

September 2, 2018
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Communion
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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**THEY DON'T KNOW YOU
BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW GOD**

1 John 3:1-3

Some of us sang a chorus in the past that went like this:
This world is not my home I'm just a passing through.
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Some days we sense that sojourner's attitude quite intensely. Read the news, listen to the reports about life, and you should realize that children of God are not at home here. Feel the sting of rejection, learn about the outright persecution of your brothers and sisters, and you will be reminded as Isaac Watts wrote that "this vile world is no friend of grace."

How do you like being different? Do you enjoy it when your associates or family members hold you at arm's length? How do you respond when you learn that someone who knows you thinks you are an odd, religious nut? We should actually be encouraged by such rejection because it is a sign that people who are wholly submerged in Satan's influence do not comprehend us. They do not comprehend us because they cannot comprehend God. Passing through a place like that is a good condition in which to be.

What Amazing Love!

The Father's love evokes wonder. *See what kind of love the Father has given to us (v.1a)*. Okay, that is a good question. What kind of love does the Heavenly Father have for His children? The phrase "kind of love" indicates that there are various kinds, or levels,

or understandings of the concept love. Indeed the Bible and ancient Greek language identify at least four different kinds of love.

There is the Greek word *eros*, which speaks of the mere physical attraction or lust. This is Hollywood's, yea America's, understanding of love. There is the word *storge*, a less common word that speaks of a familial love, or maybe a deep friendship that grows into love. Then there is the word *phileo* that describes paternal, affectionate love for a family member. Finally, there is the great New Testament word for love, *agapao*. This is the distinctly Christian love. The love defined by God the Father and demonstrated by Christ.

Apart from God's self-revelation in the Bible and through the Son, we do not know *agapee* love, the kind of love God has for His children. This is self-sacrificing love. This kind of love consciously, intentionally sacrifices in order to give or achieve the very best for the object of love. Therefore, we know, *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1John 4:10)*.

We comprehend this kind of love because God the Father has expressed it. The Father did not simply explain love, define love, or tell us about love. The Father did not only talk about love. God the Father, our Creator, whom we all offend by our sins, demonstrated love for us through God the Son. *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers (1 John 3:16)*. We have come to know and experience the love the Father has for us through the sacrifice of Jesus. Our Heavenly Father expects us to learn this love, experience this love, so that we can also demonstrate this kind of love.

And yet we often hit a snag by thinking that such matchless, extreme love is pampering. Real love does not pamper and certainly does not coddle sin, weakness, and immaturity. Our Father loves us so much that He desires for us to take on His characteristics. But we by nature are devoid of God's character. Therefore, because He loves us, God teaches us through discipline.

The writer to the Hebrew Christians gave us the classic explanation of how and why the Heavenly Father disciplines His children.

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten

the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons (Hebrews 12:4-8).

No one enjoys imposing self-discipline on someone else. And we really do not enjoy discipline from our authorities. But the godly authority is willing to show love through rebuke, discipline, teaching, and encouraging progress. This is what loving parents do all day every day. We constantly correct, admonish, discipline our children through teaching, encouraging, and sometimes punishment for wrong doing. That’s what love looks like.

Because our Heavenly Father has this kind of amazing love for us, we should expect His discipline that leads us to righteousness. That is what happens to us who receive the Father’s amazing love so that we are called His children. What kind of love *that we should be called children of God; and so we are (v.1b)*.

This is such an astonishing truth because, by birth, we are children of wrath. *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:1-3).*

We are born into the family that is opposed to God. We begin in the family of the world that is under Satan’s influence. We are, therefore, children who deserve our Creator’s wrath. But because of the Heavenly Father’s kind of love, we are called children of God. Everyone is not a child of God. That is a lie from Satan. That God is willing to call us children is the astonishing result of His love. *And so we are!* — we have this confidence.

Even more amazing is that if we are God’s children, then we are also His heirs. *And if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow*

heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8:17). This wonderful assurance causes us to ask a question. Is the suffering the means for becoming heirs with Christ? No, the suffering is caused because we are heirs with Christ? The rest of our text explains this connection.

What Sad Rejection!

Standing in stark contrast to the wonderful love the Father shows to His children is the sad rejection by the world. The problem is that the world does not know us. *The reason why the world does not know us (v.1c).* . . . Before we can consider the reason why the world does not know God’s children, we must understand what John means by the term “world” here.

What is the world? The “world” in this case refers to the philosophy, system of thought and operation that is governed by fleshly instincts and desires. John defines this use of the term when he wrote, *For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions – is not from the Father but is from the world (1 John 2:16).* This is all the life that most people ever comprehend. It is the passing, temporal, transient world. In the next verse John wrote, *And the world is passing away along with its desires (1 John 2:17).*

It is the people, the organizations, the philosophies, the teachings that are owned by Satan, influenced by Satan, and manifest Satan’s rebellion against their Creator. *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).* That world does not know us who are the children of God because of His astonishing love toward us.

In what ways are we not known? The Greek word for know is *ginosko*, which means to comprehend, ascertain, understand often through experience or personal involvement. The people who belong to the world’s system of thought, activity and reactions cannot comprehend who we are. It is impossible for children of darkness to grasp the reality of the miracle of regeneration. How can a real person be changed from within? What causes a “normal” worldly person to suddenly become “otherworldly”?

Try to explain the new birth to the typical citizen of your world and they will reveal that they are less able to comprehend the idea than was Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel. They might describe us as religious, devout, sincere about our religion. Or worse, they will conclude that we are backwards, unintelligent, out of touch, irrelevant. Worst of all, they will consider us to be intolerable, a detriment to society, hate mongers who need to be put away or eliminated.

In China and many middle-eastern cultures, Christians are deemed anti-social or anti-government. They are persecuted, imprisoned, and killed because the “world” cannot know them. All the world knows is that the children of God do not fit in their system of thought. Maybe if they were out of sight and out of mind they could be tolerated. But the children of God are always shining like lights in a very dark world even if they never say anything. We cannot be ignored and yet we cannot be comprehended. What a dilemma we create for our world.

The world does not comprehend God’s children because the world does not know God. *The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him (v.1d)*. Evidence abounds to prove that the world rejected Christ. Some people in the world were impressed with Christ for awhile. They enjoyed the benefits of His miracles like free food and free medical care. For a season, they were impressed with His authoritative teaching.

But when Jesus’s teaching demanded that the people acknowledge who He was, they rejected Him. *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him (John 1:10)*. The world would not, could not comprehend that Jesus was God the Creator in the flesh. The world steadfastly refused to acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth was the Savior sent from Heaven to offer the payment for our sins. The real problem was, and still is, that the world refuses to know that they are sinners who offend their Creator and who, therefore, need the Savior’s atonement.

The world could not reject God the Son and yet know God the Father. To know the Son is to know the Father. People of the world think they know God. They talk freely about God. They know their man-made gods well. They are quite familiar with their imaginary

gods. They rather like their perverse interpretation of who the true God is.

But the world cannot know God because it refuses to know Jesus, God the Son. The world cannot have the knowledge Jesus promised His followers. *“If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:7)*.

What A Future!

But wait! The future is somewhat unknown. That is true. Nonetheless, we are confident about what we are. *Beloved, we are God’s children now (v.2a)*. This is a simple repetition and affirmation that we are God’s children. We are His children living in a world that rejects our Father. We are His children living in a flesh that wants to replace our Father as God and King. So sometimes we struggle to remember that we are children of the Heavenly Father.

And maybe a worse struggle is that we are not as confident about what we shall be. John said that though we are children of God, *What we will be has not yet appeared (v.2b)*. The Bible offers many promises about heaven, eternity, the future for God’s children. But even if God gave us multiplied specific details about our future, would we understand? When God graciously gave Paul a vision of heaven, Paul’s conclusion was, “I wish I could tell you, but I can’t.” We trust our loving Heavenly Father with our future condition.

This much we do know: we shall be like Him. *But we know that when he appears we shall be like him (v.2c)*. Of course that confident statement begs a question. How shall we be like Him? We know that our bodiless spirit will be clothed with a glorified body like Christ received when He rose from the dead. Paul assured us, *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)*.

Okay, that's good news. So what will our imperishable body look like? We're not sure. Will we be the same age for eternity and what will that age be? We don't know. Will we have the same personalities we have now? I hope not. Whatever we will be, we will be perfectly righteous and eternal like Jesus.

Why shall we be like Him? *Because we shall see him as he is (v.2d)*. We really do not fully comprehend Christ while we are in this flesh. But when this imperfect person is clothed with the perfect, we will get it. And "it" will no doubt be astonishing!

What We Do?

People who know they are God's children and who know that they will one day be perfect and eternal must live a different kind of life. Indeed we do. We have hope, unlike a lot of folks in life. We are among those John referred to when he wrote, *And everyone who thus hopes in him . . . (v.3a)*. Not everyone hopes in Christ. Most people hope in themselves. That is why it is so natural for people to be controlling. That is why really, truly trusting God is about the last thing people want to do.

But some people hope in Christ alone. That hope is secure. Our hope is not a "sure hope so" kind of hope. Our hope is settled confidence based on God's character not on our abilities. And if we have that kind of hope, we also have a unique lifestyle.

People who have eternal hope based in Christ purify themselves. That person *purifies himself as he is pure (v.3b)*. The statement affirms that Christ is perfectly pure. Though we do not fully comprehend Christ in this flesh, yet we know He is perfect. His perfect character is revealed over and over in Scripture. Therefore, the hoppers are becoming like Christ. We do not really need to tell anyone that we hope in Christ. If our faith is really placed in Jesus Christ, we will be becoming more like Him throughout life.

Children of God progressively take on His characteristics. People who think, talk, and act more and more like God are less and less welcome in the world that does not know God. The more we become like our Lord and live in a world that is becoming less like our Lord, the more our world will think we are some kind of Martians (other worldly).