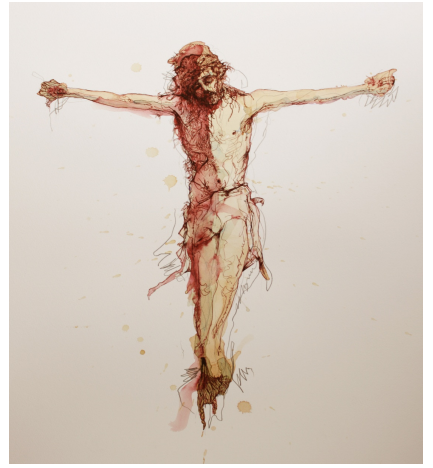


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Easter 4 April 29, 2012 1 John 3:1-2



¹ See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

It happened on St. Patrick's Day – a man – a tourist in Baltimore – drunk-- is standing in front of the court house – when he is attacked. Someone with a cell phone made a video of the whole attack – beginning with the punch in the face that sent the guy falling backward on the sidewalk. You can literally hear his head thud when it hits. Some people stood and laughed and pointed while other people stole his Mt. Dew t-shirt, his wallet, his watch, his I-phone and ultimately all his clothes. Nobody helped! What is wrong with this picture? What's wrong with waking up the next morning – not remembering the night before? This is one more symptom of a world where it seems almost everything is corrupted by sin and evil through and through! A person would be tempted to give up in utter and terrible despair were it not for the love of our Lord Jesus. This Sunday morning we have the ultimate essential comfort in the Easter Gospel. Today God's Word reminds us:

Your Heavenly Father Loves You!

1. He adopted you.
2. He made you His heir.

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today is part of the Apostle John's first letter – the first of three. These three letters – 7 chapters all together. 1st John 5 chapters; 2nd John and 3rd John just 1 chapter each. These letters were most likely written by John when he was a little grandpa. The words are simple – but the thoughts and principles they teach are profound. These three short letters have the authority of an eye witness to all Jesus began to do and to teach. John was eye witness to Jesus' most powerful miracles – when Jesus brought with him only Peter, James and John – to see Jairus' daughter raised from the dead at the gentle word of the Savior – who woke the dead with greater ease than we can wake a little child from a nap! John was there when Jesus was transfigured – shining with the bright and holy glory that belonged to him from eternity. John was an eye witness to Jesus' agony on the cross – when he suffered to redeem us. John saw the empty tomb – the linen here – the napkin folded over there. John saw Jesus risen from the dead – heard him say, **"Peace be with you."** John could reach out his hand – touch the nail marks – touch Jesus' feet – touch Jesus' side by the spear wound – give Jesus some broiled fish to eat. John saw Jesus lifted up – until a cloud hid him from their sight – heard angels say, "You guys from Galilee – why are you still looking up? Jesus has gone back to heaven. The day will come when you will see him come back – the same way you saw him leave!"

John wrote: ¹⁵ **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.** ¹⁶ **For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – (that is especially pride in your possessions – proud of all the earthly things you have accomplished in this life – instead of realizing – all you have and all you *are* are gifts from God!) – pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world.** ¹⁷ **The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.** 1 John 2:15-17 John talks about anti-Christ. John wrote, ¹⁸ **Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.** ¹⁹ **They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.** 1 John 2:18,19 Anti-Christ – danger from false prophets and false teachers – danger to our faith – wolves in sheep’s clothing – a sure and certain sign that we are in end times!

¹ **See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!** We are children of our Heavenly Father – not by birth but by adoption! My best friend in grade school and high school traced his family tree back to Finland. Finland was where they invented that thing where you ski – and then lay down in the snow and shoot this really high powered sniper rifle and then jump up and ski some more! The Fins did that during World War I and World War II – so that while the French were surrendering everywhere – the Fins were keeping their country safe and strong. Nobody was going to invade *them* and stay! My best friend wasn’t afraid to walk through the cemetery in the dark when the leaves would rustle and there were tall dark shadows everywhere. My best friend had a cat names Snuffles – and Snuffles was tough, too! My best friend knew how to go fur trapping in the dead of winter in the marsh – and knew how to skin animals and tan their hides. My best friend was from Finland – *well* – come to find out – my best friend was adopted! How great was that?! Adopted – his mom and dad picked him – chose him – gave him their last name – made him adopted from Finland! There is nothing as wonderful as being adopted! I wish I was adopted! I am – and so are you – by our Heavenly Father! **How great is the love the Father has lavished on us – that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**

The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. *To know...* The Greek language has different and very specific words for to know.

- There is knowledge from being near something – from practice – to understand – like the German word *verstehen* – Grandma wants to know if you get it! It’s like practice the piano – the more you practice the more you know about playing the piano.
- There is a word for knowing – the combination of all the senses – the way you are in the zone – the way Michael Jordan could jump – and then half way up – he would jump some more – the *air Jordan* thing. Or the way Aaron Rodgers can throw the football way down the field – and somehow – from between two or three defenders – Donald Driver – jumps up and catches it and without breaking stride – keeps running. It’s how Prince Fielder can hit a curve ball out of the park!
- There is a to know – that is purely mental – your mind’s eye – you wrap your brain around it! That’s a different word – to know!
- The word to know God – here – is none of those. It’s the Greek Word which means – to know from experience! This is the most personal *visceral* knowledge of all!

² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. Dear friends—is the Greek word **ἀγαπητοί**. This is quite the *friends!* It means someone you love with unconditional love. This is love that gives with no thought of getting anything in return! This is the love of God the Father that says I will sacrifice my one and only Son Jesus—to pay for the sins of the whole world! **ἀγάπη** love is a reasoned love—a choice and selection. **You have not chosen me**—Jesus said—**I have chosen you!** Not because we deserve to be picked or chosen—but because of God’s grace and mercy and undeserved love! We are children of God—because he adopted us! Because our Heavenly Father adopted us—we are heirs—heirs of eternal life for Jesus’ sake. Our inheritance is stored up in Heaven!

² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. Now—we are children of God. Right now! That changes everything! Being a child of God is our reason to get out of bed in the morning. Being a child of God will color how you treat the people in your family—with love and respect. Being a child of God colors the roles and responsibilities Jesus has given you! Husbands—love your wife like Christ loved the Church. This is again a love that gives and shares and sacrifices. A love that is exceedingly practical. When they ask you to do something—to repair or replace or rebuild something—that we do it. It means being thoughtful about what you say and how you say it. It means being a good listener. It means being an example to your sons of how to be a man. An example to your daughters of what a good man to marry is all about! Wives—respect and encourage your husband. Don’t tear him down—always correcting him—complaining about him in front of family or friends—and him. Children obey your parents and your teachers—showing them love and respect—especially these last weeks of school.

We are children of God—and what we will be has not yet been made known. What will we be like—when we are in Heaven? It will be so wonderful—it is just about impossible to imagine. I have a couple of scars on my body. I have a scar on my chin—from when I was sliding in my stocking feet on a very slippery floor—and my mom told me to stop—but I went once more—and slid and crashed into our wastebasket—metal—with a sharp edge. I have a scar on my knee—from when I crashed on my bicycle—on the big round farm driveway—and little pieces of stone stuck in my knee. And I have a scar on my left index finger—from trying to help Mr. Prell put paneling in the bathroom of the parsonage—and the razor blade knife slipped and I sliced my finger. When I get to Heaven—all those scars will be gone! You know the scars you have on the inside—from your sins and failures and painful mistakes? Those will be gone, too. The bad things that happened to you. The terrible things people did to you—will never come to mind again! I can only imagine how wonderful that will be!

But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Warner Elias Sallman was the oldest of three children born to a dad and mom from Finland and Sweden. Warner apprenticed himself to a bunch of different painters during the day and went to the Chicago Art Institute at night. Warner met his wife—at Church Choir practice. Warner painted a picture of Jesus’ face—with a white reflection on Jesus’ temple that is kind of the shape of a chalice—and there’s a white reflection on Jesus’ forehead—round—kind of like a communion wafer. There have been more than 500 million copies of that picture made. When I was little we had that picture of Jesus in our home—a really big picture. I was certain that’s what Jesus looks like—with big brown eyes—and long brown hair—and a very soft brown beard—kind of pointy at the bottom. Today I like to think Jesus looks kind of like Bruce Marciano—who plays Jesus in The Visual Gospel of Matthew. He has shorter black hair and a black beard. Mr. Marciano smiles—a *lot!* He smiles when Jesus gives sight to the blind—and the first thing they see is their Savior! Jesus smiles—when he picks up small children and hugs

them and holds them. Jesus smiles when he is risen from the dead – and he is by his disciples and he tells them – **“Don’t be scared!”**

I like that! I don’t know what Jesus looks like. Mary – his birth mom was Jewish – so I think it’s safe to say Jesus has skin that’s darker than mine. Isaiah wrote, **“¹ Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”** Isaiah 53 Jesus’ hair was not remarkable. His nose and his beard and his lips were not the type where people would look and say, “How charismatic! I want to follow Him!” I think there was probably something remarkable about Jesus’ eyes. His ability to look at you – and not just see the outside. Jesus could see into your heart. He could understand your worries and concerns. He could feel your pain. The part of Jesus that you will recognize in Heaven – the nail marks on his hands – the forever engraving of his forgiving love. Isaiah wrote about that, too! Isaiah chapter 49 ¹⁵ **“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! ¹⁶ See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...”** When Jesus opens his arms to welcome you into heaven – you will know his hands. You will see your Savior – face to face. How wonderful will that be? Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Pastor Anthony E. Schultz