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PRESIDENT'S LETTER - MAY 06

"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" (1 John 3:1-3).

Two weeks ago I attended the Co-ordinating Council meetings in Eau Claire, WI. As the CC prepared for the CLC Convention in June, I was struck by the amount of work the Lord has laid out for us to participate in as fellow-laborers with God. You are God's field. You are God's building. (1 Corinthians 3:5-11) Then I traveled to Spokane, WA to attend the Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference and shared the challenges that congregations are facing in an increasingly hostile environment of a world run amuck. It was a relief to get back to the problems of my flock. The local ministry helps put things back into perspective. I am convinced that it is a blessing that our officers and boards serve in local congregations. It is also a good thing when pastors get out into the real world with their members. Most of all I was again reminded of

The Gifts of God's Great Love In Our Lives

1. God gives us a new life as His Children.

John blurts out in wonder, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God." And that's what we are. By nature, we would be lost in sin and unbelief living only for ourselves. Without Christ, the lives we live would be empty and purposeless. We would be drifting aimlessly. All of this because we would have no relationship with God. We also would be alienated from God because of our many sins. However, God, Himself, now calls us "His" dear children.

This is above and beyond an earthly father's love that welcomes back the prodigal son. This is God's one-sided, unconditional love for those outside the family of God. This is agape - love in action - that moved God to send His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. God so loved that He gave. We are now the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The world does not really know or understand or care who we are. This world did not accept Jesus because it is under the temporary control of the Devil. So the world does not accept believers or understand their "lives" as children of God. In fact, the world is hostile toward those who live in Christ.

We have a new and wonderful life as the children of God. We can go in faith to our Father in prayer. We can live without anxiety because we know that the Father will take care of His children. We have a purpose in our lives that rises above the "vanity" of the things of this world.

We have been freed from the mad pursuit of things and sinful pleasures. We are the Children of God by faith.

2. God gives us an unimaginable life as God's heirs of everlasting life.

God's gift of life goes beyond this world and seventy or eighty years of earthly existence. Jesus' resurrection gives us the hope of everlasting life in heaven. In verse two, John calls us "the loved ones." We are the Children of God, but what we really are has not yet been made known. The world sees the Christian as a fool because he is willing to give up everything this world has to offer for Jesus. Sometimes, we see ourselves getting the short end of the stick. Sometimes in our ministries, we seem like losers.

What we are will not be revealed until Jesus appears at the Last Day. On that Day, all the dead will be raised, and we will enter into life. We cannot even imagine what this means. John simply says, "We shall be like Jesus, for we shall see Him as He is." Paul says, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard" what God has prepared for those who love Him. Our earthly limits make it impossible to even imagine what this new "life" will be like. The Bible says that there will be no tears, no pain, no death. We will be like Jesus, without sin and in a perfect relationship with God. As God's children we are heirs of everlasting life. Like heirs, we have to wait for a death before we receive our inheritance of everlasting life.

3. God gives us a new life of purity and righteousness.

I would urge you to read ahead in John 3 to see how this life is to be revealed in the way we live. "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). We purify ourselves by constant repentance over sin and faith in the forgiveness of sins. As children of God we hate sin in our lives. We are called upon to practice righteousness in our daily lives. "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10).

Because of Easter, let us live as Children of God. Because of Easter let us die as Children of God. God has lavished His love upon us and has made us His children and heirs of life. He has enabled us to live lives of love. As we prepare for the upcoming Convention of the CLC, may we never forget that God has called us His dear children, and that is what we are.

In the Name of the Lord of the Harvest.

John Schierenbeck