THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

2:28-3:10

The Children of God and the Children of the Devil

- **NEW MEMBERS: Canon and Irisa…and new baby Fawn!**
- CURRENT STUDY: 1ST John
- **THEME**: God IS Light…so what is our relationship to the Light
- LAST WEEK: John talked about…
    - Those who have walked away from Christ
    - His explanation: "They went out from us, but they were not really of us."
        - I have found that most who believe that you can lose your salvation…
            - …believe it because they think they've seen it.
    - John suggests something else is going on…
        - They never were of us to begin with.
    - AND…while we continue to love and serve them…
        - …we need to recognize that they are standing opposed to Christ.
        - Listening to their ideas…adopting their perspectives…is just not an option…
            - …no matter how good they might sound.
- TODAY: John's going to talk about…
    - What God's children have to look forward to…
    - …and once again…he'll draw a clear line between those who are Christ's…
        - …and those who are not.

PRAY

We have been **reborn** as sons and daughters of God, with the **expectation** of becoming even more like Him when He **appears**.

1 John 2:28-3:3

- I'm going to start with the last two verses from last week.
    - hinge between sections

28 Now, little children, remain in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not draw back from Him in shame at His coming. 29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness also has been born of Him.

- We will see Him.

    - Either He will come back to the earth for us…
    - …or we will depart to see Him.
- He encourages us to take the path that will lead us to CONFIDENCE on that day…
    - The confidence path…looks like practical righteousness.
        - doing the right…as He defines right
- If you lack practical righteousness in your life…
    - the answer ≠ be better, do better
    - the answer = abide better
        - cling to Him
        - cling to His truth
        - cling to His Spirit
    - That is where life is!
- "Born of Him" = placing your trust in Christ is not a small thing…
    - It is so transformational that it is called a REBIRTH
    - This the discussion Jesus was having with Nicodemus…

John 3:3-7

3 Jesus responded and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a person be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother's womb a second time and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and *the* Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

    - We were physically born because of the physical union of our parents.
        - We became their kids…I am a child of Gary and Louise.
    - That's about as radical a physical change as one could imagine…
        - not physically existing
        - to then coming into existence
    - Then we became born a 2nd time…this time spiritually…because of the Holy Spirit.
        - spiritually dead before…spiritual alive now
    - EVERYONE who is in the Kingdom of God…has been spiritually reborn.
        - At that point…we became kids of the God of the Universe!

1 See how great a love the Father has given us, that we would be called children of God; and *in fact* we are.

- See! …check this out…
- We didn't HAVE to be reborn.
    - We didn't HAVE to become sons and daughters of God.
    - BUT because His love is SO great…
        - because He decided to pour out His love on us in this way…
        - …we are called that!
- AND we are called that…

- NOT as a nice idea
- NOT like the mug that says **"World's Best Dad"**
- OR the sign in the coffee shop that says **"World's Best Cup of Coffee"**

– It's not like that…
- We are CALLED sons and daughters of God
- Because we ARE sons and daughters of God

For this reason the world does not know us: because it did not know Him.

– The world doesn't get the Father…
- …they never got the real Jesus…
- …so why would they get us?

– We should expect to be misunderstood…
- …and sometimes maligned…
- …and sometimes spoken down to…
  - …because they just don't get us…and won't!
  - They don't understand what drives us.
    - …what our priorities are…
    - …what makes us tick.
      - …and they really can't fully.

– BUT this is not the last transformation that we're going to experience…

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

– No one has ever seen God…
- John will make this point later…

1 John 4:12

12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us.

- No one has ever seen God…
  - …but they can experience His love through us.
- He made the same kind of statement at the beginning of his gospel

John 1:18

18 No one has seen God at any time; God the only *Son,* who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained *Him.*

- No one has ever seen God…
  - …but the life of Jesus explained to us a lot about who God is.

– BUT because no one has ever seen God…we can't really understand what we will be after He reveals Himself.

    - As His sons and daughter…we resemble His character and love now…
    - …but we will be even more like Him after our 2nd transformation.
- What is that like?
    - We don't know!
    - Nor do we need to know right now.
- BUT…we can and should absolutely set our expectations on that transformation…
    - …because He who as promised is faithful.

3 And everyone who has this hope *set* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

- To set our primary hope there…
    - AND not on…
        - our next promotion
        - our grandchild coming to faith
        - find the person I'm going to spend the rest of my life with
    - It changes us…for the better.
- purify (ἁγνίζω) = to make ritually pure, to prepare for God's use
    - dedicates you for His plans and purposes
- as opposed…to your plans and purposes
    - the worlds plans and purposes
    - submitting to the lusts and desires that you and I did…
        - …before our rebirth.
- When our focus is on being His sons and daughters…
    - …allowing Him to make us more and more like Him…
    - …desiring to imitate our dad more and more…
- …It helps put our lives to their intended use…
    - …which is eternal…not temporary.

We have been **reborn** as sons and daughters of God, with the **expectation** of becoming even more like Him when He **appears**.

What does it mean to you that God has made you His son or daughter?

Persistent rejection of God's ways is a clear indicator of a heart in **rebellion** against God, even when there's a **mouth** saying otherwise.

1 John 3:4–10

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

- This might seem like an embarrassingly obvious statement…but it was/is not.
- If you choose to sin…you are rebelling against the God of the Universe.
    - Gnosticism = what I do with my body ≠ matter to God
    - Irenaeus (church father, 180 A.D.) in *Against Heresies*…
        - speaking about a gnostic group called the Valentinians
        - They absolutely…

- considered themselves Christians
- regularly had church together
- regularly participated in communion
- regularly read the old and new testament scriptures

▪ They claimed to be the most "advanced" Christians (progressive?)

"Wherefore also they maintain that good works are necessary to us, for that otherwise it is impossible we should be saved. But as to themselves, they hold that they shall be entirely and undoubtedly saved, not by means of conduct, but because they are spiritual by nature. For, just as it is impossible that material substance should partake of salvation (since, indeed, they maintain that it is incapable of receiving it), so again it is impossible that spiritual substance (by which they mean themselves) should ever come under the power of corruption, whatever the sort of actions in which they indulged. For even as gold, when submersed in filth, loses not on that account its beauty, but retains its own native qualities, the filth having no power to injure the gold, so they affirm that they cannot in any measure suffer hurt, or lose their spiritual substance, whatever the material actions in which they may be involved." (Irenaeus, Against Heresies I.6.2)

- Convincing lie isn't it?
  - nothing I do with my body
  - can ever change my redeemed spirit
  - …so let's go crazy with our bodies!
- So they held that…
  - their wives were common property
    - on the plus side…they required consent
  - they would have an Agape Feast (dinner that included communion)
    - then snuff out all of the lamps
    - and whoever they grabbed they would sleep with
  - incest no problem!
- We love Jesus!
  - AND have freedom to do whatever we want with our bodies!
- John is saying…NO…when you act that way, you are acting in rebellion against God…period.

– We have similar voices today in the Progressive Christian movement & mainline Protestantism.

"There are those who will say that it is 'dangerous' to think we can decide for ourselves what is sacred in the Bible and what is not. I reject this idea...So my argument in this book is this: we should not be more loyal to an idea, a doctrine, or an interpretation of a Bible verse than we are to people. If the teachings of the church are harming the bodies and spirits of people, we should rethink those teachings." — Nadia Bolz-Weber, Shameless: A Sexual Reformation (2019), pp. 72, 108

- Notice it is always with these people "an interpretation of a Bible verse"
  - then they can reject the plain meaning of the text = just an interpretation…

- …and then make any text mean whatever they want…and call it "their interpretation"

2 Timothy 3:16-17
16 All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man *or woman* of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.

- She is also trying to pit following the Word of God against doing good in the lives of people

Psalm 19:7-11
7 The Law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much pure gold; Sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, Your servant is warned by them; In keeping them there is great reward.

- God's Word IS what is good for people…
  - …the doing of His Word is what is good for people…
  - …teaching His people is Word is a good, not a harm.
- Nadia Bolz-Weber is not an honest believer…with a good faith belief…
- This is lawlessness…rebellion against God.

"From a biblical perspective, there is no reason to believe that LGBTQ relationships or identities should be condemned by the church. In fact, I believe LGBTQ people and relationships should be celebrated as a unique expression and reflection of God's creativity and ever-expansive love." — Brandan Robertson, Outreach (October 9, 2022)

Matthew 19:4-5
4b "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

Romans 1:18, 24-27
18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness…24 Therefore God gave them up to vile impurity in the lusts of their hearts, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for falsehood, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 **For this reason** God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged natural relations for that which is contrary to nature, 27 and likewise the men, too, abandoned natural relations with women and burned in their desire toward one another, males with

males committing shameful acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

- God has clearly defined righteous, life-giving romantic relationships as one man and one woman for life
- LGBTQ relationships are damaging and destructive and a sign of rebellion against God.
- This is not an honest believer…with a good faith belief…
- This is lawlessness…rebellion against God.

"Each of us should be free to explore and discover how God has wired us sexually and seek to live according to the values of Jesus and inner-authenticity. For some, that may mean reserving sex for a marriage relationship. For others, that may mean expressing your sexuality more freely. Both have a place in God's design for sex, and therefore both should be celebrated by the Church." — Brandan Robertson, "Rethink Sex" / Nomad Podcast Essay (2019)

Hebrews 13:4
4 Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage* bed *is to be* undefiled; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.

- God's righteousness is clear in Scripture on all of these issues.
- This is not an honest believer…with a good faith belief…
  - This is lawlessness…rebellion against God.
- BTW…all of these are ordained pastors leading churches.

– Let's not be drawn in…
  - Those who are condoning and even encouraging things the Bible clearly reveals to be sin…
  - …it is lawlessness…it is rebellion against God.
    - No matter how many times they say they love God…they don't.
– So this is John's thesis statement…and now he's going to prove it.

5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who remains in Him sins *continually;* no one who sins *continually* has seen Him or knows Him.

– There is NO SIN in our Lord.
– None who…
  - "have fellowship with Him" a.k.a. have a relationship with Him (1:6)
  - have "come to know Him" (2:3)
  - "are in Him" (2:5-6)
  - "is in the Light" (2:9)
  - received His anointing (2:27)
  - "has been born of Him" (2:28)
  - are "children of God" (3:1)
– …continues to live in sin.
  - = a lifestyle of rejecting God's ways.

- Because we have been reborn in Him…
  - NO ONE WHO REMAINS "IN HIM"…will make a lifestyle of rejecting God's ways
- IDEA: I love God…but reject His ways…is not a thing.
  - Instead…a life that consistently rejects His ways = a person that doesn't know Him

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you;

- There is a way we could be fooled…
- …and it is as true today…as it was 2000 years ago…

the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

- practices = the pattern of their lives
  - their typical choices
  - the general way they choose to behave
- God defines what is righteous/right behavior.
- The person whose life demonstrates that they are trying to make choices…
  - …in line with what God says is right…
  - NOT PERFECTLY…BUT TYPICALLY
  - Then that person has likely been made righteous by God.
- AND the person whose pattern of life demonstrates that they typically choose…
  - …their ways…or the world's ways…over God's ways…
  - NOT IN A MOMENT…BUT BY REGULAR RULE…
  - Then that person's life is more in-line with the devil…than God.
    - …because that is exactly how the devil behaves.

- This next principle ties it all together…

The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who has been born of God practices sin, because His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin *continually,* because he has been born of God.

- Jesus came to destroy sin in our lives…
  - …not just eternally…
  - …but practically.
- How did He do that…by rebirthing us!
  - NO ONE…who has been rebirthed…
  - …will continually live in a life of sin…
    - WHY? Because He's our dad.
      - seed = **σπέρμα** = sperm
        - He is the source of what birthed us to NEW LIFE in Christ.
- It is impossible…for someone who has been born of God…to live in a life of perpetual sin.

- LOGIC: Yes, I can!
    - I could choose tomorrow to reject all of God's way…
    - …live it up in as much sin as I could get hands on.
- John is saying…no you can't! …and you won't!
    - WHY…we're different now.
    - We've been changed at our core.
- SO…if you are truly His…
    - …you will never consistently/persistently live apart from His ways every again!
- So…he lands with this final statement…

[10] By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother *and sister.*

- Don't be fooled in believing that person who has rejected God's righteousness…
    - …is somehow a child of God…they aren't.
- Don't listen to them…they don't know God.
    - Don't follow them…they in rebellion against God.
- True gold…will never be **submersed in filth**.
    - Those who **aren't loyal to God's revealed** truth…because they are loyal to their own definitions of love…are not loyal to God.
    - Those who **don't condemn what God condemns**…are condemned themselves.
    - Those who choose **inner authenticity over the clear** teaching of Christ…are really slaves to their own lusts and not servants of Christ.
- AND the plain truth…
    - those who do not practice righteousness…
        - …may give lip service to God and Jesus…
        - …but they are actually children of the devil.
- Do we act unloving towards them…NO!
    - But we love them in full view of who they are serving.
    - And reject their teaching…because we know from whom it has come.

Persistent rejection of God's ways is a clear indicator of a heart in **rebellion** against God, even when there's a **mouth** saying otherwise.

How do we love people well while still rejecting teaching and teachers that contradict God's Word?

I am a child of _____ and _____, and in a lot of ways, you can see it in me. In the same way, when we are reborn by the Holy Spirit, we become children of God, and who He is remains in us. That means we start to look like

our Father. We practice His righteousness, we love His people, and we set our hope on the day we will see Him and be like Him.

Those who make a practice of sin are showing whose children they really are. The lie that what we do with our bodies doesn't matter to God is not new. It was around in John's day, and it's being preached in churches today. But John is clear: sin is lawlessness. It is rebellion against the God of the Universe. No one who has been born of God makes a practice of it, because He has changed us at our core. So let's not be fooled by them, nor not settle ourselves. Let's continue to live like the sons and daughters of God that we are.