

April 18, 2021

Today I'm going to focus on our reading from the epistle of first John. Authorship is always interesting to me... it's probable that the epistles of John were written by the same person who wrote the gospel of John. There are many similarities, but also a few differences.

I ran into one commentator that was pretty insightful. He thought it was the same person, but that he was older, perhaps wiser when he wrote the epistles. In fact, he called the writer of First John, Grandpa John. I kind of like that...

Our scripture reading uses a wonderful metaphor, "See what love the Father has given us that we should be called **children of God**; and that is what we are." Indeed, Children of God. What could be a higher love than the love between a parent and a child...

This morning I'd like to do some reflecting with that metaphor of being Children of God. Specifically, what does it mean to be like a Child, and secondly what does it mean to be in that parental relationship.

The Greek work for little children is "teknoi" And in the Epistle of First John, he uses that title eight times. "Little children do not sin." "Little children, your sins are forgiven." "Little children, it is the last hour." "Little children, let no one deceive you." "Little children, love with deeds and truth." "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." It's his favorite title... Kinda sounds like a Grandpa thing to me... Doesn't it?

I love that phrase "little children!" We've all been little children. Perhaps, many of us have memories of being a child...

Bunch of little stories... These past couple years my dad has taken on the project of scanning all the family pictures into the computer, and it's a lot of pictures! Then my little brother uploaded them all on the internet, in the cloud somewhere!

And oh, my goodness, what fun to look at! And I have to say, what a lot of amazing memories! Many, many pictures of myself and brothers and sister as little kids! Pictures of farm work, holidays, a few vacations. And almost always we were laughing and giggling.

There is one great picture of my older brother, myself and my sister. We're all dressed up... My older brother is posing for the camera like he's a big shot, and next to him my sister and I were leaning in to one other and laughing like we just heard the funniest thing ever. And my older brother doesn't seem to have a clue.

Can you remember those moments? Times when there were no cares in the world, just the absolute joy of being... A time when we were loved unconditionally. The world was simple and innocent and healthy and whole... Those memories are precious moments...

A friend on face book recently posted a picture of his sleeping baby, and commented “If I even just had an ounce of this peacefulness...” He recognized that innocence and tranquility...

I’m reminded of the Borning Cry song, “I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well.” And then as the song reminds us, in the very next line, we grow up. “In a blaze of light, you wandered off to find where demons dwell...”

Sin invades every corner of our lives. It’s our context... We come to realize how broken our world really is... There’s coveting, jealousy, and bearing false witness, pointing our fingers... A lot of hurting one another.

So, what do you think it means when the epistle writer refers to us as Children of God? I wonder if we are called to live into that innocent joy of being... And I don’t think it’s an immature or “head in the sand” way of being in the world, but rather an eyes wide open holistic wisdom.

When the world is at war with itself, being a child of God, is about being ourselves held in love, so we can go out there and love one another.

And as brothers and sisters, we have a common parent in God. Not all of us, but many of us know what it’s like to be a parent, to have kids. There is something deeply profound about this parental relationship.

I am fortunate to have two kids, who are both married and so I now have four! And it’s difficult for me to describe how much I love them. From the moment I

held Jo, my daughter, for the first time til now, I'm absolutely and utterly, and completely in love with her. I can brag about her all day long... As far as I'm concerned, she can do absolutely nothing wrong!

And Jon, my goodness, he's completely different than Jo. And amazingly unique and empathetic, hard-working and creative, and I'm so proud of him! He's always done things his own way, and I love him just as much!

I am linked to my kids forever... When one of my kid's is hurting, I'm hurting. When one of my kid's is joyful, so am I. I think that's how God is with us. God doesn't look upon our pain and feel nothing; God feels the pain we are feeling. God rejoices when we are rejoicing.

And the amazing thing is this, for as much as I love my kids, God loves them more. As much as my parents love me, God loves me more... It's too hard to even comprehend...

The good news this morning is that we are Children of God. I hope and pray to remember those moments when I was like a little child. That unconditional love, experiencing that joy of pure being, and resting in that eternal life and love...

Amen.