

# Light & Love

## *Children of God*

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: 1 John 3:1-10

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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One of my dad's favorite phrases for me when I was growing up was, "Joel, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably why he had to use this on me a lot was because I was that kid that always felt like I was going to beat the system. I was going to strike it rich. I was going to win a contest. I was going to be the one that somehow gained huge amounts of wealth."

One of the things that I would do to try to beat the system, because I loved watching basketball and playing basketball, was buying basketball cards. You go buy a pack of cards and you open it up and you don't know what's going to be in there. It was kind of like a form of gambling for me, I guess, when I was a kid. I don't know if that's good. But one of the things that I would do every Friday night when my mom would take me to the Bay City Mall, the only thing I would look forward to was going to the store called the Stadium and buying a pack of basketball cards and opening it and seeing what I would find.

I always thought that I was going to pull out some card that was going to be worth millions of dollars and it was going to set me up for my future. You know So I would go and open the cards. And ironically, one of those Friday evenings, I opened up and I pulled out this card. It's a Michael Jordan card. It's kind of a neat one with lightning in the background that he was a scoring king. And I got this card, and you would buy these books called Beckett. Anybody ever bought a Beckett book? Okay, I'm not the only crazy one in here. All right? And so you'd look it up and you'd see how much it was worth.

And I remember seeing how much this card was worth, and it was worth \$75. And I thought to myself, "Hey, I paid \$3 for the pack of cards, \$75. That's a good return on my investment." But I had forgotten the hundred other packs that I had bought earlier you know that had nothing in them. I remember being excited about this card, and I wasn't as excited about collecting it as the money that it represented. So my mom took me to a card show at the Bay City Mall. And I remember selling this card just a couple of months after I got it for \$75.

And I thought, "This is awesome. I love this." And so I decided to look up how much this card was worth today on eBay. I sold it a touch early, just a little bit too early. \$3,000 that card is worth now. I always was looking for ways to somehow win. And so I always made my parents sign up for Publisher's Clearinghouse. You guys remember this, the sweepstakes?

So I would make them sign up, and I had these dreams that one day, these people are going to show up with cameras and a big check and balloons, and we're just going to be set for life. I would do that. I would enter any contest I could. How many of you remember this monopoly game at McDonald's that they did? I loved McDonald's anyway. This was just another way to get me there. You know I'd get my board, and we would peel off those things, and I just couldn't wait to do it. Some of you may remember the bottle caps that you would collect during March Madness, and they had the names of the teams underneath the bottle cap.

And if you had the cap of the team that won, you could win these prizes. And so I would collect these just to share with you how strange I was as a child. One birthday, I asked for a metal detector because I would watch these shows where these guys would go out on the beaches and they would find all this jewelry and coins and all of the stuff that was worth lots of money. And I remember thinking, "I'm going to do this." And so my

parents bought me a metal detector, and the only thing I ever found was the quarter they intentionally buried right in front of me you know before I got it.

I eventually ended up taking it back just because it didn't work. As I was growing up, we didn't have cable, and so we got all these weird stations on antenna. And one of the channels that I would watch, again, because I wanted to somehow make it rich was called Gold Fever. And so I would watch this show Gold Fever, and they would go out and they would pan for gold you know in the rivers out west. They would go and do that. And I thought to myself, "I am going to do that.

I'm going to go gold and pan for gold." Some of you may not appreciate this as children, but I would always, when I would go with my parents around, I would check in payphones. How many of you remember payphones? Yeah? They had the little slot there. I would put my finger in to see if anybody had left change in there or the vending machines or the pop machines. I was always looking for that way to somehow make it rich. Now, you would think that as I got older, I would have grown out of this.

But I went to college, and after I got married, there would be one more time that my dad would have to tell me, "Joel, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Just to let you know how deep this goes in my history, a quick side note, when I got married to my beautiful wife, I convinced her that for our honeymoon, that we should go out to Rancho Mirage, California, so that we could drive to Los Angeles so we could try to get on the prices right during our honeymoon.

So we had shirts made and everything, and she went along with this. This is how amazing she is. So we went out there, and as you probably know, we didn't make it on the show, and we didn't win anything. But I dragged her out there. Now, a little bit after that, it was about a year later. I came home from work, and my wife said that she was excited. She had received a phone call. She's nervous now because she doesn't know what I'm going to talk about. She said, "Joel, I got a phone call.

We won a trip to Florida for four days and three nights." And I thought, "This is awesome. I didn't even know we signed up. When do we go?" She said, "Yeah, I signed us up for this. You know She had received this phone call. The only catch was that we had to listen to a timeshare sales pitch one morning while we were there. You remember this now, right? Yes. Okay. Now, I had heard of these before, and I knew that it maybe wasn't a good idea, but it was too late. We were signed up, and you know what? We won something, so I'm going to take advantage of this.

So we go down to Florida. I think it was around the Orlando area, right? It was around Orlando, Florida, and we go down there and we signed up for that very first morning. We thought, "Let's just get it out of the way," and we didn't really know what we were in for. We go and they take you out to breakfast, and they're all super nice, and they take you around and show you the resort, and of course, it's amazing. And then they take you in a small room and they lock the doors, okay? And I am telling you, they could smell blood in the water. We were naive. We didn't know.

And so we're going back and forth. You know The first number they give us, they're like, "Man, this is what it costs, but it's a great investment and everything else." And I'm like, "Yeah, well, we can't afford that." And so we go back and forth and they finally get to a number that I'm like, "Oh, that's kind of realistic." And they can sense that I'm starting to get into it a little bit. You know They know all of the tricks. And I am just about ready to sign the documents. And I said, "Hold on. Time out. One second.

Let me call my dad." Which they probably thought, "Who's this guy call his dad?" So I called my dad, and I share with them everything that's going on, and he looks at me, or he says to me over the phone, "Joel, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is." And that's all I needed to hear. We walked out of that timeshare presentation. Now, don't get me wrong, okay? I know that there are some of you that have timeshares and you love it. And for you, it's great, and that's awesome.

I'm happy for you, but we were definitely not in a place financially to be signing up for a timeshare when we had student loan debt, and we had just bought a house, and we had new jobs. But my dad's words were right. Joel, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. But today, as we continue in our series of 1 John, I am proud to say that there is one time that my dad's phrase is not true. We are going to hear something in 1 John that really does sound too good to be true.

It's like the most amazing news you could ever hear, and yet it is actually true. It is actually good news for us. After this point that John's going to make, John's going to come back around and share with us something that he's mentioned early, but remember that he kind of swirls around in his thoughts, and he shares it again because it's crucially important for us. It's extremely important. John is going to share with us a foolproof way to know your eternal destiny.

Seems kind of important, doesn't it? He wants us to know, where are you going to spend eternity? I can give you a foolproof way. Answer to that question. It's going to help you answer the question, "How do I know if I am saved? What about my family members? What about my friends? What about people that I care about? How do I know what decision they have made?" And so these are very important questions that John is going to address, which is why he keeps circling back to the same point.

So if you haven't already, you can open your Bibles with me to 1 John chapter 3, 1 John chapter 3, and we're going to begin in verse 1. We're only going to make it to verse 10. Again, 1 John's near the end of the New Testament. So near the end of your Bible, 1 John chapter 3, verse 1. Let me pray, and then we will get started. Heavenly Father, we come before You as we continue in our act of worship. As we open Your Word, I pray that You would speak to us.

And Father, this news that John is sharing with the early church, but also sharing with us sounds too good to be true, but it is. And so may we celebrate in that, may we find excitement and joy in that, and may we shout it from the rooftops. So please speak to us this morning. We ask in Jesus' name, amen. 1 John chapter 3, starting in verse 1.

John says, "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. John starts out this chapter by reminding you and I, by reminding the early church that we are known as children of God, that we can be a child of God. And he shares that with us.

And we all know instinctively that we don't deserve it. We can't earn it. It definitely sounds too good to be true. But this truth is based on God's great love, on His mercy, on His grace, not on anything that we have done. He adopts us into His family. We can be called a son or a daughter of the king. Now, though we may recognize that, John says, "The world may never recognize that.

They may never see you as his children because they never knew him." But that doesn't make it any less true. And so we ask the question if you're here today and you say, "Yes, I am a child of the king," the question is, "Do you live like that? Do you live like you're a child of the king because there are certain benefits, gifts that are offered to us if we are the child of a king?" And we understand that even in our world. Let's look at some of these benefits of being the child of a king.

The first benefit is security. When your parents are royalty, there are some privileges that come along with that. And one of those is security. You don't need to fear because often there will be people that are protecting you, that your parents will send individuals that are going to watch over you. You'll have your own secret detail, right? When we are a child of the king, God protects us. We don't need to have fear. The second benefit of being a child of a king is authority.

When you're a child of royalty, when you're the child of a king, you have a certain authority more so than the average person, somebody that's not a child of the king. And so thinking about this in terms of God being our

heavenly Father, you and I are given authority over sin and the devil. We are given authority over sin and the devil, not because we are stronger than the devil, but because he is stronger than Satan.

And so we can have confidence that we can win the battle because stronger is he who is in us than he who is in the world. The third benefit of being a child of the king is intimacy. Intimacy. We can have a relationship with the king that those that are not a child cannot have. We can call the Creator of the universe daddy, Abba, Father. He wants to have that relationship with us.

Think about you as parents, if you have young children, how much you love and want to have a connection with your kids, how much you love just to hug them and protect them and be with them and experience life with them. Our Heavenly Father desires that with us. We can have intimacy with the Creator of the universe. The fourth benefit of being a child of the king is assurance. Assurance. Our Spirit affirms with the Holy Spirit that we are His.

We can be assured of our standing with our heavenly Father. Again, we don't need to fear. The next blessing of being a child of the king is an inheritance. Those that are born into a family of royalty know that they will inherit the blessings, the gifts that come along with that. And so they look forward to their future inheritance.

And so as children of the king of the universe, you and I are heirs with Christ, and we will inherit the blessings that come along with being a part of the family of Christ. And Scripture talks about those things that we will inherit simply because of our standing within the family, not because we've earned them. They are gifts given to us. The next benefit of being the child of a king may not seem like a benefit or a blessing, but it's the idea of discipline.

It's the idea of discipline. Scripture says that a loving father disciplines their children for their benefit. And being a child of our Heavenly Father, we recognize that we have the privilege of being disciplined by the most loving Father in the universe, that He will never intentionally put us through any discipline or pain that is not for our good.

Romans 8:28 says, "Everything works out for good." Sometimes we haven't gotten to that good part yet, but we know that we have a loving Heavenly Father who only will discipline us when it's necessary. The last benefit that we're going to talk about today about being the child of the king is family likeness.

That even though we are adopted into this family, that God actually implants Christ's nature into us, as sons and daughters of God, we actually begin to resemble the Son of God. We begin to live and to look like he did. And so we have this family likeness. And this is what John wants to talk about for a little bit. He wants to address this benefit that comes with being a child of the king in that we will begin to look like the king.

Even though we're adopted in, we will begin to have the family likeness. And this is what will help us answer the question, how do I know who my dad really is? Let's go on verses two and three. "Dear friends," John says, "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.

All who have this hope in being transformed in Him purify themselves just as He is pure." John shares with us this transformation process that almost seems like, as John is sharing, it happens in two phases or two stages. First, as we confess our sins, as we ask Christ to become part of us, we are conformed to look like Him as we walk on this planet as Jesus did.

We begin to try to emulate how He lived. But when Jesus returns, John says, "We will see Jesus in His true and fullest form. And only in that moment will you and I reach our final transformation." That might be new for some of you. This is what John is saying. We are transformed. We do become a new creation when we receive Christ, but that new creation doesn't see its fullest potential until Christ returns.

And so we look forward to that, John says. And in order to prepare for this final transformation that's going to take place when we are going to shed these bodies of flesh and be given new bodies, that we do our best now

to prepare for that in purity. We try to purify ourselves. So how do we know if we are his child or not? John is going to help us answer that question.

Who is your dad? Look at this, verse four. "Everyone who sins breaks the law for in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that Jesus appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in Him, in Jesus is no sin. No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him.

Jesus came into this world to take away the sins of the world. John tells us that in Him there was no sin. He was perfect without fault, without blame. Therefore, John's conclusion is if you are being adopted into the family of Christ, if you continue to sin while you are here, then you are not truly the child. You are not purifying yourselves for the day of his return.

He's actually saying, "If you are continuing to live in sin, then your family likeness will look more like the devil than the deliverer." So how do we know who our dad is? John says, "Look in the mirror. Look at your life. Look at your heart." He's going to go on. Don't get scared yet because I know all of you are thinking, "Oh, great. I'm a sinner. I'm toast." Right? Don't worry. Okay, John's going to share a little more with us.

"Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous." But the one who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. That's why he came. He came to destroy the devil's work.

John wants to share this as loudly and as clearly as he can. We have already seen this, but he is circling back to it. Don't believe the lie that you can be a child of God and intentionally live in sin at the same time. There's a very important word in that sentence, intentionally. Intentionally live in sin. You see, there were some people in the early church that were trying to do that. They were trying to be a part of the fellowship of the believers.

They were saying that they were a part of the family of God. But yet, when John looked at their lives, they looked more like a child of the devil than a child of God. There certainly are people today who do the same thing. They claim to be in the family. They claim that they have received the forgiveness of Jesus, but their life screams that they still belong to somebody else. So who do you belong to?

Only you can look in the mirror and see your heart. We go on, verse nine, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin." Sometimes I feel like he just beats this to death, right? How many different ways can you say this? Because God's seed, you're not going to continue to sin because God's seed is going to remain in you. Therefore, you cannot go on sinning because you have been born of God.

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Here is the answer to our question. How do you know? Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. John says, "How do you know whether you're a child of God or a child of the devil, look at your life." Do you follow the advice and the commands of God, or do you follow in the footsteps and the advice of the example that the devil has left?

It should be really clear. Now, I want to describe this a little more. John wants us to know it's not too good to be true. You and I can be called children of God, and we will receive all of these benefits that come along with that. That this is truly the biggest blessing that you and I could ever receive. John also wants us to know that if we are adopted into the family, Christ's nature will naturally shine through us.

Again, he's already mentioned this twice, and he's going to come back to it. So don't be surprised when we continue in this series. We're going to come back to this point again. That anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God. Now here is the clarifier. This is what should give us some peace. We need to remember that John isn't claiming perfection but intention. He's not claiming perfection. He's not saying those that are in Christ, those that have been adopted into His family are going to be perfect.

They're never going to make a mistake again. They're never going to sin again. No, John is saying those that have been adopted into the family of Christ will have the intention to never sin again. Why? Because we have repented of our sins. Those that are adopted into the family recognize that when I sin, even though it has hurt other people, I am sinning against a holy God. And I don't want to do that. And so this repentance turns into a godly sorrow.

So think about your life. When you do something that you know is wrong, is that godly sorrow there, not just a worldly guilt, a sadness that you got caught, but truly that godly sorrow that says, "I'm so sorry. I did not mean to hurt you. I do not want to hurt you." This is the difference. And so it leaves us with two questions.

The first question would be for all of those that are here today or watching online or listening on the radio that would say, "You know what, Pastor? As I look in the mirror of my life and I look at my heart, I truly believe I am a child of the king. To that, I say, "Amen, praise God. I am a part of the family as well. Here is your question. Are you living like it? Are you living like you are a child of the king? Do you go around in confidence and with authority over the enemy? And if you're not, start today.

If you are a child of the king, do you go around knowing that you have the security and the authority that comes in Christ? Do you recognize that your Father wants to have an intimate relationship with you and you can cry out to Him, "Abba Father anytime," and he wants to be there. Do you live your life in eager expectation for the inheritance that is reserved for his children?

If you are a child of the king, walk out today with your head held high and remember who you represent and praise Him for that. The second question is for anybody that is listening that would say, "I'm not really sure if I'm a part of the family." And to that, I ask you the question, "What are you waiting for?" If your life, your heart doesn't represent the family likeness of Christ, what are you waiting for?

I want you to hear, and I want you to know that the Heavenly Father wants to adopt you into His family. He's filled out all of the paperwork. He has paid the price. He's just waiting for you to say yes, and He will adopt you into His family. To those that are unsure, I say to you, "Come on in. The water is nice. It is filled with blessings and with gifts and with love." I know this may seem too good to be true, but it is.

Jesus came to destroy the devil's work. You and I don't need to walk in it anymore. We can be free. As always, there's going to be prayer available. If you come up and you just have questions, you just want to receive prayer for whatever reason. The people that are up here would love to pray with you. If you just want to do your business with God, of course, you can stay where you're at. The altars are open and nobody will bother you. If you just want to come to the altar, do your business with God and go back to your seat. That's great.

If you are a child of the king, live in that freedom. And if you're not, I simply ask, "What are you waiting for?" Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, thank you that we can be called sons and daughters adopted into your family, not because we've deserved it or we've earned it, but because of your gift.

Lord, continue to speak to our hearts, draw us closer to You. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.