

Look! You are the Child!

Sermon for Christmas Day

Sermon Text: 1 John 3:1-6



See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies Himself as He is pure. ⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that He appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.

Christmas begins with a proclamation: Look! Open your eyes! Something big is happening! The proclamation is for the shepherds in the fields and for the magi from the East as well as for all people in the entire world. Look! What we see is nothing unusual. A little child with poor parents is so typically human. And yet John calls to us again! Look! Look because at first glance, the baby Jesus can be overlooked or His importance mistaken. John wants us to look again to realize the importance of the child. And there are two things that make the baby Jesus special. That first glance shows us that through Jesus, God laid in the arms of Mary and Joseph. That's one side of the story. The other side is that through Jesus, God Himself adopted us. At first glance, God becomes a child. At second glance, we are the children! And that's actually the meaning of the Christ child – that God has adopted us. At Christmas, we are and may be like a child! Because God adopted us at Christmas! Behold! Look! You are God's child!

What does it even mean to be God's child? To understand that, we should perhaps imagine what it was like when we were still children. First, what I notice from my own childhood is how important my parents were to me. As a child, it was completely clear to me that my parents were the strongest, smartest, and absolute best people in the whole world! And I similarly remember how we kids would sometimes argue about whose mom or dad was the best. When you're a child, parents are important because parents are an integral part of myself. I can never change that. Even when I'm grown up, I'm still my parents' child. Even when my parents have died or are no longer with me, I have my identity from my parents because my parents are a part of me. If I may be called God's child, it means exactly

this too. I am not here in the world purely by chance, but I have a God who thought about me and wanted me even before I was born. On the day I was baptized, God added something important – God connected me with His name. I now belong to His inheritance and to His family too! My identity comes from God!

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God

Look! This is exactly how God wanted it to be when Jesus came to us. He wanted to win back our childhood that we had lost through Adam and Eve. We should become again what we actually should have been from the beginning – children of God. And in concrete terms, that means that you can always hold one thing firmly in your heart: God loves you! That's also what connects children to their parents so much – love! Children experience love from their parents! When a little child comes into the world and doesn't experience love, he dies because love is as important as food and drink are. I know there are so many people today who themselves experienced only a little bit of love as children. Such people don't know the most important currency in life – Love! That's why they also can't pass on the same love to their own children. Giving away any expensive gifts is often just a declaration of bankruptcy by the parents and shows how powerless they are when it comes to love.

When it comes to love, we are dealing with God, whose very essence is love. His love is now really without limits so that one can say: God is love and love is God! And that's why God also gave us the greatest gift that we could imagine at Christmas. He gave His own self. God poured Himself out into the earth. He, who is God, left His throne so that we could become God's children. What an exchange! God comes to us and we go to God! God lays Himself in a manger and opens the gates of heaven for us. We may enter into God's big family which He always wanted because He loves us so much!

Behold! John says to us: You are a child of God! Take a look!

I remember when my children were born how often family members and friends surprisingly said: Look! He looks exactly like his father! And people can say this about us as God's children too. If you look at us, you can see something of the God who gave us new life, whose identity we received through Baptism. This can be seen by doing the things God wants us to do. Most of the time, it's such things that are illogical to the world and make absolutely no sense because life as a child of God goes in a completely opposite direction as life in the world.

No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.

... John describes our new life in God. Sinning means that we act against God. That again means that we can't pass on the love that God gave to us. It means that we don't love God with all our strength or minds but instead place ourselves in the center and we separate ourselves from God and from everything that He gave us. It also means that we don't love our neighbors as ourselves but regard ourselves as more important and despise or even hate our neighbor. To be God's child means the exact opposite. It means that we give ourselves to our neighbors. Where there is hate, we love. Where a person suffers, we suffer with them. We are even ready to give up something of ourselves to be there for our neighbors. Look! A child of God exactly like his Father!

And yet we are still children! A child is not yet an adult. It doesn't know many things about life yet and must still make many mistakes.

What we will be has not yet appeared. John describes our status as Christian children in this world. Who can already say as a child what their life will look like later on? Even when I was already an adult, I could never have dreamt that I would choose the path for my life I finally chose. Our Christian life is a life as not yet grown children. We know that we are Christians. We also know that we are baptized. And yet we get off track so quickly. We constantly forget to Whom we actually belong. Sometimes we pursue money as if our entire life would depend on money. Sometimes we pursue love that quickly blows away again! Also how utterly sad we are when something is taken away from us. Again and again, we must run howling to the lap of our great God and have to be comforted. And that's exactly where we may constantly remain children. Children are not yet independent. They can't go into the big world alone yet. They always need the protection of their parents. We Christians need exactly that too. We can't live alone. We constantly need God's Word. From God's Word, we draw strength and can continue living. And how good it is that God has a big family. We get to know part of His family in church on Sundays. There, we experience a tight fellowship with Jesus through His body and blood. And we become closely connected with our Christian brothers and sisters as well. Through this, it again becomes clear to Whom we belong, Whose children we are, to which family we belong. And we may always know one thing – We always remain His children! That means that we can always come back. In the Bible, we always read about how unending the mercy of God is. We can read that, for example, in the story of the prodigal son. The son who fell into sin is, against all odds, simply taken back into the family with great joy. This shows us that we may return to God again and again. When we fall, we may always start over again! In his epistle, John urges us to remain in God. He must encourage us because we only need to do that – remain IN God and in His love. When Jesus came into the world, it was all about the fact that people around Him could experience the nearness of God – the shepherds, as well as the wise men, as well as the millions of Christians in the whole world. We should only lift up our eyes and see that God is among us. When we have seen Him, it is so clear that we remain with Him. Much too quickly we are turned again to thinking about everyday concerns, to selfishness and hate so that we can no longer see Him. And yet John must loudly proclaim: Come and see. God has come into the world to be close to you. He has come so close that you can simply fall into His strong hands and may be His child! Amen.