

See What Kind of Love

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Date: 15 October 2023

Preacher: Colin Horne

[0 : 00] Pastor Collins' text tonight is just three verses from 1 John chapter 3. The first three verses.

Here God's own living and life-giving word, which we saw in the Sunday school hour, is true, is right, and is good. 1 John 3, 1-3.

Behold, how great is the 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. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.

But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

[1 : 04] Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us so much as to give Your Son up to the cross in our place, and to accept His offering and His blood in our place.

Lord Jesus, thank You for loving us so much as to lay down Your life for us and to suffer what we had coming and to not quit until You could say, and so we are free from condemnation.

And thank You, Holy Spirit, for upholding our Savior in that travail of soul and anguish so that He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God on high.

Holy Spirit, we believe. Help our unbelief. Give us to see more of this wondrous love. Open our eyes that we might see wonderful things in our Savior, at the cross.

There's more to the height and depth and length and width of this love that surpasses knowledge. And we want to know more, so be our teacher tonight and shed this love abroad in our hearts.

[2 : 26] and so warm our hearts that seeing this divine love would flame our love for each other and for You.

We ask all these mercies in Jesus' name. Amen. Pastor Cullen. Does God love you?

That's a weighty question. That is a crucial question that every single person truly does need to answer. Does God love me?

And of course, if you're in Christ tonight, then you know that yes, indeed, in a special, unique, covenantal fashion, God loves me.

Scriptures are plain. All over the Bible, we read of God's great love for His people. Romans 5.8 But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[3 : 31] Ephesians 2.4 But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

John 3.16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Some of the clearest gospel texts in all of the Bible and God's love for us in Christ is inescapably clear.

He loves you. If you are in Christ, He loves you with a steadfast love. So here's the follow-up question. What is this love like?

What kind of love are we talking about here? It is crucial that we know God loves us. It is also crucial that we know what kind of love this is.

We need to drill down on what it means that God loves us. I think we all know there are all kinds of cheap, imitation, pseudo-loves around us.

[4 : 45] We can talk of love, but what one person says when they speak of love may be very different from what someone else says. We even sometimes use the word love in ways that we don't mean it to the same degree as others, such as, I really love ice cream.

I don't love ice cream as I love my wife. But we still say, I love ice cream. And so if God were to love us in the same way that we love ice cream, we really don't understand His love.

So God helps us tonight in 1 John 3. He unpacks His love for us in these three verses. Look at how our passage begins. Verse 1.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us. See this love. Look at this love.

Consider this love. Stop and think on. Meditate on this love. Don't notice it and then quickly rush past it.

[5 : 53] Savor it. Focus on it. Examine it. We need to treat God's love like a fine piece of art at an art gallery. We need to stop.

We need to stare. We need to ponder it. We need to cherish it. We need to appreciate it. So is your heart warmed by the love of God this evening?

This passage, it sets out to do just that. To warm our hearts. To deepen our appreciation for the kind of love that God has shown us. And the passage commands us to do it.

It says, see what kind of love the Father has given to us. It doesn't suggest it. It doesn't tell us that it would be a good idea to take notice of the Father's love.

No, it tells us to do it. See what kind of love the Father has given to us. And so we're going to see this evening four facets of this love that are put on display.

[6 : 54] And here's the first facet of this love. We are called children of God. That's right there in verse one. See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God.

Well, this verse, it raises a rather controversial question. Who are the children of God? If you grab someone off the street and you ask them, who are the children of God?

It's likely that you would get an answer somewhere along the lines of everyone, all people. That's pretty common for people to talk about all people as being the children of God.

And interestingly, that's not entirely without biblical warrant. We just need to qualify that. Listen to Isaiah 45, beginning in verse 11. Ask of me things to come.

This is God speaking. Ask of me things to come. Will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it.

[8 : 02] It was my hands that stretched out the heavens and I commanded all their hosts. So it could be said, it could be argued that in a sense, from this verse, all people are the children of God.

But here's the qualification. All people are God's children in the limited sense that they are all His creation. That's what these verses are teaching us here in Isaiah 45, that all people are the work of His hands.

God has created man. And so all people are His children insofar as they are His creation. But not all are His children in the fullest sense of the word.

Not all are His children in a salvific sense. Really, Isaiah 45 is more of an anomaly. For most of the Bible, when we read of God speaking of all people, He speaks of them not as the children of God, but as the children of man.

And so in a general sense, that is what people are. Children of God, that's more limited in its scope. That is a term that is especially used to delineate the people that God has saved unto Himself from those that He has not saved unto Himself.

[9 : 24] Listen to Hosea 1. The book of Hosea describes God's relationship to His people in very vivid ways. Speaking of the brokenness of that relationship because of Israel's sin, God says this, you are not my people and I am not your God.

But then He describes the future restoration of this relationship. And He says these words, and in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people, it shall be said to them, children of the living God.

So those who were once described as not God's people, they are now not just described as God's people, but they are described as children of the living God.

The children of God are His special possession. He is speaking even more affectionately of His people. And so God's children are indeed those who have now been purchased with the blood of God's one and only beloved Son.

And it's on them and only on them that God sets His special covenant love. And so yes, all people are God's children in the sense that they are all His creation, we should say.

[10 : 46] And yes, all people are loved by God with a benevolent love of common grace, like Psalm 145.9 teaches, the Lord is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made.

But not all people are God's children in the sense that they're His redeemed possession, much like our own children. We love our own children in a special, unique way.

We may love other children, we should love other children, but not as we love those children that God has given to us as our own. So God's children are special to Him.

As 1 John 2.28 says, we've been born of Him. He has set His love on us. And it is this love that is in view here in 1 John 3.

See what love the Father has given to us. We are called His children. Our status has been greatly changed. Ephesians 2.18 says, For through Him, that is Christ, for through Him, we both, Jews and Gentiles, have access in one Spirit to the Father.

[12 : 02] So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

So those words in Ephesians 2, they describe the new relationship between believing Jews and Gentiles. We heard that spoken of even in the service this morning. We're brought together.

We're made one in Christ. And all of us, Jews and Gentiles, are said to be what in this passage? Members of God's household. Similarly, 2 Timothy 3.15.

It is well known for speaking of the church as the pillar and buttress of the truth. You know what else is described there in 2 Timothy? The church is the household of God.

We are welcomed into the family of God. We are made to be a part of His household. He is our Father and we are His adopted sons and daughters.

[13 : 07] And so, do you know where the children belong? The children belong seated at the table. They have a place at the table. The children are not treated as guests at the table.

Those who merely come to the table, but then they leave and somebody else comes and that's actually their seat. No, they belong at that table because they are members of the household of God.

So, when we take communion tonight, we are reminded, Christ died for me so that I might sit at the family table and share in a meal with Him.

The Lord's Supper isn't just for anyone. It's for those who are called the children of God. And the children of God are those who are in Christ by faith.

As Galatians 3.26 says, For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. And one day, the children of God will not just sit at the Father's table.

[14 : 17] One day, we will live forever in the Father's house. Our brother, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, He promises us, in my Father's house are many rooms.

What does He go to do in His Father's house? He goes to prepare a place for us. And Jesus is not preparing a guest room for us.

He isn't preparing a temporary place for us to stay. There's no checkout date or checkout time. You don't have to go down to the lobby to request an extended checkout time.

Can you give me another hour to get out of the room because I have a lot of stuff that I left in the room? There's no cleaning fees like an Airbnb or a Vrbo.

There's no damage reimbursement. This isn't a hotel stay. This is our home. This is our Father's house that He is going to prepare a place for us.

[15 : 18] And we have a place here at this table this evening by God's grace. Do you see what kind of love that the Father has given to us? He calls us His children.

Let's consider the second facet. We really are God's children. We really are God's children. Are you thinking, wait, wasn't that the first facet?

Not quite. Let's read verse 1 again. See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God. And so we are.

Listen to the beginning of verse 2. Beloved, we are God's children now. Do you enjoy reading the fine print? Most of us probably don't.

How often do you find yourself scrolling to the bottom of the document to sign it or you're flipping through the physical pages to the end and you're trusting whoever put that document in front of you or whoever emailed that document to you, you're trusting them that whatever I'm signing is basically, it's what they told me and I'm not going to get myself into any kind of trouble.

[16 : 32] I'm trusting that person to deal truthfully and honestly with me. Now, failing to read the fine print can have pretty devastating consequences if you're dealing with someone who is not honest and forthright.

Something can sound too good to be true and perhaps that's because in the fine print it actually does tell you yeah, that is too good to be true. Maybe you've heard the story of Michael Orr.

Michael Orr is a retired professional football player. He played for the Baltimore Ravens when they won the Super Bowl and his life story was made into a movie called The Blind Side and that movie starred Sandra Bullock.

It won lots of awards and that movie tells the story of Michael Orr, this great football player in high school and he was very impoverished. He grew up in a broken family.

His mother was an addict. His father was in prison. His father actually died in prison. He had a very difficult life and so he was in the foster system and he was bouncing around from home to home in high school until a family from the school that he attended welcomed him into their home and they treated him like he was part of the family.

[17 : 51] And just recently, there were some really sad revelations about his relationship with this family because the way that it was portrayed was that this family had adopted them into their family, made him truly a part of the family with all the rights and privileges of their children.

And only recently it was discovered he wasn't adopted. They made his relationship to them a conservatorship and so they had control then over his finances and lots of money was made off of the blind side and he now has sued this family and he claims they didn't welcome me into their home to bring me in as their child.

They welcomed me into their home and they took advantage of me. He's now filing this lawsuit saying these things. There's a massive difference between being called a child and actually being a child with all of the benefits of being in that family.

If you are in Christ you are not simply called a child of God and so you are. This is no ruse.

This is no scam. There's no fine print that you need to read to learn that this is indeed too good to be true. God is not calling us his children so he can take advantage of us because let's be honest what would he be taking advantage of us for?

[19 : 23] What do we have that he is in need of? Doesn't he say that in Psalm 50? Psalm 50 he tells us that if I was hungry I would not tell you for the world and its fullness are mine.

We come with nothing to offer to God. It is all of his grace and his mercy and his great love that he says you are my children.

And we really are. It's been settled in the courts of heaven. And when we think of judges in a courtroom what comes to mind?

A stern grim expression. We think of judges who are overseeing criminal trials and a judge and a judge that's presiding over a trial they have a very serious duty especially a trial without a jury.

That judge must declare innocence or guilt and so they don't take their job lightly. And the Bible teaches us about our own trial in God's courtroom.

[20 : 30] And for us who are in Christ God the just judge has declared us those who repent and believe in Jesus he has declared us to be innocent because Christ bore our sins in our place.

He took the punishment for us. Though he had done no wrong he was declared guilty by God the judge. So the gavel was wrapped and we were found innocent. But then the image of this courtroom transforms.

And now we've gone from a trial court to an adoption court. Some of us have actually been in an adoption courtroom with a judge to do this very thing to adopt children into our homes.

Some of us have been adopted into families. And for those of us who haven't been there to be a part of it ourselves or been a witness to it we've seen videos we've seen photos and it's a joyous occasion.

Sometimes the judge will dress up in a fun costume. The judge will even sometimes have a small child who's being adopted in his or her lap and the judge will let them actually wrap the gavel to declare the adoption official.

[21 : 47] It's a very very different scene than a trial courtroom. And then after the adoption is made official and everyone is rejoicing that child goes home with their family forever.

This is their family they're going home with them they take them out of that courtroom with joy. And so we've been adopted. The Bible plainly says that we have been adopted.

But who has adopted us? Where is our family to take us to our forever home? The judge has wrapped his gavel our adoption is complete and now this same just judge looks upon us his face smiles on us with warm love and affection and in this beautiful shocking twist it is the very judge himself who has declared our adoption official that then adopts us into his family.

we're made to be his children. Ephesians 1:5 God predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will.

This is no sham. There is no fine print clarifying the terms of our relationship to God. We are called children of God and so we are.

[23 : 20] God predestined this according to the purpose of his will. So unless you or anything else in creation can foil the purpose of his will, unless his sovereign grace can be thwarted, you can rest assured you are his child by faith in his son Jesus Christ.

And we must recognize another important distinction as well. We are not becoming God's children. We are not in the process of now being adopted.

There's a finality to these verses. Verse 2 begins, we are God's children now. The price of our redemption has been paid.

Christ's body has been given for us. Christ's blood has been spilt for us. And all of those who are redeemed are also adopted.

Not one is left on the outside looking in saying, I've been redeemed, I wish I'd be adopted too. Do you see what kind of love the Father has given to us? We are called children of God, and so we are.

[24 : 31] We are really, truly, his children. Let's look at the third facet. We will be like our brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will be like our brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. Beginning in verse 2. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared.

But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

So this meal that we share in tonight, communion, is a reminder to us of a great future that awaits us. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:26, for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Because make no mistake about it, Jesus is coming back. He is coming again. And we await his appearance. And when he appears, we will see him as he is.

[25 : 44] We will see him in all of his glory. Like the disciples saw Christ on the mountaintop when he was transfigured before their very eyes.

The text says the appearance of his face was altered and his clothes became dazzling white and they saw his glory. But only for a little while.

A brief glimpse of Christ in his glory, in his splendor. But when he comes again, all eyes will see him as he is, and not just a few like at the transfiguration.

All eyes will see him and our eyes will see him as he is forever. And we who are in Christ will be like him. Not like him in every single way.

We won't become God as he is God, but we will be like him in this way. We'll be glorified as he is. Glorified as our brother is.

[26 : 49] The true son of God will come again to bring to glory all of God's adopted sons and daughters. The transformed, glorified bodies like his.

Free from sin and all of its effects. God is. Romans 8 describes this bright hope. In that day we will no longer groan under the weight of sin.

We'll no longer be subjected to futility. We will be set free from the bondage to corruption. And in that day we will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

God. This is the love that the Father has given to us. It's a love that brings us through to the end. This is not a momentary love.

This is an enduring love that sees us from justification to sanctification to glorification. We have been made to be God's children now.

[27 : 53] And we will one day enter into eternity as His children then as well. We have this promise. We will be like Christ when He appears.

And we'll receive an inheritance with Christ as well because as the Bible tells us we are co-heirs. We are fellow heirs with Christ. We've been adopted into God's family with all of its blessings and all of its rights and all of its privileges.

So here is what we do now in light of that future day. everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

We hope in Him. We continue to look to Him. Listen to Romans 8 again. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope.

For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. patience. So we do not yet see our brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 02] We don't see Him yet. But we're waiting for His appearance. We're waiting with hope. We are waiting with patience. And in that waiting, we are working.

We are putting off the old self. We are putting on the new. This is a text that calls us to a life of purity. Fleeing from sin. Pursuing righteousness.

So our hope for the future produces a present purity in our lives today. A purity that ought to permeate every area of our lives.

So are you tempted with anger toward your spouse or your kids? Remember who you are and what you will be. Are you tempted toward bitterness with how you were mistreated by your employer?

Are you tempted with lust in your heart toward a man or a woman on the screen? Are you tempted toward laziness in how you do your work in the office or around the house? Toward jealousy in what your neighbor has but you don't?

[30 : 08] Remember who you are now and remember what you will be. You are God's child now and you will be like Him when He appears. So set your hope on Jesus your Savior your brother the world will indeed grow strangely dim in the light of His glorious face.

Sin will not have the same sparkle. We look to Jesus we wait for Him to be made like Him. See what kind of love the Father has given to us?

We will be like Christ our brother one day. Let's consider the fourth facet of God's love tonight. The world does not know this love.

Back to verse 1. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. We need to work backwards here in this verse.

First we must see that the world doesn't know the Father. That makes sense when we think about Jesus' own words from John chapter 8.

[31 : 21] Back in John 8 the Jews were arguing with Him and they said to Jesus we are offspring of Abraham. But Jesus replied I speak of what I have seen with my father and you do what you have heard from your father.

And so the Jews then they answered him saying Abraham is our father. And later in the conversation they got even more theologically correct and they said that God is their father.

But listen to Jesus' reply. If God were your father you would love me for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord but He sent me.

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires.

The world lies in the power of the evil one. The world does not know God as its father because the world has a different father the devil. And so the logic of 1 John goes if the world doesn't know our father then the world doesn't know us as his children.

[32 : 38] Again in the gospel according to John Jesus said these sobering words in the very beginning of chapter 16. Indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering a service to God and they will do these things because they have not known the father nor me but I have said these things to you that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

And so the father has given this love to us and it's a love that is lost on the world. The world knows nothing of this love because the world knows nothing of our father and the world knows nothing of us as his children.

But why does John remind us of this? Why is he telling us that the world doesn't know us? The world doesn't know our father? Because we're tempted by the world.

We're tempted to think does the father really love me? Maybe the father doesn't. Maybe the father hasn't really adopted me.

Maybe I've been fooled. Maybe I've been duped. Maybe it's more than repenting and believing. Maybe I've been called a child of God but in reality I'm not.

[33 : 57] In reality I'm abandoned and destitute and forsaken. And so we conclude I need to look elsewhere for my security.

I need to look elsewhere for my pleasure. I need to look elsewhere. I need to look outside of myself. And so instead of seeing and examining and meditating and cherishing God's love pretty soon we're spending a lot of time and energy looking closely and gazing at the world and what it might offer us.

And here God's word is telling us the world's evaluation of you is a terrible litmus test. Don't base your status on what the world says about you.

The world doesn't know your father. The world doesn't know you. Base your status on what God says about you. And he says you are my child. Not because of anything that you've done.

You haven't earned your way into God's family. You're in God's family because he has set his love on you. So we need that reminder.

[35 : 10] Don't act like you're a spiritual orphan. You have a father who loves you and has made you his child. Live like that is true. See what kind of love the father has given to us.

See what kind of love the father has lavished on us. See the quality of this love. The depth of this love. The unchanging nature of this love. This is a love the world sadly does not know.

So the world, the flesh, the devil, they may all try to convince you otherwise. But you've been given this love. You know this love. You've experienced this love.

You have received the spirit of adoption as sons, Romans 8 says, by whom we cry Abba, Father. The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

And so if you're here tonight and you are not in Christ, you have not put your hope in him, repented of your sins, trusted in Jesus, then scripture says you are not a child of God.

[36 : 22] You are not a member of his household. God. But hear this. There is good news. There is good news. Christ died for sinners like all of us.

And all who turn from their sin and trust in Christ for forgiveness, not one will God turn away. This Father adopts every orphan who comes knocking. He is glad to add another leaf to the family table to make room.

you can know this love of the Father. Turn from your way of life. Turn from following after the course of this world and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

And you will be called a child of God. And you will be a child of God. See what kind of love the Father has given to us. What a fitting command from God's word for us this evening.

As we come to share in the Lord's Supper together, as we come to this family meal, we come as God's beloved children. Welcome to the table where by God's grace alone, we belong.

[37 : 34] So we want to share in that meal with joy together. Amen.