

Sermon Draft

Text: 1 John 3:1–7

Sermon: “Child of God”

This Sunday continues the Eastertide, and it comes between the Sunday that delivers the commissioning of the apostolic office and Good Shepherd Sunday. The risen Christ sends the apostolic office into the world to apply the forgiveness of sins that was earned through his death and resurrection.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

John was there with the other disciples. They were listening to and questioning the two travelers who had just run to their meeting place. The two men speaking had set out for Emmaus but returned breathless with astonishing news. John’s mind was filled with wonder and hope as the men described how the risen Lord Jesus was made known to them ***“in the breaking of the bread”*** (Luke 24:35).

John had a growing hope that started with the women returning from the empty tomb in the early morning. Then he and Peter witnessed with their own eyes that the tomb was indeed empty. And now the men who had left for Emmaus returned with such fervor and excitement that John must have been getting excited himself.

Then it happened: ***“Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’”*** (24:36). And as Jesus showed them various signs and taught them, John and the others were filled with ***“joy and were marveling”*** (24:41).

Then Jesus let them know that all he went through had to happen. John would later remember, understand, and relay to us that everything Jesus suffered and endured sprang forth from the Father’s love. All that happened indeed had to happen. It happened because ***“God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son”*** (John 3:16).

Using the Scriptures, Jesus explained the Father's love and purpose to John and the others: ***“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations. . . . You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.”*** (Luke 24:44–49)

Jesus relayed to John and the others that the Father's love was made complete in the death and resurrection of Jesus. He let the eleven disciples know that this love is known to us through the forgiveness of sins that Jesus' work has earned. But a person may ask, “How do I get this forgiveness of sins, this love of the Father, that Jesus earned for me?”

John answered this question in his record of the Good News. In his Gospel account, John recorded Jesus' conversation with a man named Nicodemus, who secretly desired to know more about what Jesus was teaching.

In this conversation, Jesus repeatedly reminded Nicodemus of Baptism perhaps hinting that Nicodemus's Pharisee brethren had previously rejected John the Baptist's ***"baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins"*** (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).

Jesus told him, ***"Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"*** (John 3:3). Again, Jesus told him, ***"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"*** (3:5). And finally, Jesus said, ***"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'"*** (3:7).

Jesus continued to teach that the Baptism we receive has its source in the Father's love, which springs forth from the lifting up of the Son of Man on the cross (3:12–16).

Moreover, all who receive this love of the Father in Baptism are saved from condemnation and eternal death (3:16–17).

God loves you! This is completely undeserved; it cannot be earned. Out of love, the Father sent his beloved Son to die in our place. Love caused Jesus to suffer, bleed, and be buried for us! And everyone who receives this love of God in Baptism is made into a child of God (John 1:12–13).

If you have not yet received this love, Jesus calls you to the waters of Baptism just as he called Nicodemus. Even though we were born in sin, God wills to make us born again. On account of his great love, he wills to turn sinners like you and me into his children.

All of this leads John to write in 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”*** (1 John 3:1). Look what Jesus went through to make us his own. The season of Lent followed that love all the way to the cross and the sealed tomb.

Three days later, we found that God's love did not let us down, for God's love is alive! And when we received Baptism, that love was united to us. Again, this love makes you and me into God's children! What an amazing thing.

This love of the Father sets us apart from the world around us. ***"The world does not know us" because "it did not know him"*** (v 1). We no longer find our identity in the things of this perishing world. By virtue of our Baptism, we bear our heavenly Father's name, and our identity is found in his love. We no longer live our lives seeking to fulfill the desires of our hearts.

Like Jesus, the one who set us free, our desire is now to do the Father's will. And what is his will? His will is to continue to love the world through his Son. And this love is made known through the Word of God that we share with others as it is shared with us.

We live our lives abiding in Jesus' love. We do this by receiving his Word. We receive his love through the Word heard in preaching and the absolution.

We receive his love as we read his Word throughout the week. We receive his love as we eat and drink his Supper. Through all of these things, we live as God's baptized, born-again children. And this love in which we live is not for us alone. The Father's love sanctifies us and causes us to live our lives so that our neighbor would know God's love as well.

As God's children, we are quick to confess when we have sinned against God and other people. By God's grace, we agree with his Word and recognize that his Law is there because he lovingly desires to protect us and our neighbor.

So, we confess when we break God's Law. And as God's children, we are quick to forgive when others sin against us. We do this because we know and understand that God's great love caused Jesus to die for our sins. We know God's love transformed us from sinners, who were objects of God's wrath, into his beloved children. We love others because God in Christ first loved and continues to love us.

That is the miracle of Easter. God's love that gave Jesus to die and then raised him again takes hopeless sinners and gives them hope, living in his love. It is truly hard to believe, and that's why John calls us to reflect on this miraculous truth over and over again, as I'm sure he did. John's life was transformed by the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection. It enabled him to see what kind of love the Father has given to us.

God's love in Christ's death and resurrection was united to John in his Baptism, and his identity was wrapped up in God's love for him. In the writing of his Gospel account, John even refers to himself as ***"the disciple whom Jesus loved."*** As a witness of God's love for the world, John couldn't help but eagerly persuade you to believe that this love, which he witnessed, is also for you: ***"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we," even sinners like you and me, "should be called children of God; and so we are"*** (v 1)!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen