

How Great the Father's Love for Us

Our sermon text sets forth three marks of those who know and experience the Father's great love.

1 John 2:28-3:3

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

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.

2 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 shall see him as he is.

3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Sermon Outline:

- I. **If you know the Father loves you in Jesus, you will please Him lovingly.** This cures our issue with apathy.
- II. **If you know the Father loves you in Jesus, you will obey Him gratefully.** This cures our issue with irresponsibility.
- III. **If you know the Father loves you in Jesus, you will hope in Him securely.** This cures our issue with insecurity.

Discussion Questions

In Dorothy Sayers' essay "The Dogma is the Drama," she delineates the oft-embraced view that the church has of God the Father:

"He is omnipotent and holy. He created the world and imposed on man conditions impossible of fulfillment. He is very angry if these are not carried out. He sometimes interferes by means of arbitrary judgments and miracles, distributed with a good deal of favoritism. He likes to be truckled to (submitted to slavishly) and is always ready to pounce on anybody who trips up over a difficulty in the Law, or is having a bit of fun. He is rather like a dictator, only larger and more arbitrary" (*Creed or Chaos*, p.21).

1. Use the above quote to discuss common views of God. After discussing a few of them, talk through the following statement from the sermon: "Viewing God as a taskmaster cripples you and robs you of human flourishing."

2. What does our sermon text have to say about how we are to view God?

3. The Apostle John tells us we are the adopted children of God with a great sense of wonder and awe. What are your dominant emotions as you reflect on your adoption into God's family?

4. Use the following Scriptures to discuss how you came to be adopted into God's family: See John 1:12-13; Galatians 3:24-26; and Galatians 4:4-7.

5. What does it look like to live as a spiritual orphan as opposed to a son of God? According to our text, what positive results come into your life when you grasp God's fatherly love?

6. How would you live differently if you knew more of your heavenly Father's great love for you? Why not start by reflecting on these words from John Calvin? "Father is a delightful name that relieves us of all distrust, since nowhere can a stronger affection be found than in a father."

7. If you are fearful, exhausted, and/or apathetic in your spiritual journey, why not admit it and ask your friends in your group to pray for you and for spiritual renewal to take place in your life as you contemplate the great love of your heavenly Father?

8. As a child of God, what are some of the family traits that you want to see developed in your life? What attitudes and actions would cause you to reflect more of the character of our Lord today?

9. If the second coming of Jesus Christ is a motivation for a more hopeful, secure Christian life, what steps can you take to think on it more frequently and live in light of it more concertedly?

Going Deeper

1. What does 1 John 3:2-3 teach us about how the story ends for a child of God? How should this encourage us? How should this challenge us?

It describes the transforming nature of the beatific vision when we see the Lord of glory. The beatific vision will bring our loneliness to an end. "The most rapturous delights you have ever had... are like dewdrops compared to the bottomless ocean of joy that it will be to see God face-to-face" (Timothy Keller, *Walking with God in Pain and Suffering*, p. 117). According to Augustine, seeing God face to face when He renews all things is "the end and purpose of all our loving activity" (*Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, 11:214).

2. Assess yourself using this insightful quote from James I. Packer:

If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God (J.I. Packer, *Evangelical Magazine*, vol. 7, pp. 19 ff.).