

BEHOLD, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE!

During the introduction to my *Mother's Day* sermon 6 weeks ago, I mentioned that if there was a way to "poll" all the Bible-preaching pastors in America to find out what passage they were preaching from on *Mother's Day*, Proverbs 31—the virtuous woman—would probably lead the pack.

When it comes to *Father's Day*, however, it would be difficult to predict the "most-used" text. Here are a couple of possibilities:

Eph 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Col 3:21 "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

Another possibility would be the one listed on the cover of our bulletin—Proverbs 22:6. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Although that verse is not directed to *fathers only*, it certainly applies to them.

But since our "normal" Sunday morning group does not have a lot of fathers with young children, I felt led to focus more on the *fatherhood of God* instead of on earthly fathers. Please turn to I John 2:28 and follow along as I read through I John 3:3.

The *human author* of this book is the Apostle John—the *last of the 12 original apostles*. John was roughly 85 years old at this time. Once known as a "*son of thunder*," John was later called the "*Apostle of love*." A study of this book in particular would quickly reveal why. Of the 105 verses in these 5 chapters, 26 different verses have the word "love" or "loved" in it—which equates to roughly 1 out of every 4!

But God, of course, is the *real author* because "All Scripture is given by *inspiration of God*." *God is the One who* had John write these things, so they are things that God obviously wants us to know. I was originally going to look at verses 1-3, but there is way too much here to cover in one sermon. So we are going to focus our attention on only *one verse* this morning—I John 3:1. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."

PRAY

1. The command to contemplate the Father's love

Vs 1 "**Behold...**" We're going to stop right here! Right out of the gate, we have this *rather common* Bible word. I say *common* because "behold" is found in our KJ Bibles *nearly 1300 times!* But it is a *word we rarely*—if ever—use in our *everyday lives*. You probably would look at me kind of strange if I said, "Behold, *how nice the lawn looks* here at church" or "Behold, *how well the flowers are growing* around the building" or "Behold, *how big the hole is in the back yard!*"

What does "behold" *mean*? It comes from the Greek word *hor-ah-o* and means to *see with the eyes*. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "**Behold the Lamb of God** which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)

But it does not just mean to see with *the eyes*. Often times it means "to see *with the mind*" ...to perceive...to contemplate. So God wants us to do more than "look at" the Father's love that He bestowed up us. He wants us to *consider it*...to *ponder it*...to *think about it*.

Another noteworthy aspect seen in the Greek is that this word is in the form of a *command*. It is not merely a suggestion or good idea—it is something that we are *commanded* to do. It is *not optional*; God says, 'I am commanding you to contemplate the manner of love that I bestowed upon you that allowed you to become a child of mine!'

It's a needful command, isn't it? Sadly, *things we are familiar with* can become common place and we can begin to take them for granted. We can do that with *our spouses*. Just like it takes awareness...and planning...and work to maintain *the physical house* we live in, it takes awareness...and planning...and work to maintain *a marriage*. If we aren't careful—and don't work at it—we can become like "two ships passing in the night." We live together under the same roof—but can have two very different lives.

We can also take our relationship with **our parents** for granted, can't we? I didn't take the time to read all of them, but I noticed on Facebook this past week a number of tributes that people gave about their fathers. Some of their fathers were still alive—but some of them were not. Many of us have lost one or both of our parents. They won't always be there, will they? So let's not take them for granted.

And just like we can get "used to" **people in our lives loving us**, we can become "used to" the fact that God loves us and consequently it **doesn't affect us the way** it once did. Think of all the people you know—some even in your own family—that were at one time amazed and appreciative that God **loved them**. Many don't feel that way anymore, do they? Why? Because they've **gotten over** "the wonder of it all."

God through John tells us to **guard against that** and one way to do that is to **contemplate** it; to take some time to think about the greatness of God's love to us. So we are going to do that very thing this morning!

What is it we are **commanded to contemplate** and ponder? I'm calling it...

2. The components to contemplate concerning the Father's love

God very specifically tells us **what it is** that He wants us **to ponder**. God wants us **to attend to** and **consider** and **think upon** "the manner of love" that He—the Father—"hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

But how are we to "wrap our minds" around a love that Paul describes in Eph 3:19 as something that "passes knowledge?" One way is to break it down into smaller pieces!

First, let's consider... A. The giver of the Father's love

Who is the giver of the **Father's** love? That's a no-brainer, isn't it? **The Father, of course!** But far too many people have a view of God "as **they understand Him**"—instead of the view of God that **God Himself gives us!** So I want us to dwell on **who the Father** is for a few minutes. I can't go into depth—and there are dozens of passages we could look at—but I want us to turn to Psalm 139. We'll be back here; mark your spot.

i. The Father is omniscient—meaning all-knowing.

--vs 1. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and **known** me."

--vs 2. You know when I sit down, you know when I get up, you know my thoughts.

--End of vs 3. You are acquainted with all my ways.

--vs 4. Every word I speak you hear it—and know it!

ii. The Father is omnipresent—meaning every-present.

--vs 7. I cannot get away from your presence. Everywhere I go, you are there.

--vs 8. "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [sheol; the grave; the place of the dead], behold, thou art there."

--vss 9-10. If I go to the uttermost part of the sea, you are there.

--vss 11-12. If I think darkness hides myself from you, I'm only fooling myself because "the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

iii. The Father is the Creator.

--vs 13. "For thou hast possessed my reins." "Reins" here are **not referring** to the two pieces of leather that extend from a horse's bit and are used to stop it or turn it. "Reins" means "inward parts." If God "possessed" your inward parts before you were born—and covered you in your mother's womb—**He created you!**

--vs 14. To praise God for being fearfully and wonderfully made also acknowledges the fact that He created u!

iv. The Father is the Judge.

--vs 19. "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God..." If God is going to slay the wicked, then He is the Judge who determines who is wicked—and the Judge who has the authority to punish the wicked!

v. The Father is Holy. Don't have that spelled out in Psalm 139 but notice on your hand out.

Hab 1:13a "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:"

Rev 4:8 “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty**, which was, and is, and is to come.”

Much more could be said, of course. We looked at only 5 of the approximately 15 attributes of God. To recap these 5, though, the giver of this love we are to contemplate is **the Father**—Almighty God who sees all and knows all...and who made us all...and who is perfectly holy...and the One who will judge us all!

Please turn back to I John 3 and let’s consider next... **B. The gift of the Father’s love**

What exactly **did the Father give** that makes His love so amazing? Again, not a hard question to answer. He gave **His Son!**

Most of us are familiar with John 3:16, feel **free to quote** the 1st half with me if you know it.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that **He gave** His only begotten Son...”

We’re in I John 3; look at I John 4:9 and 10.

I John 4:9 “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God **sent His only begotten Son into the world**, that we might live through Him.”

I John 4:10 “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and **sent His Son** to be the propitiation for our sins.”

God **proved His love** by giving—and He **gave us His Son**. But in reality, He gave **Himself!** God—in the person of Jesus, the God-Man—**died in our place** so that we could be forgiven!

Look at **I John 3:16** “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because **He laid down His** life for us...”

“Amazing love! How can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me?”

What are we to contemplate...to consider...to ponder...regarding the love of God?

--First, the giver—God the Father. Second, the gift—God Himself in the person of His Son!

Third, let’s consider **who** the Father’s love was demonstrated **to**. Who were the **recipients** of the Father’s love?

In keeping with the letter “g,” I’m calling them.... **C. The “getters” of the Father’s love**

--Who were these ones that Jesus died for?

--Who were the receivers of this unequaled, almost incomprehensible love?

Sinners—like you and me!

Let’s turn now to Romans 5, beginning with verse 6. We’ll come back to I John shortly, so I recommend again you somehow mark this spot. Just as it is true that people have the **wrong view of God** because they don’t know the Bible, many people also have the **wrong view of themselves and sin!** Notice what God calls us:

--In vs 6, we see that Christ died **for the ungodly**—meaning you and me!

--In vs 8, we see that God demonstrated His love, in that, while **we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us.

--In vs 10, we see that **when we were enemies**, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

Not very flattering, is it? But it doesn’t stop there. Notice on your hand-out...

I Cor 6:9-11 “Know ye not that the **unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God**? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.** ¹¹ **And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus**, and by the Spirit of our God.”

How do we know Christ died for **these sins** and these **kinds of sinners**? Because Paul says “And such **were some of you**: but ye are washed...” The only way we can be washed from our sin is by the blood of Jesus!

Who did Jesus **die for**? **Sinners!** **Who** can Jesus **save**? **Sinners!** Paul summed it up perfectly in his letter to Timothy. **I Tim 1:15** “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world **to save sinners**; of whom I am chief.”

Back to I John 3 one more time. What are we to contemplate regarding the Father’s love? **First**, the giver: God the Father. **Second**, the gift: God Himself in the person of His Son! **Third**, the receivers: proud, rebellious, self-pleasing, self-serving, unrighteous sinners like us!

One more feature about the Father's love to us that God wants us to contemplate, and it is this...

D. The gain of the "getters" of the Father's love

Kind of clunky, I know, but I believe you get the point. **What** is it that **the recipients**—the "getters" of the Father's love—**actually get**—besides love? Once again, the answer is obvious: they receive **sonship!** "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God..."

We are not just **called** sons of God, though—**we are in actuality sons** of God! That is our new position when we are born again. **Notice the certainty** stated in verse 2, "Beloved, **now** are we the sons of God..."

Please note that God is **not** leaving out women or girls. In fact, the Greek more literally would read "children" of God as opposed to "sons" of God.

Our "gain," then, is not just forgiveness—it is **much higher than that!** We are not just pardoned criminals; nor are we **merely freed slaves!** We are sons—and daughters—of the God of heaven and earth!

Barnes wrote: "Even God could bestow upon us no more **valuable token of affection** than that we should be **adopted into His family**, and permitted to regard Him as our Father. When we remember how **insignificant we are as creatures**, and how ungrateful, rebellious, and **vile we have been as sinners**, we may well be amazed at the love which would adopt us into the holy family of God, so that we may be regarded and treated as the children of the Most High."

J.I. Packer summed it up like this: "To be right with God the Judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is a greater." (Knowing God; pg 207).

We've seen the **command to contemplate** the Father's love...and the **components to contemplate** regarding the Father's love, but there is one last thing we need to look at and it is this...

3. The criteria required to become a son of God

Just as people can "get it wrong" as to **who God is**—and "get it wrong" as to **who they are** and **what sin is**—people can "get it wrong" as to **how to become** a child of God! And—once again—if they simply **looked at what God says** about it in His Word, there would be no confusion! So what does God say about bc His child?

In one sense, we already talked about it!

--God the Father is the giver...His Son was the gift...and sinners are the recipients! God didn't give us His Son because we were good—He gave us His Son **because we were sinful and needed saving!**

Look again at I John 4:10 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." We didn't initiate a relationship with God—He initiated it with us! He loved us first and sent His Son to be the "propitiation"—meaning atoning sacrifice—for our sins.

Look at I John 4:14 (read). **Who** is the Savior? The Son! **What** does He save **us from**? We just read it in vs 10—the penalty of our sins!

Now I John 5:11. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life..."

--Notice it **doesn't say** God "paid" us eternal life because we **earned it**. He has **given it to us!**

--"...and this life is in His Son." What life? **Eternal life!**

--Eternal life then is a gift...given by God...tied up with—attached to—His Son.

And then vs 12—our sign verse...and website verse...and verse I refer to often. Sometimes I fear I refer to it too often and sound "like a broken record." And yet, what a blessing it would be if we all had this verse memorized! "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

--It is not just about **believing in God's existence**. The devil believes in the existence of God!

--It is about **having Jesus**...it is about possessing Him...it is about receiving Him as a gift for yourself!

John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [authority; the right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:"

How do you "receive" someone you can't see? By faith! Come to Him in humility as a needy sinner, admitting you can't save yourself and believing His death on the cross was enough to pay your penalty.

Jesus' promise is that him that "cometh to me I will in no way cast out" (John 6:37).

God's promise is "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." (Romans 10:13). Have you done that?

So what would God have us do in light of His word?

1. First and foremost, receive the Son as your Savior if you haven't!

--Believing God exists is not enough; you need to have Him—you need to possess Him! Do you?

Please know, God is not your Father if Jesus is not your Savior!

2. Second, if God is your Father, contemplate—think often about—the wonderful love that was demonstrated in making you His child. Don't take for granted the great love He has bestowed upon us.

3. Third, if God is your Father, trust Him to care for you. He has already given you the greatest gift He could possibly give you so you can certainly trust Him for "smaller" needs.

4. Lastly, work on your relationship with Him. Spend time with Him. Talk to Him; pour out your heart to Him. Read of His love for you...and His promises to care for you...and what you can do to please Him.