

Children of God

John 1:9-13

Jesus is the light of the world! In him was life! That's what we have seen so far in John's gospel. This light of the world is the second person of the Trinity, through whom the world was made. He was with God before the creation of the world. He was God. He is God, and he will always be God, the eternal God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

But, as we read in,
v.5 "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

Thus God sent a witness, the final prophet of the Old Testament era, that is, the final prophet before the coming of Jesus. His name was John.

v.8 "He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light."

But again, the light was rejected. Jesus was rejected.

I. DESPITE BEING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, JESUS WAS REJECTED.

John makes a rather startling statement, however, before he explains Jesus' rejection.

v.9 "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."

The light "enlightens every man." Which is to say, Jesus is the true light. The true revelation of God. The full revelation of God, and therefore the final revelation of God. As we read in,

Hebr. 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being."

Col. 1:15 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."

In the person of Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of the Father, God is fully revealed to man. So if you want to know what God is like, then come to know what Jesus is like, for he is the true light. He gives light, enlightens every man.

And everyone has the light. Everyone can see the light. But there is an obvious problem, an obvious reality. "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." The darkness did not accept it. The darkness did not receive the light.

A. Jesus was rejected by the world.

The whole world. The true light came into the world. The true light gives light to the world. And the true light is rejected. But the problem isn't because of a problem with the light. There wasn't any deficiency in the light. The problem was with the world.

You see, God has made himself obvious. God made himself evident. Just look at the world. Look at the external power of God that must have been necessary to create a world such as the one in which we live. Such a perfect design, a design that can be attributed only to God's own divine power. That is clear and plain to see, for Paul invokes the wrath of God

Rom. 1:18 "...against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

The light is clear. If you are in darkness, and someone turns

on a light, you see it! But the world wouldn't see it.

v.10 "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."

And we know why, don't we? I read it earlier in the worship service,

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

Jesus was rejected because sinful men loved darkness rather than light. They loved their sin. And Jesus is still rejected today for that same reason, isn't he? Men love their sin. Women love their sin. Children love their sin. They practice what is evil, and they do not want their sinful deeds to be exposed.

Left to our own devices, we would all reject the light. As Paul declares in,

Rom. 3:10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Jesus was rejected by the world. And that shouldn't come as a surprise, since the prophets predicted it,

Is. 53:3 "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of

sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted."

Jesus was despised and rejected by the world. And perhaps even more surprisingly,

B. Jesus was rejected by the nation of Israel.

By the nation of God's people. The covenant people.

v.11

He came to the Jews, as a Jew. He came as the Messiah of the Jews, the promised savior. And even they rejected him. And there is a good reason God designed it that way. A good reason God accomplished it that way. Because being a Jew wasn't enough to get you into heaven. Being a citizen of the nation of Israel didn't automatically make you a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

Paul explains all that in Romans 9, when he expresses his anguish for the nation of Israel in their rejection of Jesus.

Rom. 9:6 "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

You see, the promise of the gospel is just that, a promise. The hope of the gospel is not in the flesh, it is not in your physical identity. The only hope of the gospel is in the faith to believe the promise! The children of God are the children of the promise.

You don't become a Christian by something you do or perform in your flesh. You don't become a Christian because of your family heritage. The children of God are the children of a promise, and so it wasn't the children of Hagar whom God blessed with the hope of the gospel, children conceived by the schemes and plans of men. Instead, it is the children of Sarah who are the children of God, children conceived because of God's promise.

Let me explain all of that further.

Eph. 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Jesus was rejected by the nation of Israel so that God could demonstrate this fundamental truth of the gospel, that the hope of eternal life is for those who believe the promise! Or, to put it even more simply, you are saved by grace, not by works. You are saved by faith, not by the law.

Gal. 3:7 "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. 10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the

Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

That's the gospel. The blessing of life comes to those receive the promise through faith. So...Jesus was rejected. The light of the world was rejected because fallen mankind loves darkness. But let's move on. John gives us a great contrast. "His own did not receive him," we read in verse 11, but others did receive him. Others did believe him. And they are the ones who become the children of God.

II. JESUS IDENTIFIES THOSE WHO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN.

This identification as the children of God is the most blessed, most exalted and most secure identification we could possibly have. It should be your greatest glory, and the foundation of your greatest security. The children of God! If you are a Christian, you are a child of God! A beloved child of God.

Rom.8:15 "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

And, Gal.4:4 "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

And finally,

1 John 3:1 "Behold what manner of love the Father has

bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

That’s our identity. We are children of God.

An identity that depends upon the love of God, not upon some inherent goodness in us. God loves you. “What manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.” That could be accurately translated, “How great a love the Father has bestowed upon us.”

Jesus loves you. Jesus loves me. And not because I have done something to earn it. Not because I have worked hard to deserve his favor. No, he loves me because of the promise! Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!

That’s what the gospel of John is all about. Jesus identifies those who are God’s children. Specifically, in very simple and direct words,

A. God’s children are those who receive Jesus.

Who is a Christian? Who is a child of God? Who is saved? Who is born again? Who has eternal life? All those questions are one and the same question. And the answer is very simple to define.

Who are the children of God? Those who have received Jesus. It is as we receive Jesus, as we embrace him and embrace the message of the gospel which he embodies, it is as we do that that God adopts us. It is through the means of our embracing Jesus Christ that God grants to us, by grace, the status of adopted children.

v.12a

Notice the contrast again,
v.11

So how do you receive him? Perhaps the word which best defines it today is our word surrender. You is, you surrender your life to the control of Jesus Christ and submit to his authority.

And that is an act of the will. A choice. A decision. More accurately perhaps, a commitment. To receive Jesus is to make a commitment to him. To love him, and to be faithful to him.

Within that commitment is the willingness to believe the truth that he embodies. And so we see that,

B. God’s children are those who believe in Jesus.
v12

Those who receive Jesus are those who believe in His name. They are the ones who believe what he said and believe what he taught. They believe who he is and what he did.

And that is called faith. Our catechism puts it so well, defining saving faith with these words: “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.”

In the exact words of Scripture,

Rom.10:8 “But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto

righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

One more verse, verse 13, a verse which emphasizes the nature and source of salvation. Very much in the context of this whole chapter, we see that salvation is defined in terms of life. New life. Life that begins, of course, with birth!

III. THE BIRTH OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

v.13

This is a very thorough analogy. If you are to identify as children of God, then you have to understand how you came to be born. And John makes his point very clearly. A Christian, a child of God, is...

A. Born not by the will or work of men.

Verse 13, "not of blood." In other words, not by the natural process of human procreation. "Not by the will of the flesh." In other words, to speak gently, you weren't born as a Christian the way you were born as a human being. Your human birth came about because of the intimate relationship between your mother and father, born of the flesh. Not so your Christian birth.

And to be all the more emphatic, you were not born "of the will of man." Becoming a Christian is not accomplished by the power of your human will, because we know the condition of all men apart from Christ. The will of man is dead, enslaved to sin. Ultimately, it is not your decision. The saving power that makes you a child of God is not a power that is within you. To the

contrary, a child of God is,

B. Born by the will and work of God.

v.13

As John will write in chapter 3,
John 3:3 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus was thinking of being born according to the flesh, so he asked,

John 3:4 "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

So how do you become a child of God? You have to be born. You have to be born again. You have to be born of the spirit. You have to be born by the will and work of God. God has to make you alive,

Eph. 2:5 "...even when we were dead in trespasses."

That verse continues,

Eph. 2:5 "[God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

You must be born again! That is the gospel I will preach to you. But how? How, then, can you know if you have been born again? How can you know if you are a child of God? Answer, by the evidence. By the fruit. By your response to the gospel. By your response to Jesus.

And so this morning, I accept my responsibility to preach that gospel to you. I am here to proclaim to you the one in whom you must believe, the one whom you must receive as your Lord in order to be saved. His name is Jesus. You must believe in this light, this true light that is revealed in the gospel of John. You must understand your own sinfulness, and understand that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for your sin when he died upon the cross, satisfying the perfect and unyielding justice of God the Father. Justice that you deserved. You must believe those things. You must choose to believe those things. And you must choose to surrender control of your life to Jesus and submit to his authority as Lord over you.

And so I proclaim to you today, and to all in my hearing, that if you receive Jesus Christ and acknowledge him as Lord, trusting in him for your salvation, if you believe in his name in that way, then you are given the right to be called the children of God.