblings in the Lord. This blessing, according to John 1:12, is for those who receive Jesus, receiving the love of Jesus in a life of fellowship and trust with him.

Two weeks ago we considered the benefits of our salvation, primarily justification, adoption, and sanctification. We examined justification in some depth, and today we go on to dig into adoption and sanctification. So, what is adoption? Adoption is the act of God's free grace by which we become His sons with all the rights and privileges of being His.[2] This, according to our scripture reading today, is why the world does not know us.

We are strangers to this world – or we should be. We are unique in our parentage from God, and the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. The world rejected and crucified Jesus, even though he loved them to the end. The same sinners who flocked to Him, later turned on Him.

In verse 2 of our reading today, John goes on to tell us that we are indeed children of God. Romans 8:16 tells us that "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." We have an inward assurance of this. Then John goes on to tell us that "what we will be has not yet been made known." Our present standing is clear, but our future destiny is clouded. We do not have detail about what we will become in the world beyond. We can't even imagine what it will be like in glory. Eternity is where Christians will fully develop. But we do know, as John goes on to tell us, that we will be like Jesus. God's ultimate goal in our lives is to make us like Jesus, as

we read in Romans 8:29: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Heaven is the destiny for all who want to be like Jesus. Hell is reserved for those who do not want to be like Jesus. God takes no one by force, but gives to each as they choose.

In this life we grow to be more like Jesus, but only in eternity will this process be finished. John goes on to tell us that we shall see Jesus as he is. Greater than our own glorification will be the greater glory of the unrestricted, unhindered presence of our Lord. Paul says in 1 Corinthians (13:12), "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Unlike our mirrors today in which we see clear images, the mirrors of the ancient world were made of polished metal – and the images were unclear and somewhat distorted. There will be much joy in heaven as we reunite with loved ones, but the greatest experience of our eternal existence will be to see Jesus as he is.

John says, "All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure," making a connection between seeing Jesus as he is and being like him. In this life, we are becoming like Jesus to the extent that we see him as he is. Knowing our eternal destiny and living in this hope will purify our lives. We want to be more like Jesus now because we know that this is our destiny. We want to be ready now, serving him now, pleasing him now. Our hope is in Jesus, not in heaven, not in our own glory. Not in a relationship, success, mutual funds, health, or possessions: only Jesus.

God adopts us as strangers and children of wrath, without anything commendable in us, and gives us all the rights and privileges of children of God. He gives us a new heart, a new home, surrounded by a new family to bless us and foster our growth. Only those who believe on Christ are adopted, those who have answered the call of the Father. There are no limits to the privileges to which the children of God are entitled. The primary ones are: protection from evils of all kinds (Psalm 121:7), the bearing of his likeness (Colossians 3:10), access to the

Father (1 John 5:14-15), provision of needs (Psalm 34:10), and entrance into the kingdom of God (Romans 8:17). Adoption is the act of God's free grace by which we become His sons with all the rights and privileges of being His.

Our second topic for today is sanctification. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace by which our whole person is made new in the image of God, and we are made more and more able to become dead to sin and alive to righteousness.[3] While *justification* is complete at once; *sanctification* is a process carried on by degrees to perfection in glory. *Justification* alters a man's position or standing before God; but *sanctification* is a real change as it changes a man's heart and life. *Justification* is an act of God without us; while *sanctification* is the work of God, renewing us within as we use the means of grace.

To sanctify is to set apart for special purposes. God did this for us through our calling to faith in Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we pursue growth in godliness so that we can more clearly reflect Jesus in our lives, until he comes again and makes us perfect reflections of Christ. God remodels our hearts into his image of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This is the "new man," the regenerated self, by which we die to self and sin and are made alive by the power of grace to live lives that are pleasing to God. It is evidence of our justification and faith. It is necessary so that we may live for the glory of God, so that we may be prepared to meet God, for without holiness no man shall see God, as we read in Hebrews 12:14, "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace by which our whole person is made new in the image of God, and we are made more and more able to become dead to sin and alive to righteousness. Adoption and sanctification are distinct yet deeply connected benefits of salvation that flow from a believer's union with Jesus. Adoption is a legal and relational act giving us full rights and privileges. Sanctification is the ongoing work of God's grace renewing the believer's entire nature into the image of Christ. Adoption is definitive and once-for-all.

Sanctification is an ongoing, progressive, lifetime process. While adoption focuses on our status, position and identity as the children of God, sanctification focuses on transformation, moral growth, and holiness. Both are granted by the Father, through Christ, and applied by the active power of the Holy Spirit, acting in cooperation with the believer.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father teach us to rejoice in the gifts of adoption and sanctification, and to strive to please you by sharing the gospel, so that others may come to rejoice in all your exceeding gifts as well, for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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[1] Spurgeon, Charles Haddon The New Park Street Pulpit, Volumes 1-6 and The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volumes 7-63 (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1990).

[2] https://westminsterseminaryuk.org/westminster-shorter-catechism-modern-english#section-1Re, 34.

[3] https://westminsterseminaryuk.org/westminster-shorter-catechism-modern-english#section-1Re, 35.

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