

This is the Love of God

Easter 6

Pastor Josh Frazee

1 John 5:1-8

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

A few years ago we heard that many college-age people were questioning who they were. The best response to that question is another question: the better question to ask than “Who am I?” is “*Whose* am I?”

That is where John starts in our Epistle text. He wrote: “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.” We are God’s children—if we have faith. Not everyone can make this claim or confession if they do not believe it. But the answer for we who believe is that I am a child of God.

Yet when we are asked the question “Who am I?” it entails more than just our names or whose children we are—it entails everything about us. Relationships, occupations, likes, dislikes—all of it.

Today John will show us that the same is true for answering “Whose are we?” with the response “We are God’s children.” As children of God, we have very real, very specific relationships with one another. And we have specific likes and dislikes; and specific, real responsibilities toward each other.

Verse 1

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”

We hear again that we are God’s children—we have “been born of God”—and we hear that we love the Father. More than that, we hear that we love everyone who has been born of Him. It is important to note the phrasing of this statement. “(E)veryone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.” Loves the Father. Not will begin to love the Father eventually, not will begin to love whoever loves Him eventually. No. Loves in the present tense. This is not a future possibility but, rather, through the Spirit, it is a current reality. To those in the faith, it is impossible not to love God and it is also impossible not to love the ones who love Him.

As children of God, then, our responsibility to each other is to love each other, to love our brothers and sisters in the faith. Each of us only has faith because of Jesus’ work; and it is by Jesus’ work that you and I and we have been made brothers and sisters.

This is not the same as when two friends call each other a brother or sister based on similar interests or time spent with each other. It is a reality. We are members of the family of God. We are brothers and sisters of Jesus—brothers in terms of inheritance—and we are children of God. We are not slaves or outsiders any more but we are members of God’s family—you and me, we are in faith.

Verse 2

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

John also makes it known in this text that the children of God—we—are victors over death. That is part of “Whose we are.” Both of these—our new relationships toward each other and our victory over death—both are received through faith.

None of us deserves to be part of God's family or to be victors over death. We had been outsiders. We did not love anyone else, let alone God Himself. We had been lost in sin. But God came to us, to you and to me, through His Word. He made known to us that He has paid the price we owed for not loving Him or others as we should have. He sent His Son Jesus to overcome the world, to live a perfect life of love. He sent Jesus to suffer and die in our places, because that is the punishment we rightly deserved. And then He called us through His Word. He made known to us how He had saved us and gave us His Spirit to believe it.

But more than that, He called us in the hearing of His Word and through the waters of Baptism to be members of His family. We each now share the name of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, who have received eternal life. We live this life even now.

It's true that while we live here, we are saints and sinners, and it's very easy to see the sinner side of that dichotomy. Yet we are also and at the same time saints. God the Holy Spirit is working in you and me right now to believe and to cling to that joyous truth that we have been forgiven and are now members of the family of God. He also continues to work in us to do those good works that have been laid out before us to walk in them. So we are victors over death, not only in the future, but even here and now. And we also love one another even here and yes, even now. For us as God's children, it is impossible to think of doing anything other than loving God and those who love Him.

Verse 3

“This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”

Yes, Jesus came “by water and blood” and they testify that He came and was baptized in the waters of the Jordan river and that He shed His blood on the cross of Calvary. But there is a third who testifies. John wrote: “there are three that testify.” The third one who testifies is none other than the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, God Himself.

Earlier in this epistle, John made reference to how he and the other apostles and Paul were bearing witness to Jesus as the Savior of the world. But here, John sets that aside. After all, what good is the word of another person alone? So dear friends in Christ, do not take John's words, or my words alone. Our words are indeed a testimony, but it is nothing without the One who gave it first, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.

John is making the point that everything he has written up to this point—everything we've been hearing over the last several weeks in our Epistle lessons—are the truth, not because he or any other human being says so, but because the Spirit Himself testifies to their validity and their truth.

That is also true for everything we've heard in this sermon this morning. The Spirit Himself testifies to the validity and truth that you and I are children of God; and that as children of God, we are victors over death, even here and now, and that He, the Spirit, is working in us even right now to love God and to love one another. And we have received the Spirit and the forgiveness of our sins all thanks to God sending His Son Jesus to pay for our sins. Jesus has done it; and we are God's children. That's the word of the Spirit of truth, even the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

