

All Saints Day
November ,1 2020

“Children of God in name and in reality!” (1 John 3:1-2)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, saints in Christ,
Today’s text for All Saints Day is from our epistle reading, 1 John 3:1-2

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Here ends our text.

I. Children of God in name – what a blessing!

Maybe you’ve heard the old joke, you can call me anything, but don’t call me late to dinner. Or in President Trump’s case, “you can call me Donald or George, or anything you want, just don’t call me late to the acceptance speech.” It seems that former vice-president Biden, was having trouble remembering who he was running against last week. He thought he was running against George, George Bush, that is. It happens.

Has anyone ever misspoken your name or called you by someone else’s name? I was called Don last week. I wasn’t confused President Trump but with a member from the church in Port Isabel. It happens. I’ve sometimes switched siblings’ names by accident. No one says anything. I just get a funny look or a moment of silence until I realize my mistake and say the right name.

Fortunately, God never has any problems calling us who we are. And our text tells us some very good news to behold. Look, see with your eyes the love of the Father that He has bestowed on us! It’s so great a love that we would be privileged to be called children of God!

It took a lot of love on the Father's part for Him to utter these words "child of God". It certainly wasn't anything we were born into, having lost the image of God since the fall of Adam.

No, Psalm 14, calls all sinners "children of men". And God certainly isn't confused about who are children of men and who are children of God. Yes, there is a big difference.

2 The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. 3 They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one. (Psalm 14:2-3)

No, not one can claim the title, the honor of being called a child of God. You and I are included. How great, then, is God's love to behold for He tells us how He has made us His children!

Listen to Paul in Ephesians 2.

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." (Ephesians 2:2-3)

How does God describe us before He made us alive? Sons of disobedience, children of wrath, just as the others. Why am I taking the time to make this point clear? First, God wants all people to acknowledge that they were dead in trespasses and sins. He wants all to become poor in spirit through repentance that they may see the kingdom of God. And secondly, it is important to be clear that there is no innate goodness in man. For some teach that all people are born as children of God.

No. All people are not born as children of God. All people are created by God, and God loved all people, so much that He gave His Son, Jesus to die for all. But, Jesus didn't die for children of God. No, He died for children of wrath. Jesus didn't die for good people. He died for the children of disobedience. He died for you and me.

We heard last week on Reformation Sunday in our Gospel reading from John 8 that anyone who commits a sin is a slave of sin and does not abide in the house forever. It is only if the Son sets you free that you are free indeed!

There's a big difference between believers and unbelievers, the children of the bondwoman and the children of the free, as Paul says in Galatians 3.

30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. (Galatians 3:30-31)

To call unrepentant sinners “children of God”, simply because God created them, is not scriptural and leads people to a false sense of security.

So, this past week, Pope Francis' new documentary, “Francesco”, caused quite a stir when he expressed support for the civil union of homosexuals. His unscriptural reasoning was that they are “children of God” and have a right to a family.

God does not call unrepentant people who practice homosexuality His children. Just as He does not call unrepentant heterosexual adulterers or fornicators His children. They are all children of wrath.

Only Christ could remove the wrath that we deserved by taking it on Himself when He died on the cross. Sinful man is incapable of receiving this freedom by his own power. As John says in his Gospel in the first chapter, this is 100% an act of God's merciful will.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

Those who believe in Jesus alone have been given the right to be called children of God. One does not become a child of God by birth, or blood, or a descendent of Abraham, or the will of man, or the will of the pope! No, it is by the will of God that this rebirth occurs. And as Paul says in Galatians 3, you become sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus when you are baptized into Christ. You literally put on Christ and become a son or daughter, a seed of Abraham!

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither

Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)

Through faith... that is how one becomes a son of God...faith in Jesus Christ.

II. Children of God in reality – that's who you are!

Why was this reading from 1 John 3 chosen for All Saints Day? It was chosen because it describes the reality of a baptized child of God. Being a child of God equals being a saint. For if one's sins are forgiven through baptism, then one is holy before God and God calls His people saints.

God loves to call His people saints for that is what they are. It is our present and eternal reality.

From today's introit we heard how God views the death of His saints, **"Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)**

But isn't death the punishment for sinners? Yes, but it has lost its sting for God's saints! Listen to the verses previous verses which explain why the death of a saint is precious. It is because a lost soul was saved through faith and became part of God's family, to walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

"Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful. 6 The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. 7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. 8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears And my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the Lord In the land of the living." (Psalm 116:5-9)

Psalm 30 tells of how the saints give thanks to God as they remember His holy name that saved them.

"Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name." (Psalm 30:4)

A phenomenon that has taken over TV recently is the reality show. People love reality shows. The canned laughter or staged scripts get old after a while. People want to see authenticity and not actors. They like Judge Judy, Undercover Boss, or the Last Alaskans.

But, if you're wanting the best reality, God says tells us to behold His love that He has bestowed on us through Jesus.. The most exciting, fulfilling reality for a Christian is described right here in our epistle reading. Christians are not only called children of God, but that is who they are! John says in his epistle.

“Beloved, now we are children of God”. We are 100%, white robed saints of God who are blessed.

Why do we need to be reminded? Well John clearly says that...

“it has not yet been revealed what we shall be” When we look at our present sinful rags, its seems that it is too good to be true, that God would do this for me a sinner. We don't deserve to behold what the Father has done. But that is why we are reminded that it is by grace that we are saved through faith, not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Christians don't look any different than other people. We are sinners who are suffering the afflictions of this world, like all people. We are not privileged to escape sickness or cancer or the Coronavirus. But, a Christian doesn't face the world alone. For we know that God is our refuge and strength and a very present help in time of trouble.

We know that we ARE privileged to be called brothers of Jesus as we hear in Hebrews 2.

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying:

“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.” 13 And again: “I will put My trust in Him.” And again: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.” (Hebrews 2:10-13)

Jesus, the captain of our salvation, calls us His brethren. He's not ashamed to do so because He has sanctified us by His shed blood. He has given us His righteousness through faith! That is our reality!

Oh, behold what manner is the love of the Father that He has bestowed on us!

And not only is Jesus our brother, but we call the Father, Abba, our daddy!
So Paul writes in Romans 8.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:12-17)

Oh, and that is what is still to be revealed...our future glory as children of God. For we live presently in the great tribulation as our reading from Revelation 7 described. We indeed suffer with Him in the here and now.

We suffer persecutions for the world does not know us and has contempt for us. For the sons of men do not know Jesus as their Savior. But our Gospel from St. Matthew 5 tells us that when we are persecuted to **“Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” Matthew 5:12.**

And John tells us the best news from our text.

“ but, we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

We shall be like Him...glorified...without pain, or hunger or sadness or tears. Our mortal will put on immortality and we will join all the saints in heaven around the throne of the Lamb! That’s our future reality that we see but dimly now!

Oh, behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we would receive all this...all of this through Jesus Christ. Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)