

Children of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 February 2024

Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Hi, everyone. This is James. If you're tuning in, wanting to hear last Sunday's sermon, that's the Sunday just gone, so the 18th of Feb. Unfortunately, we had a bit of a technological problem, so we weren't able to record the sermon.

But here I am giving you a condensed version of the sermon so that at least you can turn up to your midweek group and having heard something and knowing what you're going to be talking about.

The title of the sermon was The Children of God. We're going through 1 John chapter 3. And John's been saying a lot of stuff. His main point is that he really wants people to know God, right?

Know God, not just know about him, but actually know him. And when you know him, it affects the way you live. It can't not. It affects you on a moral level. It affects you on a social level. When you confess your sins, you have fellowship with one another and you love one another.

And why? Because you know the truth. You know the truth about who you are. Last week for Chinese New Year, we went through 1 John chapter 2, verses 18 onwards.

[1:05] And he's warning them about the Antichrist. And I talked about maybe some of the things that we've allowed culture to speak into the church. And maybe those are sort of the Antichrists that we have. And maybe faith is one of them for us, Chinese people.

Or maybe fortune is another one. And then whilst he's been warning us about the Antichrist, he then takes a bit of a stop. And then he kind of has this little bit of an emotional outburst. And that's where we're picking up here.

And we're going to focus on this really short few verses here and the theme of it, which is the children of God, that we are children of God. Recently, I was asked to share at a high school retreat on one of the hot topics of the day, which is sexuality.

And as I was really pondering over what I wanted to share with these high school kids, the thing that really came up for me was that anytime we're talking about this issue of sexuality, it seems to be so tied in to the topic of identity and what your sexuality is becomes your prime identity.

But my point is, but actually, no, your sexuality is something that's very important about you, but it's not the most important thing. It's not the first thing that you need to say after introducing your name.

[2:20] Your main identity, of course, is that you are a child of God. And how many of us let us really let those kind of things really seep into who we are, whether it's sexuality, whether it's social class, whether it's job, whether it's political affiliation.

These things end up being the things that we identify with as the most, when actually our main identity is that we are children of God. And as the elder John here is warning them about the Antichrist, he then takes a pause.

And in 1 John 3, verse 1, he goes, 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.

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.

So he suddenly takes this moment and stops and just goes, Man, I want you to pause, I want you to stop what you're doing, I want you to look at the kind of love that the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God.

[3:29] What do you feel, what do you think when I tell you that you're a child of God? You know, Romans 8 talks about all creation is eagerly longing for the revealing of the sons of God or the children of God, where all of us really step up and step into the identity that we truly have.

And I asked us a few things here. When we're thinking about what it means to be a child of God, do we first of all realize that actually, we did nothing to become children of God? Just like a baby does

nothing to enter into our family.

Many of you know that Christina is about to give birth in a few weeks, and when baby MJ arrives, he's a boy, and he's going to be called MJ, he will have done nothing to earn his right to become into this family. He will just be part of this family, mostly because of what his parents did.

Same. So as children of God, as we're born into this family, we really did nothing. God did everything. God was the one who took the initiative. God was the one who welcomed us into his family. God was the one that adopted us.

And second is, babies aren't supposed to stay babies. They're supposed to grow. The whole point is not just that you become a child of God so that you can get into heaven, but that you would grow into maturity, that you would become more and more like him.

[4:35] And I say really three quick points here when we're looking at this. And the first is this, see. See the type of love that God has. Second is be. So first is see.

The second is be. How does that impact the way you live? Who are you becoming? And third is free, that you've been freed from your sins. So first point, see. Second point, be.

And third point, free. I'm going to quickly, very quickly unpack it for you today. He says, see what kind of love the Father has given us. So he says, stop, look. The other versions would be behold. Behold or look. Have a think about what this type of love is. And what is that type of love? It's a type of love that is sacrificial. It's unconditional. His love protects, trusts, hopes.

While we were still sinners, it's not dependent on what you do. You get it anyway. It's unconditional. I think sometimes we forget that. Second, it's unfailing. 1 Peter 4, 8 says it causes a multitude of sins.

[5:34] There's nothing that you've done that this love cannot conquer. It's unending. It's relentless. It's persistent. His love endures forever.

It's unselfish. It's not self-seeking. John 15, right? Jesus says, the greatest kind of love is one where a friend lays down their lives. So that's the kind of love we're talking about.

The type of love we're talking about. The type of love we see in the world is one which is, I love something because it gives me joy. I love that because it gives me satisfaction. I love that person because they make me feel better.

But this kind of love, the type of love, see the kind of love the Father has given to us. It is one that is completely undeserved and it is not self-seeking.

And he says, love. Actually, another version is, see the kind of love that the Father gave. Another version would be the kind of love that a Father has lavished, bestowed.

[6:32] It's a much more significant form of just thinking about how you love someone. The other day, Florence and Julian got married to each other. And of course, they've been in love with each other for a while.

But on their wedding day, on the wedding day, the groom bestows his love onto his wife. He's already in love with her. But on that day, he bestows the love.

He gives her the love, lavishes that love. John 3.16 says, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son. This kind of love is received. It's not achieved.

There's no cost to it. Well, there is a cost. We just didn't have to pay it. And it's nothing that we can do. And it's shocking. Hank shared with us that actually that's kind of love.

This kind of love is outrageous. It's reckless. It's relentless. Why is it outrageous? Now, the kind of love that we're used to, even for parents. You know, I said that I would die for my kids.

[7:27] I'd be willing to die for my kids in a heartbeat. I wouldn't have to think about it at all. But this isn't that kind of love. What kind of love is it? This isn't me loving Reuben and Lysia so much that I'd be willing to die for them.

This is me loving you so much that I'm willing to sacrifice Reuben and Lysia's life for you. So you can be part of this family. Just even the thought of that is uncomfortable.

It's disorienting, right? That's the kind of love that Father has. It's outrageous. That's why John says, see, look, do you truly understand it? It's shocking. We were rebels that were made children of God. John 1 verse 2 says, But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

We have received the spirit of adoption, and now we are children of God. But here's where I stop and kind of go, well, actually, is there anything culturally here that we need to be aware of?

[8:30] Because when we think children of God, it's not even necessarily given that it's a happy, good thing, right? So many of us have our own experiences with our parents that are negative, traumatizing even.

So when you're told that you are a child of God, what does that even make you feel? How does that even make you feel, and what are you even thinking? So often our own experience with our own parents really affects our perspective and our approach to God.

For example, if you don't have a great relationship with your parents or your father, maybe your father is a stereotypical Chinese father who never really spoke to you. How does that impact the way you approach Father God?

So when you're told that you're a child of God, you don't really truly know what it means, because you don't really have those kind of experiences to be able to help support you, in terms of understanding what it means to be a child of God.

So my question really here is, has your own experience with your parents affected you and your relationship with your father in heaven? Because if there is, then we need to, one, be aware of it, to be able to articulate it and then be able to address it and go, actually, you know what?

[9:44] I didn't have a great relationship with my parents, and that's really affected the way I have intimacy with God. Or whether it's, no, I did have a great relationship, and actually that has enhanced. So it's just something that we need to think about.

The kind of love. See the kind of love the father has given us. Second point is B. When you see this kind of love, you can't help but be. And the rest of this passage in 1 John chapter 3 is actually him, again, talking about the fact that when you know you're a child of God, it affects the way you live. You can't keep on sinning. Now, yes, we are still sinners, and we still make mistakes. We still commit sins, maybe even on a daily basis. But there's a difference between committing sins and continually sinning.

What John's saying here is, hey, if you're a child of God, you can't continually sin without even being repentant, without feeling bad at all. You can't do that. If you are a child of God, you need to know that actually you are freed from sin.

You are freed from sinning and that you do not need to keep sinning. Basically, it's this point of we need to be who we are becoming.

[10:55] We need to be who we are becoming. I gave an example of when I was a child, Joe and I, our family, was from the New Territories, the Tang Clan, and we had a big, big celebration for our grandparents.

And, of course, I was the grandchild and a male, and, of course, Chinese families really value males. And I remember as a young boy, as a 10-year-old, having a sticker that indicated who I was, that I was the oldest male grandson of the family.

And I wore that sticker with pride because I knew who I was. And it affected the way I acted. Do you know that when you're a child of God, it should affect the way you act?

Not to say that you're perfect. We're all works in progress. But we should be heading towards looking more like Jesus. 1 John 3, verse 2 says this. Beloved, we are God's children now.

Now. And what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him because we'll see him as he is. Say, hey, you are a child of God right now. So let's start acting like him.

[11:58] Look, we're not going to be perfect yet until the day he comes back. But let's be who we are becoming. Let us be who we are becoming. If you work for a bank and you know that in a few months, you're going to be promoted to being the managing director, then you start acting as though you already are, right?

Because you wouldn't want to act in a way that is contrary to what your role is going to be. But you start acting in that way already. So first, we have to see the kind of love.

Second, we have to be. It impacts the way we live. And then we have to be different. We are justified immediately, but we must be sanctified gradually. Sanctification means just the process of becoming more and more like him.

The final point is free. We see. We then we be. Because we know that we are free. Chapter 3, verse 5 says this. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins. And in him there is no sin. He came to take away the sin of the world. Another John. John the Baptist. And John 1, verse 19 says, when he sees Jesus across the desert, he says, behold, the lamb that takes away the sin of

the world.

[13:04] See, next time you are tempted to sin, next time you are tempted to commit the sin, you can remind yourself, man, Jesus came to die for this. He came to earth to die for this, to take away the sin.

To swap my soiled garments so that I could walk with him in white, for I am worthy. Revelation 3.

That's what it means. Are we being who we are becoming?

Because we have been freed from these ways. We have been freed from fear. We have been freed from the need to sin. And this is not our own doing.

It's a gift of God. It's a gift. And it's that grace that he's given us that allows us to be molded to be more and more like him. So that's my conclusion.

Would we spend some time just to see the kind of love that the Father has loved us with, to the point where he gave his only son? And if he gave his son, will he not graciously give us all the things that we need?

[14:06] So we don't need to act as orphans. We don't need to act as children who have no one to look after us. See the kind of love that rebels were made children. And then be who you are becoming.

Start acting that way. Let it change the way you live. Because you have been freed. Because you have been freed. He came to take away your sins. He died for those sins that you're tempted to commit.

So you can be freed from it. But be prepared. Don't leave here now just warm and fuzzy thinking, well, I'm a child of God and everything is going to be okay with me. The next, in chapter 3, verse 1, he says this, The reason why the world does not know was that it did not know him.

The world is going to, as soon as you finish listening to this, the world is going to tell you, you need this, you need that. You're not a child of God. You need to fight for scraps. You need to do this. You are the only one who can look after yourself.

And they don't understand what it means to be a child of God. Just take comfort in the fact that the reason why they don't understand is because they didn't even understand him. So how are they going to understand you?

[15:09] John 3, verse 16 is, God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Verse 19 is, He came into the world as light, but the world chose darkness instead. So don't be surprised, brothers and sisters.

Be prepared. Don't be surprised when people don't understand the hope that you have. But be prepared to explain to them why you have that hope. That we are children of God without flesh in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Philippians 2, 15. Be the light that shines into the darkness. Walk in the light because that's who he is. And that's who you're becoming. Praying for you that we would all spend time to be able to see the kind of love live in the way that he wants us to as children of God.

Bless you. Thank you.