

I.N.I.

Christmas Day

Dec. 25, 2014

I John 3:1a

In Christ Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem who came to make us children of God, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In our Christmas Eve service last night our narrators said “Oh, to be young again! Wouldn’t it be great to have that youthful energy that just doesn’t quit? Wouldn’t it be nice to wake up in the morning without all the aches and pains that you’ve become so accustomed to? Wouldn’t it be nice to have the doctor say to you, “You know, you could really stand to add a few pounds”? Wouldn’t it be nice to live a carefree life rather than stress over deadline after deadline?

Well we can’t go back in time physically, but we can spiritually and emotionally. The problem is that as we have aged sometimes we have allowed our adulthood to tax our mind and spirit, to harden us over the years by living in the real world. Temptations and trials we never thought of as little children now plague us everyday---power, wealth, self-importance, sexual lusts, skepticism, cynicism, loss of simple trust, worry, fear, unresolved guilt, and you can no doubt add many more to your own list.

What has time done to us adults? Besides wearing down our bodies physically, it has often led us to lose simple trust and the simple joy of proclaiming Jesus’ birth. You in high school and college can probably better remember when you were Jonathan’s and Cayden’s age, or Jonah’s and Seth’s age. How excited you were to say your Christmas parts and sing your Christmas songs. You were told by your pastor that you, the little children of the congregation, were going to tell your parents and all of the adults the greatest message ever, the message of the greatest Gift ever given—the gift of the Son of God, born as a Baby in Bethlehem. How your heart soared and your voice sang!

Now as adults when we are encouraged to do the same thing by telling others about Jesus’ birth we often first think of the time involved, the embarrassment, the real necessity, the effectiveness of our words and the list of excuses can be as long as we are old. How easily we can turn religion, the Christmas message and even Christianity into something for the kids, but not for us adults.

Because we are sinful human beings, we are incapable of simple, childlike faith. Our old Adam has no time for, no reason to care about the gift of salvation and God’s love.

Is there any way we adults can go back to that simple childlike trust?

Our theme for this morning is:

He Became a Child to Make Us Children of God!

Last night we heard a truth that does not change with age. We heard the proclamation of the angels: **DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY WHICH WILL BE TO ALL PEOPLE. FOR THERE IS BORN TO YOU THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR, WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD.**

Listen again to what John says in his first letter, chapter 3, verse 1: **BEHOLD WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER HAS BESTOWED ON US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD!**

Do you want a simple child-like faith? Behold and look no further than the manger. For in that manger is a Child who came for the one purpose to make you and me and everyone children of God again.

Jesus came for you and for me. He came to make us children again. Without Christ, we cannot call ourselves children of God. We came into this world as sinful enemies of God. So Jesus Christ came into this world and became what He was not---a condemned sinner---so that we could be what we were not—children of God.

Jesus knew what He was doing. Nothing was hidden from Him. He knew exactly what He would be facing. He knew that He would be rejected by His own and all people, even by His Father. He knew He would be arrested, ridiculed, beaten, suffer and finally crucified. He knew He would die and be damned. That baby in the manger was not ignorant. He saw this world as it really was, He saw what He really had to do, and He still came.

BEHOLD WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER HAS BESTOWED ON US. There is that word again that we mentioned in our mid-week Advent service, “Behold.” It means “to pay attention to, to carefully examine, to contemplate.” Carefully examine and contemplate that love that we did nothing to earn or deserve. It is a love that God freely gave us. That’s what God’s *agape* love is. It is a love that is a gift; a love that He chose to give, not a love that we chose or merited.

This is a love that God freely gave us, John says **BESTOWED**, or literally **LAVISHED UPON US**, when He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be a child for us. And this is a love that He freely gave to us in Baptism, where, connected with simple water, He marked us as redeemed children of God. When God says that we are called children of God, that’s because He made us children of God. That word “lavished” or “bestowed” is in the perfect tense, which indicates an action that took place in the past but continues into the present and will continue on into the future. Let us glory in and rejoice in the love of our gracious Father who sent His Son as the Baby of Bethlehem, our Savior.

All of our sins, unresolved guilt, skepticism, cynicism, loss of simple trust, worry, and fear are gone. All that remains is a simple, childlike faith—a faith that does not get shaken by the doubting of the world but stands upon the truth of God’s unchanging Word; a faith that boldly and confidently proclaims, “My Savior has come in the person of the Child who made me a child of God.” A faith that trusts in Jesus’ perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection from the dead. And a faith that eagerly waits for the day our Savior will come again.

And so with childlike faith we too this morning sing with our voices and in our hearts praise our God for His amazing love to us—that we are children of God. **BEHOLD WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER HAS BESTOWED ON US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD!**

Praise God that is what we are!

Amen.