

Children of God

(1 John 3:1-7)

Intro: "See what love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God."

-1 John 3:1.

Ideally, the conception of every child.

-Act of love.

That's certainly true where God is concerned.

-In God's love.

#We are not only called the children of God.

#That is, in fact, what we are.

I. God Has Made Us A Part Of The Family.

A. It Is An Act Of Pure Grace.

1. We don't choose to be born.

a. Into our human families.

b. Life is a gift.

2. Even in cases of adoption.

a. At least where an infant is involved.

-It is not the child that chooses.

-It is the parents.

b. It is an act of love.

c. It is an act of grace.

3. God chooses us.

a. "You did not choose me; I chose you."

b. John 15:16.

4. Baptismal liturgy.

a. "We are born children of a fallen humanity."

b. "In the waters of baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life."

-My dad is still living.

#Last September he turned 90.

#He told us not to make a fuss over his birthday.

*So we made a fuss.

+We had a big party for him.

+He loved it.

-My dad has a will.
 #Whatever assets he doesn't need.
 *To care for himself.
 +Through the rest of his days.
 #My brother and sister and I.
 *Stand to inherit.
 +Share and share alike.
 #What do I have to do in order to receive my inheritance?
 *Nothing, really.
 *But my dad has to die.
 -As children of God.
 #We stand to inherit, too.
 *Only our inheritance is the kingdom of heaven.
 #What do we have to do in order to inherit?
 *Nothing, really.
 *But Jesus had to die.
 -Through baptism.
 #We are joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 *Romans 6.
 #We are made part of the family of God.
 *It is an act of love.
 *It is an act of pure grace.

B. But We Are Not Always Recognized As Part Of God's Family.

1. Some people don't know God.
 - a. So they don't know God's children.
 - b. That's the first problem.
 2. A second is that we don't always act like we belong in the family.
 - a. I went for a bike ride.
 - One evening last week.
 - #Along Riverside Drive.
 - I rode north just past 31st Street.
 - #It's a beautiful spot.
 - *Old railroad bridge crosses the river.
 - *There is a fountain.
 - *Promenade overlooking the fountain.
- All along the promenade are signs.
 #No fishing.
 #No fishing.
 #No fishing.
 #No fishing.

- Evening that I was there.
 - #There were 2-3 people there.
 - *On the promenade.
 - #What were they doing?
 - *They were fishing.
- We like to do what we're not supposed to do.
 - #Maybe we think:
 - *That's a dumb rule.
 - *That rule is for other people.
 - *Nobody's going to say anything.
 - #When we do what we're not supposed to do.
 - *We're not acting.
 - +Like we belong in God's family.
 - *But it is more than breaking the rules.
 - +It is ultimately rebellion against God.
- b. Let me tell you about Maurice Byrd.
 - For those who may have wondered.
 - #When I would start telling jail stories.
 - *This is it.
 - Maurice Byrd.
 - #Accused of murdering four people.
 - *Employees of a cafeteria.
 - +Marched into the cooler.
 - +Gunned down in cold blood.
 - #Came to the St. Louis County Jail.
 - Maurice I met there as the jail chaplain.
 - #Different from the cold-blooded killer.
 - *Portrayed by:
 - +Newspapers.
 - +TV news.
 - #I saw a young man.
 - *Cared about his family.
 - *Concerned with what his front-page case.
 - +Was doing to his wife and son.
 - While Maurice was awaiting trial.
 - #I instructed him in the basics of the Christian faith.
 - #I baptized him in a service at the jail.
 - When Maurice went to trial.
 - #He was convicted.
 - #He was sentenced to death.
 - On the night of Maurice's execution.
 - #We had:
 - *Prayer service.
 - *Candlelight vigil.
 - +As we did on more than 60 other occasions.
 - =When an execution was scheduled.

#Because I knew Maurice.
 *I was elected to have the homily.
 +At the prayer service.
 #In my homily.
 *I described Maurice as being both:
 +Convicted killer.
 +Child of God.
 #Now to some people.
 *Those two labels may seem mutually
 exclusive.
 #But Maurice was both.
 *He was a convicted killer.
 +That's what the courts had declared.
 *He was also a child of God.
 +That's what God had declared.
 =At his baptism.
 -I traced a cross.
 #Upon Maurice's forehead.
 -With the words:
 # "Maurice Oscar, child of God."
 # "You have been sealed by the
 Holy Spirit."
 # "And marked with the cross of
 Christ forever."
 -That, too, is pure grace.
 #When my children were younger.
 *They didn't always behave themselves.
 *They didn't always do what they were told.
 *Sometimes they rebelled.
 +But they never stopped being my children.
 #So it is with God.
 *Even when we don't act like we belong in the
 family.
 *Even when we rebel against God.
 +God loves us still.
 +We are still God's children.
 =Marked with the cross of Christ forever.

II. But There's More.

A. We Shall Be Like Him.

1. Now we're part of the family.
 - a. 1 John 3:1.
 - b. Family of God.
 - c. Family of faith.
 - "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but of God."
 - John 1:12-13.
2. "When he is revealed, we will be like him."
 - a. 1 John 3:2.
3. When is he revealed to us?
 - a. Only at the end of time?
 - b. Or every time we experience?
 - Forgiveness and repentance.
 - Resurrection and rebirth.
 - c. This, too, is God's gift to us.
 - d. It is pure grace.

B. What Are We Like When We Are Like Him?

1. Loving (3:1).
 - a. Not only loving God.
 - b. But loving the rest of the family.
 - Our sisters and brothers in the faith.
 - That's not always so easy.
 - # Some like one style of worship.
 - * Others like another.
 - # Some like one style of music.
 - * Others like another.
 - # Some like one Bible translation.
 - * Others like another.
 - To be like God.
 - # Is to love as God loves.
 - * Even those who may be different from us.
2. Pure (3:3).
 - a. Seeing other people as God sees them.
 - b. Seeing God in other people.
 - c. One the Beatitudes.
 - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."
 - Matthew 5:8.
 - # One of the places we see God.
 - * When we are pure in heart.
 - * Is in other people.

- d. Remember the passage in Matthew 25:31-46.
 - Where Jesus divides the sheep from the goats.
 - Jesus says there about:
 - #Feeding the hungry.
 - #Welcoming the stranger.
 - #Visiting the sick or imprisoned.
 - “When you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”
 - #Matthew 25:40.
 - e. To be like God.
 - Is to carry ourselves in such a way.
 - #We can see the Christ in other people.
 - #They can see the Christ in us.
 - Is to be pure in heart so that we can:
 - #See other people as God sees them.
 - #Be seen as God is seen.
3. Sinless (3:5-6).
- a. What makes us saints:
 - Not that we are so perfect.
 - But that we are forgiven.
 - b. God’s forgiveness is free.
 - But we dare not make it cheap.
 - #We cheapen it if we take it for granted.
 - #“It doesn’t matter what I do, God will forgive me for it anyhow.”
 - +That’s like:
 - =Nailing Christ back on the cross.
 - =Crucifying Christ anew.
 - Hebrews 6:6.
 - c. To be like God.
 - So value the price of our salvation.
 - We do not keep crucifying Christ anew.
4. Righteous (3:7).
- a. Righteousness has more to do with relationships.
 - Than rules.
 - b. Doing right by those with whom we are in relationship.
 - To do right by the head of the household.
 - #God
 - To do right by the rest of the family as well.
 - #Our sisters and brothers.
 - c. To be like God is to be:
 - Loving and pure.
 - Holy and righteous.
 - #It is all a gift from God.
 - #It is all pure grace.

Concl: See what love God has lavished on us.

Children of God.

-That is what we are.

What we shall become.

-Nothing less than like God.