

## **Children Of God** **1 John 3:1-3**

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

Who's child are you? Yes, you can name our parents. In fact, you might be able to recite back the line of your ancestors a few generations, maybe even back to those who came over to America from the "old country." Who was first to settle in Wisconsin? You may even have a connection to the humble beginning of this particular congregation, your great or great-great grandparents were founding members.

As today is All Saints Sunday, it is good to remember those who have gone before us in the faith, those who even now are gathered 'round the throne of God's grace, in His glory.

But let's not go back quite so far, not generations, but only back to remembering *our* youth. Do you recall how your parents disciplined you as children, when you were disobedient, when you stepped out of line, breaking the rules they had set down for you to follow?

This should bring to mind, especially here in church, the Fourth Commandment. Children are to honor their father and mother, and parents in turn, are instructed by God to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. My father had a brown and a black belt, I believe one was named nurture and the other admonition.

I personally know that parenting can sometimes be a challenge. Parents have been called by God to be stewards, raising their children in love and discipline, and there are times that is a hard road to walk. Parents cannot be too lenient, nor too severe. There are consequences in the future of our children if parents walk either extreme. Because children often make less than wise decisions, even the best parents have been known to bemoan the lives of their children, disappointed in some of the choices their offspring have made.

And to be honest, each of us has been that wayward child, making that decision which caused our parents the roll their eyes back in their head and say, "Why did you do that? What were you thinking?"

We are also all children of our heavenly Father. And if the truth be told, we have disappointed Him more often than we like. The rules He has laid out for us we have grievously violated on numerous occasions. And, there are times He has disciplined us.

Even when the discipline wasn't severe, His holy and righteous Law has stared us in the face. And as much as we'd like to claim otherwise, we have each transgressed His law. We do deserve His discipline, even more, we deserve His wrath and punishment.

But we don't want to hear that. Let's face it, which child ever desired to be called disobedient, especially if disobedient meant that one had to be disciplined? Children will make multiple excuses when caught in their disobedience. Sometimes they will accuse their own parents of being too harsh - only too happy to hold up the more lenient parents of their friends as examples

of how they *should* be parenting in that particular situation. Other times, outright lies are told by children to try and mollify the anger of a particular parent.

God is a righteous Father. His Laws are not overbearing. His discipline is never more severe than what He has already warned. And no matter how we may try to cover up our sinfulness, nothing is ever hidden from His sight.

While discipline is the bane of a parents existence, even greater still is a parent's love. While parents may be forced by their children to discipline them, parents still continue to love their children. Despite how they turn out, a parent's love still remains.

Listen again to our text. *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

If you could chose your children, what would they be like? Interesting question, isn't it.

I know there are days that parents might like to trade their children in for others - for a different model. In fact, I remember my mother and father stating exactly that, but they were stuck with me. I know there are some parents who have thought, "If I knew how they'd turn out, I never would have had them."

That is not so with God. God chose us to be His children. What is more, even knowing of our disobedience, He chose us to be His children. Did you catch that? Even knowing that we would not love Him as He loves us, even knowing that we would willfully be disobedient to Him, He chose us to be His children.

Let's face it, there are times that we'd rather walk as children of the world. In fact, just as our text tells us, and we know full well, the world rejects the children of God. We see that evident in the way the world rejects the Word of God and the will of our heavenly Father, choosing instead to walk as children of darkness. And all too often we also walk according to the will and ways of the world.

As only one example, continuing this parenting and children theme, many are the children of this world who believe it is acceptable to think that unborn children are nothing more than a choice, not a child – that it is all about the body of the mother and nothing about the body of the child in the womb. Yes, the children of this world find many things acceptable, which God's Word has strictly forbidden and calls sin.

God's love for His children though, was boldly proclaimed to them in the waters of baptism. In our sinfulness, He uses this miracle to adopt us into His own family.

Consider this fact. God has a Son, a perfectly obedient Son. This beloved Son submitted to the will of His Father, even when that will was for Him to sacrifice His own perfection and

innocence in excruciating pain, suffering, humiliation, and death for the willful disobedience of those the Father *desired* to make His own children.

Given this fact, was there really any reason that God should adopt us as His own dear children? Yes! For it is the very nature of God to love unconditionally. It is this love of God which moved Him to give unto death His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered the discipline of the Father, **for** the sins of the disobedient children of men. In their place, He endured what they – what you and I – deserved.

It is into this death that you are baptized. And, as Christ was raised on the third day, you were born again of God – raised to new life, cleansed of the stain and guilt of sin.

It is Christ's redeeming death which we celebrate in the Lord's Supper, receiving again the remission of sins and given strengthening of faith to live a new life in Him. But there is even more coming to us who are God's children.

*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we have been united to Christ, and we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

One day, we will cast off this mortal coil. We will be given our adoption inheritance as sons. We do not know when it will be, nor what that will be like, but it will be glorious. It is this heavenly inheritance which gives us the courage and strength to face the trials and tribulations of this existence in a world which assaults us each and every day.

On this All Saint's Sunday, this is the confidence we share with those who have already gone before us in the faith, those also called the children of God. By God's grace, they fought the good fight of faith and now stand before God's throne as part of the white robed throng who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are gathered around Christ in His eternal kingdom, even as we are gathered around Christ here today. We are all gathered together around Christ this day as God's children.

Today's text reminds us of the love of the Father, the love He lavishly gives to us, that we should be called children of God. That is what you are. Our confidence is in Christ, that He has done all for us, that in Him is the forgiveness of our sins. His perfect obedience is ours, given to us as a gracious gift of the Father.

That is why God's great love gathers you together in this place, drawn here by the Holy Spirit's prodding, to renew you in your faith, to cleanse you again in the blood of the Lamb, and to keep you as His beloved children – loved by Him as He loves Christ.

God's great love is showered upon you, for you are His children, and it is in His name – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – that He forgives you your sinfulness and the sins of your disobedience.

While you may not know what the future holds, you do know what you are and will be, for God's great love has been revealed to you and in you. As His own Son rose from the dead, so He

feeds you, He nourishes you with His own flesh that you might remain as His dearly beloved children. Christ is the hope in which you are made pure and holy – made to be children of God – for Christ gives to you His very own name.

It is God's great love, given to you in His name, in Christ Jesus, that gives you confident hope for this life and forevermore. Amen.