

1 John 2:28-3:3

SI: This is a sermon series on the Gospel. Gospel means good news. We've been looking at different facets of the good news in Scripture. The good news is that God himself, because of his great love, has intervened in this fallen world to save us from our sins through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But as we end the series today I want us to see that the good news is much more than forgiveness—it's the creation of a whole new you.

INTRO: One time years ago when our kids were still at home we were finishing supper when something came up that Allison and I had to run out and take care of. When we came home 30 minutes later we found one of our children doing dishes. Allison hadn't told her to do the dishes before we left. I hadn't told her. That was not her assigned chore. She was just doing the dishes. It made me very happy.

If you're a parent you know how happy it makes you when your children obey promptly and cheerfully.

When you say: Please do the dishes, pick up your room, do your homework, and they do it promptly and cheerfully.

Obedying a command—if it is done with the right spirit—is a beautiful thing.

But there is something even more beautiful.

It's when the actions and attitudes come spontaneously because of who they are, and who they know themselves to be.

The thing that made me so happy when I found my child doing the dishes was that it showed me she was learning what it means to be a member of the family.

Because when you know you're a member of a family and you see dirty dishes—you do them. You do them because you know your parents want things neat and tidy and you're becoming like them.

Sometimes you still have to be told to do the dishes—

but more and more you begin to do them because these family likenesses are developing in you and you know who you are.

The Gospel is a message of the forgiveness of our sins through Christ.

But it's much more than that.

The good news is the moral and spiritual transformation of our lives.

That's the ultimate purpose of Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.

It's to make you a new you.
The you God intended for you to be, bearing a family resemblance to God,
and instinctively thinking and doing the things members of that family do.

In this passage, the Apostle John has been talking about obeying God's commands.

He says in vs. 29 “. . . everyone who does what is right has been born of him.”
Real Christians, people born of God live obedient, righteous lives.

That's John's point. But when he writes the words, “born of him”
he gets so blown away with this thought—we've been born of him—
that it prompts an outburst of amazement.

Starts writing about what good news it is to be born of God.

John says that being born of him means:

You are a child of God,
You have a new nature,
And you are destined to be like Christ.

When this begins to work itself out in your life and when the reality of become
part of your self-image, then it leads you to a deeper, more mature obedience.
You obey not only because God tells you to, expects things of you,
and has duties and commands for your life, but because it's who you are.

I'm a child of God, with a new nature, destined to be like Christ.

Let's look at each of these aspects of being born of Him.

MP#1 You are a child of God.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are!”

Lavish love—we are called children of God.

If God had only forgiven our sins—if that is all he had done for us—that alone would have required giving his only begotten son to die in our place while we were still enemies.

So if that is all that God had done, we would be amazed and singing his praises.

But he did more than that—he did something truly amazing—he made us his sons and daughters.

It would be a great thing if our salvation was only that we are no longer under God’s judgment, and that he has acquitted us through Christ.

But that’s not all it is.

The Judge of all the earth has told us that he wants us to call him Father.

In fact, the Apostle Paul says twice that we have received a spirit of sonship by which we call God Abba Father.

Abba familiar word for father in Aramaic—language Jesus grew up speaking.

A language related to Hebrew.

A friend of mine was studying in Israel and he was in the home of Israelis.

Their little boy fell down and skinned his knees, cried out—

Abba! Abba! Abba! Abba! Abba!

Hearing that struck my friend deeply as he realized as he never had before that

God himself says to us, Call me that. Call me Abba.

God could have simply saved us, provided for us, and kept us at a distance.

And that alone would have been reason to praise him.

But he didn’t just do that. He made us his children, he gave us a family.

He gave us brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers.

I read an article once about teenagers in the foster care system who after years of hoping for an adoptive family simply age out of the system and are on their own.

One girl in the article who aged out of foster care at 18, moved into a state run dormitory she could live in until age 21. Then what? She didn’t know.

She said:

“When a person grows up in a family, they are given certain ideas all along, like being told that you should be a doctor like your uncle Herbie, or you’re good at teaching like your cousin

Anne. Parents lay down a footprint for you to follow. Sometimes I feel so blocked I can't see beyond my nose."

God didn't just save us, provide for us and keep us at a distance,

He didn't just give us a dorm to live in, He brought us in.

And more than that, he has provided us an inheritance.

You might notice that the Bible almost always uses the language of sons.

All believers are sons of God, even women and girls are sons of God.

That's not sexist language, it's the exact opposite.

Because the intent of the New Testament writers in using the language of sonship is to affirm that both men and women share an equal inheritance.

All believers are heirs. Heirs of heaven.

What is heaven for a child of God? It's home.

Heaven is the place of ultimate familiarity, freeness, and intimacy.

I once heard someone say it's the place you can open the refrigerator,

which sounded kind of silly to me until I thought about it, and what they meant.

Heaven is the place God is preparing for his family.

It's the place of family laughs and stories and secrets.

It's the best of times around the fireplace at Christmas.

Jesus said he was going away to prepare a place for us and that he would come back one day and take us to be with him.

As a child of God through faith in Jesus you are going there and you will live and love and be glad forever world without end amen.

Now, John says, when you begin to realize, This is who I am!

I'm a child of God. He is my Abba Father. I'm a son with an inheritance.

He has not kept me at a distance, but has brought me into the family.

He has given me little tastes of that family here on earth with fellow Christians— and one day I'll enjoy it perfectly, all the awkwardness will be gone—

I'll know the family of God with total familiarity, freedom, and intimacy.

And he is coming to take me home—then this is what happens—

You start to do the dishes. Not just because you know he has commanded you to— but because you know who you are. You're part of the family.

Are there some things in your life that need to change? Things need to be put away and put on. Bitterness put off, forgiveness and love and patience on. You can.

You're a child of God—

MP#2 With a new nature.

When you are born again into the family of God you receive a new nature.

See this idea introduced in verse 29 and John elaborates on it in passage:
“If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.”

Bible describes us becoming children of God in two ways—
adoption and being born of Him.

In human society you can only be one or the other,
either adopted into a family or born into a family, but you can't be both.
But in God's family you come in both ways and sometimes the Bible focus our
attention on one or the other.

This passage focuses on being born of God.
That means that you not only get the name and status and rights of a child,
you get a new nature or disposition appropriate for life in your new family.
Might say you're a chip off the old block.

That is what the new birth is, being born again, born of Him—all the same.
It means that you have been given God's nature so that you can live
as one of his own children in family fellowship with him.
When you become a Christian, certain aspects of God's nature are planted in you
and those grow slowly and come to express themselves in your life.
What aspects of God's nature? Particularly his moral nature.
Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control
And living the Christian life means you grow up into who you are.
Like a child in a natural sense grows up to be like his or her parents.

One of the biggest discouragements that Christians face is when they look at lives,
and don't see this new nature in themselves like wish could see it.

Have you ever looked at yourself and said:

I'm barely making any spiritual progress.

I'm defeated by the same temptations.

I'm not consistent in doing the good things I know I should do.

I'm fearful to share my faith.

I'm sidetracked by sinful thoughts.

I'm supposed to be born again but look at me.

Have you ever thought that way about yourself? Of course you have.

All true Christians have. It's a common discouragement we all face.

Yesterday I had a yard sale. I should have donated all that stuff to church sale,
but it was such a big job I wasn't able to tackle in time. Finally got it done.

When you set up all your stuff for a yard sale you think, this looks ok.

It's a little humbling, all these pieces of your life, but you arrange it so looks good
Then people come and start buying, and as the morning wears on,
your yard sale looks shabbier and shabbier.

You're downright embarrassed for your neighbors to stop by and see this junk.

But the fact is, you're making progress. You're getting rid of it, which was your
goal all along, to be able to get your car back in the garage!

You look in cigar box and there's money in there. Not a lot, but hey, it's money!

That's a metaphor for the divine nature in our lives.

As we truly progress and grow to be more like our Father in heaven, we start to see
more of the junky, shabbier parts of our lives, those are sometimes the hardest
things to change and get rid of.

But look what John says, this is really remarkable:

"That is what we are. The reason the world does not know is us that it did not know him"

A Christian says: I don't see much Christ-likeness in my life and I'm afraid people
around me don't see much of it either.

John says, no they probably don't

But remember, they didn't see Christ's true nature either.

His own brothers didn't believe him. But he really was the Son of God.

If you often look at yourself and get overwhelmed because all you can focus on
is the vast distance between where you are and where you should be in Xian life.

John says, you need to look at yourself differently.

You need to remember what you are. You have a new nature.

It hasn't developed completely, but it will.

So don't be discouraged. Don't think that you have come as far as you can.

When Christians give into that kind of thinking they give up fighting.

They don't push ahead to the next thing God has for their growth.

They see a pile of dirty dishes in their lives and think they aren't even capable of
working on that mess. But you can because you have a new nature.

And, there's something even more amazing

MP#3 And you are destined to be like Christ.

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.
But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

We will see Jesus. Doesn't that sometimes give you a shiver?

We see Jesus now with eyes of faith, as in a mirror as Paul puts it.
But we will see him face to face as he is.

As he has means not as a baby in the manger or a man hanging on the cross,
but as he is now—exalted, at the right hand of God, a rod of iron in his
hand with which he rules the nations, the hosts of heaven at his command.

Not abased, not humiliated—but glorified.

The days of his humiliation are over. Gethsemane is over.

You will see him as he is.

But even in that glory you will know him as your Savior by his identifying scars.

He will bear the marks of his suffering on hands, side.

And what will happen to you when you see Jesus as he is, at his coming in glory?

“When he appears, we shall be like him.”

The sight of Jesus Christ will bring about your final maturity as a child of God.

You shall be like him. The vision of him in his glory will bring about your final
transformation. You’ll feel and see all the old, ugly things you’ve wrestled with
your whole life fall away, and you’ll look at yourself and be amazed.

In our Florida church there was a retired army colonel who was in his 80s.

This man was old school. Orphanage to army. Army was his life.

Another retired couple started coming and this man was a retired general.

So we were at a men’s fellowship event and the pastor introduced them.

I was standing there when it happened and I witnessed it.

When the colonel, realized this was a general, his bearing became erect,
he suddenly became formal and attentive. These habits and manners.

There was a transformation of sorts.

When you see Jesus, you’re going to be transformed.

All you’ve known and hoped for in your life as a Christian, all you’ve struggled
for and tried to change and make better, it’s going to happen.

What it will actually look like is so wonderful that we really can’t comprehend it.

John says: “We are children of God, what we will be has not yet been made known.”

Even the apostle John does not really know.

All we know are the outlines. We will be brought to maturity as children of God.

We will be like Jesus Christ in his glory.

The seeds of the divine nature planted in you—your new nature—

moral qualities of righteousness, holiness, goodness,

will come to a perfection that you cannot conceive of in this life.

This only happens to people who are already children of God,
who already have the new nature—because Christ when he comes simply
brings to perfection that which has already been started in us.

Hell is the opposite. It's a place where all of God's restraining grace is removed,
and all the qualities of a person's sinful nature are allowed to fester for eternity.
All the bitterness, hate, self-pity, lust—people become grotesque there.
The seeds of the sinful nature bear their terrible fruit.

Thank God we've been delivered from that. Our hope is in Christ.

When He returns in glory,

We see him, and we are transformed to be like him because of who we are now.

So John says:

“Continue in him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him
at his coming.”

Then he says:

“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”

Do you see the logical conclusion that John is driving you to?

If this is who you are and this is where you are heading—

how can you do anything else but live a pure life in preparation for that day?

Anything less will simply make you ashamed when you see Jesus.

How can you mess around with bitterness and unforgiveness and selfishness when
you are destined to be transformed when Jesus appears?

How can you live as if Jesus Christ is not going to return and you are not going
to see him and look in his face and see the marks of his suffering
and receive from him blessings and wonderful things no tongue can describe?

You can't. It's not who you are. Be who you are.

Live in the hope of what you will be.

Every time you meet Christians whose lives are beautiful, it's because the
expectation of seeing Jesus is vivid to them.

This is the best part of the gospel.

It's good news that we've been forgiven.

But it's even better news that we are being made good and that we will one day
be perfectly good people, bearing the likeness of the man from heaven.

There's a song we used to sing, *I Will Never Be the Same Again*.

One of the stanzas says:

There are higher heights, there are deeper seas,
Whatever you need to do, Lord, do it in me.
The power of God fills my life,
And I will never be the same again.”

So, in your life, what is the place where Lord wants you to go higher or deeper?
You can, because you're a child of God with a new nature, and you are destined
to be transformed when you see Jesus face to face.