

LOVES ME, LOVES ME NOT

1 JOHN 3:1-3

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. 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. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

There is a famous drawing by English engraver, Henry Moses - done in 1820. It depicts a whimsical game played in France, usually by young lovers. Moses' drawing is entitled, "[The Decision Of The Flower.](#)"

In fact, you may've played the game yourself!

The participants are people who've fallen in love, and are pondering if the one they love, loves them in return.

She picks the pedals off a flower, and alternating with each pedal, she says, "[He loves me](#)" then with the next pedal, "[He loves me not...](#)" "[He loves me...](#)" "[He loves me not...](#)" "[He loves me...](#)" "[He loves me not...](#)"

Hopefully her flower doesn't have a lot of pedals.

For on and on this goes, until whatever is said over the last pedal becomes the answer to her curiosity.

Well, in this morning's text the Apostle John is playing a similar game. But he's not just mulling over a curiosity. He's

explaining a definite reality... When John thinks of God, he realizes, “**He loves me.**” But when he turns his attention to this world, he shutter, “**It loves me not.**”

God loves me. This world loves me not.

And this is the plight of every Christian. We are love by God more than we can imagine. But at the same time we are misunderstood by this world, and as a result it doesn't appreciate us. In fact, the world will despise us.

Again, this is the dilemma of every follower of Jesus. **Jesus loves me more than I know. But this world loves me not.** And this creates far-reaching dynamics.

In our text, the Apostle John takes us on a tour.

He starts with *what we are **now...*** followed by *what has **not yet** been revealed...* then on to *what **we shall be...*** and back to *he **who has this hope...*** Here's our journey: from **now**, to **not yet**, to **we shall**, to **who has...**

Here's another way to put it, in these three amazing verses, John discusses our **given glory**, our **hidden glory**, our **coming glory**, and our **growing glory**. Our **given glory**, **hidden glory**, **coming glory**, **growing glory...**

The Apostle John begins Chapter 3 with one of the most staggering thoughts in all the Bible. *If you're down in the dumps this morning, and need a lift. If you're looking for some pep in your step - a little hey in your day - a bump to your jump. Verse 1 is for you...*

It's an invitation. John grabs our attention. He calls us out, “**Behold...**” *Stop what you're doing - arrest your wandering thoughts - here's a point to really ponder...*

“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” John is saying, “**Check this out!** God loves us so much He has made a way to call us His kids.”

*And this is what we'll do. Let's just “**behold**” a bit...*

“**Behold, what manner of love...**” The Greek word “**potapos**” is here translated “**manner.**” It means “**from what country.**” It speaks of a behavior or trait indicative of a particular country. Perhaps you've heard the joke, “**Heaven is where the police are British, the chefs are Italian, the mechanics are German, the lovers are French, and it's all organized by the Swiss.**”

Whereas, Hell is where the police are German, the chefs are British, the mechanics are French, the lovers are Swiss, and it's all organized by the Italians.”

Think of all the different countries in the world and they're all known for their own particular proclivities.

And the same is true of heaven. The God in heaven is known for a specific “**manner**” or “**type**” of love that cannot be experienced anywhere else in the universe.

Of course, our world is not without its types of love.

There's the strong love of a **father** - the tender love of a **mother** - the longing love of **children** for their parents - the lasting love of **siblings** - the loyal love of **friends** - the passionate love of **spouses**. There are all kinds of love in the world. *Aren't we glad.* As the old saying goes, “**It's love that makes the world go round.**”

But there is a greater form of love than what can be found in earthly relationships. There is a *love that's out of this world!* In

Ephesians 3:18 Paul prays that his readers can comprehend what is “the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ.”

Paul mentions the **width of God's love**. God's love reaches everywhere and to everyone. It crosses borders, and breaks down walls. *It grows in sidewalk cracks*. It pops up in the most unexpected places!

He speaks of the **length of God's love**. When we're a distant memory to the people closest to us, we'll still be the object of God's love - the apple of His eye.

The **depth of God's love** - God's love is weighted so it always sinks to the bottom. No matter how *low you go* you're never out of the reach of God's love.

Then he exalts in the **height of God's love**. A love that sacrifices His only Son for the likes of us is a love that's over our head. God's love rises to peaks none of us can climb! It tops all our earthly concepts of love.

Think of the manner of love it took for the eternal, holy, impeccable God to make children out of sinful, rebellious, onerous us. God took rebellious, dirty little street urchins like you and me - spiritually speaking, we were dumpster divers. *Look at where we've been, the scraps we sucked, the scum we swam in, the depths to which we sunk, the shameful stuff we've done...*

Yet the God in heaven made a way for us to become children of the King. We're now *kids of the King of kings*. Behold the *mind-blowing* love God has for us!

Of course, what fuels this thought, and makes possible this notion of us becoming God's sons and daughters is the work of God's unique Son, Jesus.

Jesus died for us. He took our sin on His innocent shoulders and eagerly paid its penalty. Now once we come to Jesus we can walk away free and forgiven.

And even more, God is now our Father. *This is amazing love!* Jesus created for us the same sort of relationship with God He has. Thus, **THE** Son of God ushered into God's family *many sons and daughters*.

Realize there are three ways you can enter a family.

First, is to be **born** into that family. You enter through the rigors of birth. A seed gets planted and it grows. A womb contracts. There's pressure and pushing. A baby comes through blood and water...It's all similar to what a person goes through when they're born again. Often God applies agonizing pressure to bring us to a place of repentance and faith. It's called "**the life principle.**"

But the second way to enter a family is to be **adopted**. Paperwork gets filed. *Laws and courts* are as definitive as *blood and water*. An adopted child has the same rights as a child by birth... And this is the hope of all Gentile Christians. God's promise of salvation was to Jews. Thus, those of us who lack Jewish blood, can be thankful God put in place laws for us to be adopted. In Christ we entered his family by "**the legal principle.**"

And a third way to enter a family is by **marriage**. A man and a woman form a union. They make a holy and permanent commitment to each other... And this too happens to true

believers. Jesus has taken a bride. The NT calls us the “**bride of Christ.**” Thus, we’ve entered God’s family a third way, “**the love principle.**”

Behold, God’s love for us... He wants us to be His, to such an extent He’s made us part of His family in three ways: **through life, through law, through love.** This makes God our Father in every sense of the word.

And this is the name for God unique to Christianity.

The Jews called the holy, eternal One “**El**” or “**Elohim**” - **which spoke of His greatness.** Or they would speak of God as “**Yahweh**” - **the promise keeper.**

But the Hebrews never referred to God as “**Abba**” or “**Father**” in any kind of personal sense. At times He was called “**Father of the nation,**” but no individual addressed the almighty God as “**Father**” until Jesus.

This is what blew John’s mind. He and the other disciples overheard Jesus’ praying and addressing the awesome God as “**Abba**” - literally “**Papa**” or “**Daddy.**”

He used a term of the closest possible endearment.

But as if this wasn’t staggering enough, when Jesus taught His disciples to pray He told them to address God in the same way He had, “**Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name...**” His intention was to place them on the same terms with God He enjoyed.

And this is true of all Christians since. The fellowship we now have with Jesus has made the sovereign God who sits on the orb of the universe *our Father.*

I know some of us had a not-so-good father growing up - *more a **dud** than a **dad***. And now when you hear the word “father” it doesn’t excite as much as it should.

Don’t let the earthly man rob you again by distorting a relationship with such immense potential for good in your life. *Imagine, **God is your dad!*** Let Him reshape your image and feelings about fathers in general.

Famous theologian, J.I. Packer once said, “If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.”

And please understand, this relationship with God as your Father isn’t something you have to earn, or grow into, or prove yourself before it goes into effect... Take note of what John says in verse 2, “*Beloved, now we are children of God*” - right now! The moment you’re saved.

This is a **given glory**. It’s “*bestowed*” fully and freely.

It’s not **bought** by good deeds - or **sought** by man’s will - or **wrought** by our devices. It’s free. It’s all grace.

So who’s your daddy? And here’s my answer, “**Behold, what manner of love that God is now my daddy!**”

And if I don’t rush God’s throne for everything I need...

If I’m not proud of who sits at the head of my table...

If I don’t walk in this world with a bit of a strut knowing that its Creator is my Father; then as ole J.I. Packer unpacked, I don’t grasp Christianity very well at all.

Once, an older gentleman came to the track meet in his suit - an unusual sight at the Special Olympics.

He had rushed over from his office to watch his son compete in the 400 meter dash. When he shouted, “Go Lenny,” a middle-aged man in running shorts, with Down’s Syndrome, looked up from the track.

Soon the gun sounded. All the runners sped away except Lenny. He was dead last and losing ground.

He was preoccupied with his hands. He wrung them constantly as he tried to run. But the man in the stands got the attention of the whole section. He was so proud, “*That’s my son, Lenny. Isn’t he doing great?*”

When Lenny reached the last turn the other runners had already crossed the finish line, but this fan in the stands kept yelling, “*Great job, Lenny! Way to go, Son!*” The spectators politely clapped, but actually they were a bit embarrassed for both Lenny and his dad.

Finally, Lenny crossed the finish line, and was met by his father. The dad proudly hugged his exhausted, confused, drooling runner. *He was so proud of his son.*

And we’re all like Lenny... crippled in so many ways. We’re challenged by our own disabilities. We’re often perplexed and exhausted. Most days we’re nothing but a pitiful pile of exhaustion, and sweat, and drool.

Yet we have a Father who loves us, and is proud to call us His kids despite our deficiencies. Friends, “**Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!**”

He loves me - but this world **loves me not**.

John continues, “Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” I like this paraphrase of Verse 1, “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. But that’s also why the world doesn’t recognize us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who He is or what He’s up to.”

Jesus was God in the flesh. He knew the mysteries of creation. He understood each person he came in contact with better than they knew themselves.

Yet Jesus Himself was *brushed aside by the masses as a mere teacher... He was accused by the religious establishment of being a charlatan... He was ultimately executed as a blasphemer...* Obviously, Jesus was never recognized or appreciated for who He really was.

And this is the Christian’s dilemma. In Christ we’re co-heirs with Jesus - kids of the King - beneficiaries of divine grace and mercy - we’re members of God’s forever family... yet we’re either brushed aside and ignored - or scoffed at and persecuted. We too are not recognized and appreciated for who we really are!

Movie star, Helen Hunt, is a successful leading lady and director. In 1997 she won an Oscar for best actress. She’s also won four Emmys, and four Golden Globe awards. Yet she’s not always recognized.

Recently, she told the story of how she was mistaken for fellow actress, Jodi Foster, at her neighborhood Starbucks.

When Helen picked up the coffee she'd ordered, Jodi's name was written on the side of the cup. Later Helen tweeted, "Ordered my drink @Starbucks asked the barista if she wanted my name. She winked and said 'We gotcha' #JodieFoster."

And like the barista who didn't recognize the famous movie star, this world doesn't recognize us.

Your heart is the sight of a miracle. The Holy Spirit has revived you. He now resides inside you! Your heart is a sacred place. *It should be a tourist attraction!*

Yet instead of treating you as special, the folks you work with ignore you, or view you falsely. Don't be shocked if they treat you the way they treated Jesus!

And even worse, **don't let the way they treat you effect how you see yourself!** This happens far too often. We as Christians allow the world around us to press us into its mold, *rather than live out what God has put in.* We have to remember who we are in Christ.

In Colossians 3:3 Paul writes to the believers, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

You and I need to realize the Christian life is the hidden life. Our **given glory** is for now a **hidden glory**.

The world looks at the Christian, and doesn't get our devotion. They scoff, "She's committed herself completely to Christ, and has nothing to show for it!"

And to a degree the world is right... Our God is invisible... Our home is over the horizon, out-of-sight, off-the-map... Our greatest rewards are still future...

Our Savior is seen only through eyes of faith... Our helper, the Holy Spirit, is like the wind - *He's spiritual rather than tangible - He's sensed rather than seen...*

Our treasure is buried in our hearts... Our source of joy, and love, and power, and peace is accessed only from the inside of our lives - not from the outside...

In short, our **“life is hidden with Christ in God...”**

Recall how John defined the world system in 2:16.

He listed the values the world promotes that God opposes - **“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”** This means as Christians our life's emphasis should be **the spiritual not physical, the internal not external, and the eternal not temporal.**

From an insider's perspective - a person who knows Christ and the abundance He brings - sees this as a rich, full life... But this is not how it's viewed from an outsiders perspective. The world sees the Christian life as a repressed existence devoid of what counts.

One day the Pharisees approached Jesus, **“You talk so much about the Kingdom of God, where is it?”** They were thinking of pageantry, and wealth, and power.

But Jesus replied, **“The kingdom does not come with observation (its not tangible, or visible, or earthly); “nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ (you can't point it out) For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”**

The glory of our lives is hidden with Christ in God.

We're like an iceberg - the largest part of **who we are** and **what we have** is out-of-sight, below the surface.

All the world sees is the tip of the iceberg. This is why we're laughed at, and ridiculed, and misconstrued.

A Christian has given their all to a Kingdom and King other people cannot see. It is indeed a **hidden glory**.

Yet one day our plight will change. There is a **coming glory**. Verse 2 tells us, "**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.**"

One day, God is going to let the cat out of the bag!

What we are - the glorious children of God - will be revealed to everyone! *Everyone be in awe of us!*

When Jesus appears in the clouds we'll be on *Cloud 9*. In 1 Corinthians 15 we're told that one day soon Jesus will return for His church. He'll snatch us up into the air to be with Him. At the rapture of the church we'll be given new bodies that radiate God's eternal glory.

Colossians 3:4 tells us, "**When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.**"

The redemption God has planned for us in Christ won't be complete until the last vestiges of sin, and death, and decay are purged from our fleshly bodies.

Our rotting flesh will be transformed. God will give us new bodies that will reflect God's beauty and glory.

These current bodies are too opaque. *What you see is not always what you get. The life of Christ abides in us. But that's not always apparent to those who look at us.* Our eternal bodies will be more translucent. The glory on the *inside* will be seen by folks on the *outside*.

Like Jesus at His transfiguration, the glory that was hidden will shine through the flesh that once housed it.

Of course, when it comes to our **coming glory** John seems to have more questions than answers.

He writes, *"it has not yet been revealed what we shall be..."* There're holes in our understanding. Some of the details surrounding our future remain murky.

But one truth is certain, a change is mandatory.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 15:50-52, "Now this I say, brethren, **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.**" Our current bodies aren't fit for our future environment.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (The bodies of the believing dead are resurrected first, *for they have six feet further to go*. They're followed by the bodies of believers who are alive at the time.) **For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**"

When man walked on the moon, NASA knew a human body could never survive on the lunar surface.

Earthly bodies aren't fit for lunar life. That's why NASA designed a life-support suit for moon walks.

And likewise, the mortal bodies we currently inhabit aren't suited to survive the physical presence of God.

If we entered pure, un-bridled holiness wearing "*flesh and blood*" we'd melt faster than ice cream on a hot July day. To enter God's throne room we'll have to shed our earth-suits, and suit up in a spiritual body.

In his book "[The Great Divorce](#)," theologian CS Lewis imagined what heavenly bodies might look like...

"I saw people coming to meet us. Because they were bright I saw them while they were still very distant, and at first I did not know that they were people at all..."

The earth shook under their tread as their strong feet sank into the wet turf... Some were naked, some robed. But the naked ones did not seem less adorned, and the robes did not disguise in those who wore them the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh. Some were bearded, but no one... struck me as being of any particular age." Sum it up, they were *shining, strong, unblemished, smooth-skinned, ageless*. A heavenly man is a sight to behold!

Lewis says in another place, "[A regenerate man in glory would be something we in our ignorance might be tempted to worship.](#)" If, through these eyes we saw a believer in his or her glorified body, we might mistake the human for divine... *Heavenly bodies are heavenly!*

Today, we wonder about our future, heavenly bodies? What characteristics will they possess? How will they behave under pressure? Imagine, a body no longer vulnerable to pain, and sickness, and soreness.

Think of inhabiting a body that never breaks down.

We can try to envision its capabilities, but John squelches our curiosity with five words, **“we shall be like Him.”** We’ll have the same type of body - with the same features - that Jesus had after His resurrection.

Recall how Jesus vanished before the disciples on the Road to Emmaus - then reappeared in the upper room in Jerusalem several miles away. His body wasn’t limited by time and space. I’m not sure what all **“Christ-like”** includes, but I’m sure we’ll be the envy of the angels... beautiful beyond description... *like Jesus!*

People may be mocking us at the moment - but one day the follower of Jesus is going to get the last laugh!

When Jesus appears - *visibly and tangibly* - the whole world will stand in awe. With jaws dropped and tongues tied - they’ll stand in fear of His majesty.

And there, your life - and what the world thought was a strange devotion - will be instantly explained.

When the ladies on *“The View”* get a view of you standing beside Jesus, clothed in His glory, suddenly they’ll understand Christianity in a new light ... In that moment, *the hidden life will become the envied life.*

A mechanic and a sculptor were competing to create a ornament that would adorn the top of a skyscraper.

The sculptor's work was chosen. It was an exquisite piece. It was small, but it was full of meticulous detail.

The day came for the art to be hoisted to the top of the building. But as it ascended it lost its definition, it began to look like nothing but a shapeless block.

In desperation the owners tried the mechanic's piece. It seemed so huge and uncouth, but as it was hoisted into the air, they noticed the further it rose the more its deformities disappeared, and the more elegant it looked. *And this is the plight of the Christian.*

On earth we seem so marred and mortal. We look like little more than a roughed-out chunk of stone.

But when we ascend to heaven to join our Lord we'll become like Him, and take on a breathtaking beauty.

For every believer there is a **given glory**, a **hidden glory**, a **coming glory**, and finally a **growing glory**.

Believe **what we are now** - children of God...

Of course, that has **not yet been revealed**...

But when we see Him, **we shall be like Him**...

And then John tells us, verse 3, **“Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

Hope is a confidence in the future. And here's the big question for us, *how many of us ever really focus on the future?* Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert writes, **“(Human beings) think about the future in a way that no other animal**

can, does, or ever has, and this simple... ordinary act is the defining feature of our humanity.”

Gilbert says that the average adult spends 12% of his day thinking about the future. That's 7 minutes and 12 seconds out of every hour, we're focused forward...

John says this is good. For when we think about our ultimate and eternal destiny it motivates us to live godly and holy in this present life. I like what the poet writes, “*Could you in vision see yourself, the man God meant. You never more would be the man you are, content.*”

A forward focus is the key to a purer present.

Today, skeptics label the doctrine of the rapture as a form of escapism. Rather than trying to make the here and now a better place - they accuse rapture advocates of sitting on their hands, twiddling their thumbs, biding their time, and waiting complacently...

Not so! Our hope of seeing Jesus is a powerful motivator for godly living! Verse 3, “*Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*”

Think of a young lady who lands a date to the prom with the High School heartthrob. Trust me, she won't be idle thirty minutes before he arrives to pick her up.

She's prepping and primping - styling and smiling. This girl wants to look her very best when he appears.

And likewise we, the Bride of Christ, should want to be at our best when Jesus returns for us. A constant expectation of His soon arrival keeps us on our toes.

Wherever I go, whatever I do - I need to first ask myself if Jesus returned right now is this where I'd want Him to find me? For *sure*, we'll want to be *pure*!

According to the Collins English Dictionary the word of the year for 2017 was "**binge-watch.**" It's defined as "**watching a large number of television programs in succession.**" It's usage has tripled over this past year.

I think we'd all agree that keeping our eyes fixed on a HDTV screen for long, unbroken intervals is probably not the best use of our time. *But what if we binge-watch for Jesus? I mean keep our eyes on the heavens with the expectation that He could return at any moment?*

Now we're talking... for it's this kind of gaze that keeps me *hoping for Him and holy toward Him.*

Don't ever forget, "***we shall see Him as He is.***"

So let me ask you, are you living between two worlds? *Are you picking flower pedals* so to speak?

You know **God loves me** and **this world loves me not.** But for some reason you're still picking... you're still playing a game... you live your life in limbo never quite sure where you'll come down this next weekend...

Will you resist the lures of this world and live for Jesus? Or will pick the next pedal hoping things have changed... hoping this world loves you after all...

He loves me. The world loves me not. I hope you really come to believe both truths in the days ahead.