

Adopted Into The Family:

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Good morning.

How are you all feeling after a very busy week?

It has certainly been busy for me.

I mentioned last week that I would not be available on Monday as I would be attending a wedding. Rachel and I did attend that wedding, and it was a wonderful event. It turned out to be a very long day, with me starting at around 10 in the morning, and not getting home to bed until about 1:30am Tuesday morning.

But weddings are totally worth the effort!

They are such special times!

The Groom was a very good friend of mine who I trained with in Canada when I was in the Air Force. His name is **Nathan Tucker**. No relation to John Tucker that I'm aware of. He met the most amazing woman (second to my gorgeous wife, of course) on a blind date that two of their friends had set them up on, and they turned out to be a wonderful match! Her name is **Anne Bloch**. Rachel and I would joke, calling them 'Nath-anne.' Unfortunately Anne's mother had passed away when she was little, so she was raised by her father who never remarried. She has two sisters and no brothers, so the chances of continuing the **Block family name** were slim. Though Nathan is a man of tradition, he and Anne compromised with the last name, so have both become **Tucker-Bloch's**.

Nathan and Anne **Tucker-Bloch**.

I think it's a wonderful representation of what happens when two people are married. The bible says that the **two become one**.

That somehow there is a oneness, of the two individual lives.

Much like God's triune nature being 3 persons but one God.

Marriages are also the beginning of a **new family**.

In this case, a family of **Tucker-Bloch's**.

There is something special about families. Something that **runs deep**.

Something that affects those who are in it.

What family name do you bear?

Let's turn to our text for this morning from 1st John. Reading from Chapter 2:28 to 3:10,

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

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

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him 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.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He 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. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

Well, one of the first rules of public speaking, is that you are not supposed to **apologise** from the front. Big 'NO-NO!'

So what I'm **not** going to do is apologise for **not** sticking to the original title of this sermon, as per the church newsletter.

You will **NOT** hear me say **sorry** for taking a slightly different direction.

O.K.?

In seriousness, I had originally titled this sermon: **God is Love: Live in Him**. But after having studied this text deeper over the last week, I don't feel that that is the essence of what is being said here, though it is similar. I do not feel that that is what the Holy Spirit wants to say to us this morning.

So instead I've titled this message:

Adopted into the Family! (Exclamation mark)

God's essence being that of '**love**' is certainly a theme that appears in 1 John, and we will re-approach this later in the series, but for this morning, I want to pick up on an idea that John reveals here in the third chapter of his epistle:

Chapter 3:1: ***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 NIV almost doesn't do justice to the magnitude of this statement. Here it is from the Message bible:

***What marvelous love the Father has extended to us!
Just look at it—we're called children of God!
THAT'S WHO WE REALLY ARE!***

Children of God; we ARE children of God.

We've been **adopted** into the family of **divinity!**

Isn't that **amazing?**

This is my **first point** this morning, and I want to explore it a little further.

As we know and can hopefully recall from last week, John is writing to a group of believers in **turmoil**. There had been some false teachers, some **anti-Christ's** who were no longer a part of the community, but had left those remaining confused and perhaps frustrated.

We can also learn from earlier verses that some people, likely these anti-Christ's, were claiming to be elite; to be without sin. We know this because John attack's such a claim in the 1st chapter of this letter, verse 8:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Ok, so now they know that they are sinners, that they should not love the things of this world but love their fellow believers, and that they should not listen to the lies and deception around them, but instead trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit who is within them. And it's at this point, after having some fairly strong imperatives that John reminds them of something extremely significant:

Not only are they **called** the children of God; but they actually **are** the children of God.

John wasn't just explaining some lovely metaphor that is used to describe their Christian nature, he was stating **a reality** as a result of their **spiritual birth!**

At the end of the first century when this epistle was likely written, **lineage** was something of great significance; it mattered who's son or daughter you were!

This was true right back through the Jewish tradition. This is why we find many genealogical records in the bible, including the New Testament.

Immediate respect was given to someone born of an important family line.

Not only that, but there were certain expectations placed on them. It is likely that they would be similar in nature or character to their mother or father.

Unfortunately the same significance is not given to genealogy in our modern age. It's every man for **himself**.

Make your **own way**.

Make a name for **yourself**.

Do your own thing!

But what is the significance of genealogy anyway? Why does their lineage matter?

Because **with lineage comes heritage!**

John's words are of **profound assurance**.

If they are the **Children** of God, then they are included in God's **inheritance!**
The same Inheritance and glory that Jesus will receive!

How astounding is this?

Paul makes the same point in some of his epistles.

Romans 8:17 & 18:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

So in a similar vein to Paul, John is encouraging them in their present suffering and frustration.

WE ARE CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST!

WE WILL SHARE IN CHRIST'S GLORY!

This is **AMAZING!** And it almost seems unfair.

Why?

Because we didn't even earn this family status; this lineage.

It was bestowed on us simply because of **God's incredible love for us!**

And we can only receive it because of what **Jesus has done for us!**

Don't the scales seem **unevenly tipped in our favour?**

Isn't the God we serve **incredible!!**

I was listening to **News Talk ZB** in the car while driving home from Rachel's family batch up north, and the presenter was leading a discussion on adoption. He was asking whether it was fair that Sir Elton John, and his partner David Furnish should not be

allowed to adopt a Ukrainian child because they were not legally married under Ukrainian law, though they were in a civil union, and because they were too old.

What do you think?

My initial reaction was: “Great! It would be hard for a child to grow up with two fathers and no mother.”

But the radio presenter, Pat Britton, fired a challenging thought. You see the child is HIV positive, and is staying at an orphanage. Pat’s question was:

“Regardless of the parental situation, wouldn’t this child be better off growing up in a wealthy family with adequate health care, unlimited education opportunities and a lifestyle that most could only dream of?”

Hmmm, that **complicates** the situation a little!

I dare not attempt to give an answer to that one, but it does highlight the point I’m trying to make.

We, much like little 14 month old Lev with HIV, bear the sickness of sin and are in no place to do anything about it. But God in his loving mercy and grace adopted us into His perfect family, and gives us a share of His inheritance and glory though we are not worthy of it.

WOW!

BE ENCOURAGED!!!

Church, you and I, having accepted Jesus into our hearts, are now considered Children of the living God!

That was my first point.

The second is the implication of this new divine status; a point that John makes very clearly throughout this morning’s passage.

Because we are children of God; we must act as members of the family!

We must be CHILDREN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!

2:29: *If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.*

3:3: *Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

3:6 & 7: *No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Finally 3:9 & 10: ***No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.***

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

Simply put: God is **righteous**, so we are to be **righteous**.

God is **sinless**, so we are to be **sinless**.

We are to reflect our Father's perfect nature. In this way we will not be associated with the world.

John uses very strong, almost contradictory words here: ***No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.***

Surely we do not know God then, because no one here would claim to be completely free from sin. What are we to make of this?

First we know that John doesn't believe that a Christian can be totally free from every sinning again while on this earth. We covered this early in Chapter 1:8: ***If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.***

Perhaps the key word is '**continue**.' That we are not to live in continued deliberate acts of sin. This would make sense.

But the best explanation is that John is revealing to us a reality that we must continue to work towards.

Children of God are sinless; **we must become what we already are as Christians.**

We are deemed righteous by the blood of Jesus, but we must continue to become children of righteousness.

We must bear our fathers nature.

Do you remember your more rebellious teenage years? I suppose I would say that I didn't really get up to too much mischief, but I was by no means perfect!

I recall some of my attempts to be slightly more mischievous. It would be me, my best friend James, and another friend called Sean. James' parent's were separated and very laid back, so they didn't really mind what he got up to, not that he ever really got into any trouble. Sean's parents on the other hand were constantly keeping Sean on a tight leash, not that he would have really done anything to mischievous either. There would be the odd occasion that James and I would try and persuade Sean to come out with us and go dancing or some such thing. And typically, without even asking his parents he would politely turn us down, because he knew they wouldn't approve.

They weren't Christians, they just preferred Sean

to stay at home and live a more peaceful life.

Despite our name calling, such as “**Mumma’s boy,**” or “**Goodie goodie.**” He was quite happy to live the life they wanted for him. He trusted in their judgment, and he knew they had his best interests at heart.

For Sean, it wasn’t about **keeping the rules**; it was about **honoring** his parents desires and **being obedient** to their will.

This is what it is to be righteous.

You see originally a righteous man was one whose behavior fitted into the framework of his society and who fulfilled his rightful obligations towards the gods and his fellowmen.

Righteousness in the Old Testament is not a matter of actions conforming to a given set of absolute legal standards, but of behavior which is in keeping with the two-way relationship between man and God. Thus the righteousness of God appears in his God-like dealings with his people.

To be righteous is to choose not to sin.

Not because the rule book says so, but because we are children of a God who is sinless, perfect and Holy.

In choosing to avoid sin, we are not attaining our salvation, for that has already been given to us thanks to the gracious act of Jesus at Calvary.

In choosing to avoid sin the world will know that we are different, because our allegiance will not be to ourselves and our own selfish desires, but to our holy and righteous Father, whose family we have been adopted into.

In choosing to avoid sin, we are simply choosing to become who we already are: children of **God**;

children of **righteousness**.

My Theology teacher stated an interesting observation he had made one afternoon while we were having a casual conversation:

The emphasis on God’s character has moved from: **HOLINESS to LOVE.**

God is Love, we are always told and taught. And they are not wrong. In fact this is our direction for the coming weeks,

but **God is also holy and righteous.**

And so we must be righteous.

And this is not a negative imperative. Because it’s founded in our status as children of God.

Make every effort to **be as your Father is!**

We will **stuff up**. But then we must **pick up**, and **keep up!**
And we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to do this.

WHERE DO YOUR EFFORTS NEED TO BE DIRECTED IN THIS AREA?

WHAT PART OF YOUR LIFE DOES GOD MOST WANT TO WORK ON?

We are CHILDREN OF GOD;

Let's be CHILDREN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!