

"SAINTS: NOW AND FOREVER"

1 JOHN 3:1-3

ALL SAINTS' DAY (OBSERVED)

MESSIAH, BOERNE

NOVEMBER 2, 5, 2023

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

READ TEXT: "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. 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. AND EVERYONE WHO THUS HOPES IN HIM PURIFIES HIMSELF AS HE IS PURE.
(VV 1-3)

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

MOST PEOPLE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, AND, AS THE TELEVISION COMMERCIAL SAYS, THAT'S THE REASON WE HAVE WALGREENS. WELL, CHRISTIANS ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR APPEARANCE—NOT ONLY PHYSICAL, BUT ALSO (AND MORE IMPORTANTLY) *SPIRITUAL*—AND *THAT'S* THE REASON WE HAVE CHURCHES. JUST AS PEOPLE CAN GO TO WALGREENS OR CVS OR ANOTHER STORE AND PURCHASE BEAUTY PRODUCTS AND COSMETIC SUPPLIES, SO ALSO CHRISTIANS CAN GO TO CHURCH AND BE ASSURED OF THEIR *SPIRITUAL* APPEARANCE BEFORE GOD. FOR EXAMPLE, IN OUR TEXT THIS MORNING FROM THE THIRD CHAPTER OF THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN, GOD ASSURES US THAT HE SEES US AS HIS BELOVED CHILDREN. IN CHRIST, THAT'S WHAT WE ARE! JUST

AS GOD THE FATHER IS HOLY, SO HIS CHILDREN ARE HOLY, THAT IS, SAINTS: NOW AND FOREVER.

OUR TEXT BEGINS WITH THESE WORDS: "SEE WHAT KIND OF LOVE THE FATHER HAS GIVEN TO US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD, AND SO WE ARE" (V 1a). IN THE ROMAN CULTURE, CHILDREN WERE ADOPTED BY A PROCESS CALLED *PATRIA POTESTAS*, LITERALLY, RIGHTS OF THE FATHER. PRIOR TO THEIR ADOPTION, ORPHANS HAD NO FAMILY RIGHTS, BUT BY ADOPTION THE CHILD WAS GRANTED THE FULL RIGHTS OF CHILDREN OF THE FATHER, INCLUDING INHERITANCE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND COMPLETE SONSHIP. BY A SIMILAR PROCESS WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, NOT BY OUR NATURAL BIRTH BUT BY OUR REBIRTH FROM GOD ABOVE THROUGH THE WORD AND IN THE WORD AND WATER OF HOLY BAPTISM, AS JOHN WRITES,

BUT TO ALL WHO RECEIVED [JESUS], WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME, HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD, WHO WERE BORN . . . OF GOD . . . FROM ABOVE . . . OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT (JN 1:12-13; 3:3, 5).

BY OUR NATURAL BIRTH WE ARE ENEMIES OF GOD, ORPHANED AND ESTRANGED FROM GOD (ROM 5:10). BUT BY HIS GRACE, WE HAVE BECOME GOD'S CHILDREN BY SPIRITUAL ADOPTION THROUGH THE WORD AND IN HOLY BAPTISM, A PROCESS WHICH HE INITIATED AND COMPLETED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (PHIL 1:6). NOW WE ARE KNOWN BY GOD'S NAME, AS SAINTS, THAT IS, *HOLY ONES*, EVEN AS GOD IS *THE HOLY ONE* (IS 43:3).

BUT WHAT WAS IT THAT MOTIVATED GOD TO CHOOSE US TO BE HIS CHILDREN? WAS IT BECAUSE WE WERE GOOD? DID HE LOOK INTO THE FUTURE AND FORSEE OUR OBEDIENCE, OUR FAITHFULNESS TO HIM? NO, NOT AT ALL. AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS AT THE SAME TIME. WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD AND SAINTS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS. BUT DUE TO OUR SINFUL NATURE, INHERITED FROM OUR FIRST PARENTS, ADAM AND EVE, WE OFTEN ACT MORE LIKE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL. WE ARE REBELLIOUS SPIRITS. WE DISOBEY GOD'S RIGHTEOUS COMMANDS. WE DO NOT LOVE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST AS OURSELVES (1 JN 3:10, 23). JOHN TELLS US CLEARLY IN OUR TEXT THAT GOD'S ONLY MOTIVE IN CHOOSING US WAS HIS "LAVISH LOVE" (V 1). NOT OUR *RESPONSE* TO THAT LOVE, MIND YOU, BUT SOLELY HIS LOVE MOTIVATED HIM TO ADOPT US AS HIS CHILDREN BY GRACE, AS PAUL WRITES, "FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH. AND THIS IS NOT YOUR OWN DOING; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, NOT A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST" (EPH 2:8, 9).

NOW, AS HIS CHILDREN, GOD WORKS IN OUR LIVES BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO MAKE US LIKE HIMSELF, THAT IS, PURE (V 3). JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, IS *THE MEANS* FOR OUR PURITY. WHEN JESUS ENTERED THE WORLD AT HIS INCARNATION, HE WAS CALLED "THE HOLY ONE OF GOD" (LK 1:35), AND HE KEPT HIMSELF PURE THROUGHOUT HIS EARTHLY LIFE AS A TRULY HUMAN

BEING. HE OBEYED THE FATHER'S COMMANDMENTS PERFECTLY IN THOUGHT, ACTION, AND WILL, SO THAT THE WRITER TO THE HEBREWS CAN SAY: "ALTHOUGH HE WAS A SON, HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE THROUGH WHAT HE SUFFERED. AND BEING MADE PERFECT, HE BECAME THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION TO ALL WHO OBEY HIM" (HEB 5:8-9). JOHN WRITES EARLIER IN HIS FIRST LETTER THAT WE WHO ARE CHILDREN OF GOD BY GRACE ARE PURIFIED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST (1 JN 1:7).

NOT ONLY IS JESUS *THE MEANS* FOR OUR PURITY, BUT ALSO *THE MODEL*. AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE WANT TO BE LIKE OUR FATHER, AND THE HUMAN MODEL WE FOLLOW IS OUR HUMAN BROTHER, JESUS CHRIST. IN CHRIST WE SEE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE PURE IN MOTIVE, IN ACTION, IN SPEECH, AND IN THOUGHT, AND AS CHRISTIANS, THAT IS, "LITTLE CHRISTS," WE STRIVE TO BE PURE IN OUR DAILY LIVES. AS WE LIVE, WE REFLECT UPON THE REASON FOR DOING THE THINGS WE DO: IS IT TO PLEASE GOD OR IS IT TO SATISFY OUR SINFUL SELF? DO OUR WORDS AND ACTIONS SEEK TO GLORIFY GOD OR SELF? ARE OUR MINDS OCCUPIED WITH WHATEVER IS PURE, LOVELY, COMMENDABLE, EXCELLENT, AND PRAISEWORTHY (PHIL 4:12), OR ARE WE OBSESSED WITH THOUGHTS AND MENTAL IMAGES THAT ARE IMPURE, DEGRADING, AND SHAMEFUL? AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE ARE TO BE PURE LIKE HIS SON, OUR SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST, AND SINCE HE IS OUR ONLY HOPE OF SALVATION, WE TRUST IN HIM TO PURIFY OUR SPIRITS (V 3).

NOT ONLY DOES GOD MAKE US HIS CHILDREN THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS ON EARTH, BUT HE ALSO GIVES US THE HOPE THAT WE WILL BE SAINTS FOREVER IN HEAVEN. WE HAVE THIS HOPE BECAUSE HE GIVES US HIS PROMISE IN HIS WORD. AS THE CHILDREN OF GOD, WE TRUST IN OUR FATHER, WHOM WE HAVE NEVER SEEN WITH OUR PHYSICAL EYES. WE LIVE, HOWEVER, IN THE HOPE OF SEEING HIM ONE DAY IN HEAVEN, FACE TO FACE, AS HE IS, IN THE FULL REALITY OF HIS BEING (V 3). THIS IS A PRIVILEGE RESERVED FOR HIS CHILDREN, FOR "NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN GOD" (JN 1:18a). BUT WE WHO ARE HIS CHILDREN THROUGH FAITH IN HIS SON WILL SEE HIM IN ALL HIS GLORY AND MAJESTY WHEN THIS EARTHLY WORLD ENDS. JESUS WILL APPEAR SUDDENLY ON THE LAST DAY, AND WE WILL SEE HIM IN HIS HOLINESS, EVEN AS WE WILL BE HOLY (EX 33:20; V 2b, c; REV 7:9).

THEN WE WILL JOIN WITH *ALL THE SAINTS* IN THE UNENDING WORSHIP OF GOD IN HEAVEN PICTURED SO BEAUTIFULLY IN OUR FIRST LESSON FROM REVELATION 7. WE WILL BE CLOTHED IN ROBES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, PURIFIED IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, AND JOIN WITH ALL THE SAINTS FROM EVERY NATION, TRIBE, PEOPLE, AND LANGUAGE IN THANKING GOD AND GIVING HIM THE GLORY FOR OUR SALVATION. WHAT JOY WILL BE OURS WHEN WE ARE TOGETHER AGAIN WITH OUR DEPARTED LOVED ONES AND *ALL WHO TRUSTED IN CHRIST* FOR THEIR SALVATION! GOD WILL PROVIDE FOR ALL OUR NEEDS THERE, AND WE WILL BE COMFORTED AT LAST.

FOR THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE [OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST] WILL BE [OUR] SHEPHERD, AND HE WILL GUIDE [US] TO STREAMS OF LIVING WATER, AND GOD WILL WIPE EVERY TEAR FROM [OUR] EYES. (REV 7:17)

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, AS PEOPLE WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT OUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, WE TAKE CARE THAT WE ARE BATHED AND WELL GROOMED WHEN WE GO OUT IN PUBLIC. AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE ALSO TAKE CARE OF OUR SPIRITUAL APPEARANCE BY BEING BAPTIZED AND SEEING THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE ALSO BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE TRUE AND ONLY GOD, THE HOLY TRINITY: THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE ATTEND CHURCH REGULARLY TO HEAR AND STUDY GOD'S HOLY WORD AND TO RECEIVE CHRIST'S TRUE BODY AND BLOOD IN THE HOLY COMMUNION. INDEED, AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WE WANT TO GATHER TOGETHER AS OFTEN AS WE CAN WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST IN THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS, BECAUSE *THAT'S WHO WE ARE—HOLY ONES*, SAINTS: NOW AND FOREVER! AMEN.