

*1 John 3:1-2 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. <sup>2</sup> 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.*

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We are here today to celebrate. It is confirmation day. Mason and Ethan are dressed to the tee. They soon will publicly profess their faith before this congregation. They even survived questioning last Wednesday. And yet today, we are not truly here to celebrate what Ethan and Mason have done, but rather who they are. And if we are to celebrate who they are, we must also celebrate the one that made them that way. Yes, ultimately we are here to celebrate God's love for Ethan and Mason. Yes how great is the love that the Father has given to them that they should be called the children of God, and that is what they are.

Mason was 13 days old when it happened. Ethan was just 27 days old. When what happened? When God made each of them His child. Yes it was here in this church in the waters of holy baptism that God expressed His love for each of them in the most real way possible. He said, "Ethan, Mason, You are mine. My spirit will dwell in you. Your sins are forgiven."

And every since that day, Ethan and Mason had been blessed to live in the reality of those truths. Even before their minds could comprehend all of these things, they were blessed to live each day in those realities. And as they have grown up and as they have grown in their knowledge of their Lord Jesus, they have come to understand them more and more. They indeed know that they have a God that loves them so much that He sent His only Son to die for them and to rise for them. They know they have a Father that is there for them each day. And they know also that there is for them as children of God more to come, an eternity of blessedness awaiting them. As our text for the day declares, they believe, "what we will be has not yet appeared; but when Jesus appears we know that we shall be like him, because we shall see him as He is."

People often dream about what it would be like to be the son or daughter of a multi-millionaire. What would be it be like to be surrounded with that kind of wealth every day. What would it be like to have every need fulfilled so quickly?

Well Ethan, Mason, and each one of us who has been baptized into Christ Jesus indeed know what it is like. No, it's not that we have earthly fathers who are just overwhelmed with the amount of money that they have in their bank accounts. But we do have a heavenly Father who is rich beyond all comparison. As the scriptures say, indeed all things are His. And He shares all of those things with His children in great abundance according to His great love.

Indeed we are all heirs of the riches of God by virtue of him adopting us, choosing us as His children for each of God's children shares in the abundant riches of His Father. We walk around each day with the wonderful knowledge that our Father is the Almighty God, that He loves us with an everlasting love, and that He is generous towards us in every way.

Ethan and Mason, you are children of God because God loves you. And that is what we are here today to celebrate. But it is also that same truth that your church family here hopes will be the truth that transforms and molds your entire lives from this point forward. Indeed today as the church recognizes that you are old enough to take more responsibly for your faith life and to examine yourself before you receive the Lord's Supper, our church's prayer is indeed that the knowledge that you are children of God may be knowledge that molds every part of your life.

You are a child of God. Each day, whatever you are doing is a chance to live as God's child. Whether it is as a student or a friend, as a family member or a boyfriend, as an employee or a church member, God will give you opportunity after opportunity to simply live as the children He has made you to be in baptism. And you know also that God has promised that He will mature you in faith that as you continue to grow. And as you grow in your faith, you will look more and more like your Heavenly Father. As you continue to read, learn, and inwardly digest God's word and as you receive the Supper of our Lord, God has promised to build you up into that full maturity of faith, to that place where there will be no doubt whose kid you are. You will look so much like your Father that you can't be mistaken as any else's child.

You are a child of God. And that means also that you have a spiritual family. Remember throughout your life, that this congregation here at St. Paul's, and not just the people that are your own age, but from oldest to youngest, from richest to poorest, the whole Christian church for that matter is your family. Come here when

you are down. Share your joys here when you have triumphed. Look here when you are in need of help. For God has not left you as an only child but has rather has created a huge family around you in order that that family might meet your needs throughout your life. Come into God's house regularly and enjoy the blessing of your spiritual family.

You are a child of God. And yet, like everyone else, there will be those times in your Christian life when you will not live like a child of God. Just like everyone else gathered here, there will be those times when you will make mistakes, when you will fall, and when you will sin. And have no doubt in those times Satan will try His absolute best to convince you that you are no longer worthy of being God's child, that He doesn't want anything to do with you anymore. But don't buy Satan's lies. Rather return to your Father as prodigal son did and be received anew into His grace as He celebrates your return. God has promised to never disown you.

You are a child of God. And that means also that sometimes as you live out your life as a child of God, there will be those in the world who will not understand you or the way you live. They will not understand you and they may at times not even like you. It means that as you live as a child of God you may not always be the most popular person with those who are not children of God. But in those times, do not be discouraged. Know that as our text says that the only reason they may not like you is that they don't like your dad. Indeed when they see God shining through you, at times it will offend the people around you but never that to discourage your walk as a child of God. In those times, trust that you heavenly Father in heaven is proud of you and that your family here on earth will support your walk of faith each step of the way.

You are a child of God. And today that means that you will join your family for the first time at this altar. As everyone knows, family time around the family table is important. This is especially true of our spiritual family. Today your church family rejoices to stand at this same altar with you, to drink from a common cup that you have drank from, and to be reunited with you as family. We will be blessed to receive with you the first time our Lord's body and blood for our forgiveness. Never forget throughout your whole life what a blessing it is to be able to sit at the table of God with His family. All of your life look forward to those opportunities and realize that missing an opportunity to come to the Lord's Table is missing out on a great feast.

Ethan and Mason, and each person here baptized into Christ Jesus, how great is the love that the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God, and that is what we are.

We are all heirs of the riches of God's grace. We are blessed to walk around in our various roles living as His children each day. We are blessed to live in the community of saints and have that be our spiritual family. Our Father has told us and reminded us that He will welcome us back no matter how much we have rebelled. And yes, we may be persecuted at times by the world, but if we are, we are comforted by our God and by our family. Today we are invited again to come to the family table to eat and drink of Christ's body and blood with the family as the Father serves to us a feast beyond all comparison.

Yes, what a blessed life it is to live as the children of God. And that is what each of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus are because God has loved us so very much. Yes, "we are God's children now, and what will be has not yet appeared; but when Christ appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as He is." Yes, we are children of God today by His grace and we will be His children forever in His Glory.

Ethan, and Mason, each of you baptized into Christ Jesus, you are a child of God. Amen.