

Midweek Message

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” (1 John 3:1 ESV)

As we continue to journey through this pandemic, the chaos that’s occurring in some of our cities, and especially the uncertainty regarding this election, it can bring about various levels of discouragement. As human beings, even Christians aren’t immune to the troubles that come in our world, our nation, and even our personal lives. It’s bad enough when life is “normal” let alone when our lives are turned upside down by forces beyond our control. As we heard Sunday, from Jeremiah, God has a plan and purpose for His people to *“prosper (them) and not to harm (them), to give (them) hope and a future.”* One of the Scriptures from the sermon Sunday is what the Apostle John writes in his first letter to the Church. In chapter 3, verses 1-3, he gives us three very good reasons why there’s encouragement for the discouraged.

First, we can be encouraged because of our privileged position in Jesus. In verse 1 he tells us, *“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.”* I think our English Bibles lose something in the translation from the Greek language. You see, the Apostle John is in awe of God’s love for us, He’s overwhelmed as he contemplates the loving-kindness of the Lord. When he contemplates how God sent one and only His Son, the person we know as Jesus, into this world, to die a cruel death on the cross and give His life as an atonement for all our sins he’s quite overcome with wonder. I often feel much the same way when I read what the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans,

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 6:6-11 ESV).

After reading that I often ask myself how I might respond to an enemy which is why I’m in such a state of awe and wonder at God’s grace, mercy, and love expressed to me. You see, that’s how great is God’s love for us, a love so wondrous, so complete, that it would give itself away just to redeem us. It’s not a fickle love that’s here today and gone tomorrow, that loves only as it is loved. God’s love is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional and keeps loving, regardless of what we do. One commentator had this to say, “It is a love in which He takes all the initiative to make us his children; a love that gives lavishly and freely to those who are utterly undeserving. When we contemplate our sin and rebellion against the background of God’s unapproachable light, his total holiness, we begin to sense something of John’s wonder, that He should ever bother with people like us. Yet the love of God delights to change rebels into children who belong to the family.” Listen, God desires for us to be in a living relationship with Him, to be a part of His family. God knows everything about us, nothing is hidden from His sight. He knows every thought, word, desire, and action. And yet, God’s greatest passion is to bring us into His home, making us a part of His family with all the benefits of being children of our heavenly Father, securing us forever in His great love that He has lavished upon us.

Secondly, we can be encouraged because of our particular promise from Jesus. The Apostle John continues in verse 2, *“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.”* One of the great truths of Scripture, what I believe is the Christian’s greatest hope, is that this world will one day be completely transformed and we, who believe in Jesus, will also be raised to glorious life for all eternity. Aren’t you glad this world isn’t all there is and that there’s a better world coming? I know I am, and truthfully, I can hardly wait until Jesus comes back to claim me as His very own and restore the garden paradise that was lost when our first parents, Adam and Eve, rebelled against God. You see, all the misery, all the sorrow, all the anguish, all the hatred, all the sin came about because of their disobedience. However, the beauty of what God is going to do, what He is working toward, should give us great encouragement because one day we’re going to be like Jesus. John tells us we don’t know exactly what that means, but I can assure you this, it will mean a total transformation of our lives such that we’ll never sin against God again nor will there be any remnants of humanity’s fall into sin and we’ll be fully glorified in bodies that will never experience any disease or even death. You see, God is moving this world toward the day when He’s going to remove the very presence of sin in our lives and in this world, so that we’ll live in perfect harmony with Him and with each other for all eternity. As you’ve probably figured out by now, I greatly hold on to the truths expressed by the Apostle Paul when he writes,

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30 ESV).

Listen, everything God is doing now is to bring us, we who believe in Jesus, to that state of glorification in which we’ll live and reign with Him forever. I don’t know if you’ve ever noticed, but the tense being used in that passage, indicates that God considers this as having already occurred which gives us great assurance that the outcome of our salvation is secured for all eternity.

Finally, we can be encouraged because our powerful purity through Jesus. The Apostle John closes this section in verse 3 by saying, *“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”* John has told us about the past action of God to love us and adopt us into His family. He’s told us about the future and how we’ll be like Jesus, perfect in every way, in a world in which the curse has been fully removed. However, what about the struggles we face in this life and is there any hope for us today? Well, the Apostle John is pointing us to the reality of God’s all sufficient grace in our lives and that if we truly belong to the Lord we will have the power to overcome our sinful habits and endure the struggles that come from life in a fallen and cursed world. The Apostle John is telling us that if we have this hope in us, that is, if we’ve truly experienced new life in Jesus then we will work at purifying ourselves, at getting rid of the remaining habits of sinfulness and yielding our lives to obedience to God. You see, this is the evidence of true saving faith and what continues to reassure of the truths of Scripture. As the Apostle Peter tells us, *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3 ESV).*

Listen, God is continually at work in us and in this world, setting us on display so the world can see the difference His grace makes in a life surrendered to Him. And as we live our lives with hope, being encouraged by God’s love for us, the world can then see the difference, especially in times such as these, and through our testimony, some will come to faith in Jesus.

Pastor Mark