

Loved by God

Preached: 2/28/2021; 2nd Sunday in Lent – Germantown;

Candle: We are continuing our journey through the Season of Lent. During this season we are focusing our attention on Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. We are reminded that it was for this reason He came into the world. Our Advent Candles have become a Lenten Candle. The excitement and joy of celebrating His birth has turned into a sobering realization of His sacrifice. Jesus was aware of His mission to go to the cross. The enemy tried to turn his attention away from the cross, but Jesus would not be deterred.

Opening Scripture: **Luke 4:1-13**

Opening Prayer

Scripture **1 John 2:28 – 3:3 (ESV)**

Message **A Beloved Child of God**

If you are someone who enjoys going to Yard Sales, or to flea markets, you may have had an experience like this: Something catches your eye. You look at the price and see that its not very expensive, so you buy it. Maybe you're not sure what you will do with it, but you take it home. When you get home and you start to look at your "find", you begin to see somethings you had not seen. Maybe you take it to an "expert" and have them look at it. Upon closer inspection you come to find out that the thing that you purchased has far more value than you realized. It may in fact be worth far more than you invested in it.

Last week I introduced a series of sermon studies on the topic: **The Love Of God**. We like to remind ourselves that **God loves us**. Some people throw that little phrase around without even giving it a thought. It just becomes something to say to encourage someone else (Have a Good Day) or to encourage ourselves. I suggest to you however that that little phrase is more than just a thoughtless expression. Its like that treasure you find at a Flea Market or a Yard Sale. You realize how valuable it is upon closer reflection and prayer. When we realize the deep significance of knowing that God loves us, and understand what His love has accomplished for us, it can have a significant impact on the way we think, the way we live, the way we believe. I mentioned that it has been my observation that while many people love to say **God Loves Me** they don't live as if they truly believe that. Over the next few weeks, I want to take a look at what our lives will look like if we truly believe that God loves us.

In the Scripture passage that I read, John teaches us an important lesson – Because of God's love for us, He has made believers into His Children. He is our Father. We are His children. Theologian J. I Packer writes this: **"What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for his Father."** The idea of being adopted by God, becoming a child of God is an idea that runs all through the New Testament. Some people may suggest that All people are God's children. But the New Testament does not teach that. Instead we are told that becoming a child of God is a gift of God's grace. **1 John 1:12 says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God."** This new relationship with God, whereby He is our Father and we become His child only becomes a reality when we become a believer, a follower of Jesus. In Romans 8:15 Paul says of believers: **"you received the Spirit of Sonship. And by Him we cry Abba, Father."** (Romans 8:15). And in Galatians 4, Paul writes (again, referring to believers in Jesus): **Because you are children, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a child."** (Gal. 4:6-7) We have become God's children through our faith. And it is important to understand that we are not "2nd class children" just because we are adopted. The term Abba is a word that Jesus used in His prayer life to address God. It is an Aramaic word for Papa. We now have been raised to the same level as Jesus in terms of being a child of God. Not only is God our Father, but Jesus is our brother!

So God loves you – enough to make you His Child. You are someone who God cherishes. You now have value and worth beyond measure. **What is the significance of understanding that God is our Father and we are His children.** How will that impact your life. There are now several realities that are true of us that

were not true of us before we were adopted. (Packer). It is important to remember that this idea of God's Fatherhood is not just an illustration of God. Like David says of God in Psalm 23 – The Lord is my shepherd. God in fact IS our Father.

The Holy God is our Father. I have heard some preachers and teachers suggest that the concept of God as our Father may not be helpful to some people. If their relationship with the Father was deficient, they may not be able to relate to God as Father. Maybe their father was abusive, or absent, or unloving. Maybe that is all they know as a child. But God is not abusive or uncompassionate, or unmerciful, or absent. God is a perfect father. Maybe this person who had a failure as a father, has dreamed about the perfect Father. A good father, or a perfect father would treat me different. Well, that is what God is – the Perfect image of a Father. All that you can imagine a perfect Father to be, is what God is.

We belong to His Family. I have already noted that when we come to understand God as Father, and we understand that we are His child, we have a new relationship with Jesus. He is our brother. In the text that I read from 1 John, John says, ***“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 will see Him as He is!” (vs. 2).*** In the passage that I referred to from Galatians, Paul makes the point that we are not Slaves or servants in the household, but we are Children. **There is another point** that we need to make here. When we understand that we are a child of God and that God is our Father, this is an unending relationship. God does not consider us to be His child sometimes, and sometimes we are not. And, if we are made members of his family that is not a relationship that we can turn on and off. **Every moment of every day must be lived impacted by that reality – I am Loved By God, He is my Father and I am His child. Every thought is impacted by that. Every word we speak, every choice we make, every action we take.**

We can approach Him without fear or trepidation. The writer of Hebrews invites us to **“draw near to God, with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10:22).** When we come God in prayer, we come to Him as a child would come to a loving Father. Knowing we are loved. Knowing the one we are talking to has our best interest at heart. As Jesus teaches us to pray – through His teaching and His example – He shows us that when we pray we are talking to our Father. Our prayer life takes on a whole new meaning when we grasp this concept that we are Loved by God as a child is love by her or his Father.

We can be sure of His care and concern. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us not to be anxious or filled with worry. The Father cares for the birds of the air, and the flowers of the field. The heavenly Father knows what your needs are before you ask. Jesus doesn't just call Him God, but your heavenly Father. So take comfort that you are always in the care of the Father in heaven.

God Loves You!!! He loves you as a Perfect father loves His child – no matter what that child's story is. No matter what that child's past is like. No matter where that child has lived – in a gutter, or in a palace. As a believer you become God's beloved child.

Once again, a challenge from Dr. Packer: ***Know your real identity: I am a child of God. God is my Father. Heaven is my Home; every day is one day nearer. My Savior is my Brother. Every Christian is my Brother too. Say it over to yourself. First thing in the morning, last thing at night!***

Prayer.